

CHAPTER 6 SOCIAL SCIENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE: CURRENT PERSPECTIVES AND THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

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Introduction

The history of social science in Mozambique is of recent origin. Research work is not yet carried out on a systematic basis, and at institutional level it is heavily reliant on individual effort or strongly influenced by the institutions which provide the finance for research.

Research is still to some extent dependent: on the division of labour in social science (epistemological, theoretical and methodological) and on the material circumstances under which research is carried out.

We cannot therefore say that there is a research policy in Mozambique, not that there is a tradition in the area of social science.

The systematic analysis of the way in which social science is practised is still at an elementary stage. We have not yet made any great contribution to the scientific process by way of developing a critique of documentary sources, whether in ideological, semantic or scientific terms. We have not developed techniques for the sorting and preparation of data, nor have we made any great theoretical advances in the construction of the objects of research. In the same way there has been little conceptual preparation aimed at proper interpretation of data. And finally we have not created the framework for the presentation of sets of results or of practical fieldwork as proof that work has been conducted in a proper scientific manner. In turn no link has been established between the description of empirical method and the development of theoretical reflection on the object of research and on the empirical method itself.

Using these basic facts what I would like to propose in this presentation is an outline of scientific practice in Mozambique in the context of the social sciences, together with an explanation of its development in the post-independence period. Preparing this outline, which at the same time identifies certain definite periods in the history of social science in Mozambique, has enabled me to define a very specific objective: a description of the institutional,

ideological, theoretical and practical context of research today, and of the problems which all researchers face within it.

The Historical Context for Science

The Armed Struggle and Intellectual Endeavour

As with all work of the mind, scientific output in Mozambique is conditioned by the historical context in which it emerged, or in other words, by the theoretical and practical means with which it has to operate.

On attaining independence we did not find any tradition of anthropological research which could provide us with valid methodological guidelines for conducting a systematic and organised study of social life. Ethnographic studies in Mozambique (reports and small monographs) had been carried out as part of the colonial administration of the territory, and their objective was to understand social life so as "to better administer it". Sometimes there was an element of folklore in these studies as well. Colonial administrators and missionaries were the main analysts and observers of "traditional" society.

So the emergence of the social sciences and of the epistemological assumptions associated with them is linked on the one hand with the historical (social and ideological) context of science in general and on the other hand with the relationship between theory and practice and between science and ideology.

The last three decades in Mozambique witnessed two great turning-points: the start of the armed struggle against the Portuguese colonial system, and the defeat of that system by an armed struggle based on a revolutionary ideology whose aim was to create a socialist society.

Once independence had been attained, it became necessary to explain underdevelopment, the national liberation struggle and the class struggle to a country which was going through the immediate aftermath of decolonisation.

The characteristics of this new situation led to research on the economic causes of exploitation and on the political and revolutionary solutions which would eliminate it. The experience of the armed struggle, and its theoretical and methodological teachings in particular, are regarded as one of the sources of inspiration for intellectual work whose aims were to be revolutionary, popular and innovative. The first steps towards that revolutionary transformation of Mozambican society were taken in the former liberated areas. This transformation had always been the core objective of the liberation struggle, and envisaged liberation in all senses of the word: freedom from colonial oppression, and freeing up all the creative capacity and potential of the people.

A consistent effort has been made to study the armed struggle because it is only by understanding it that we will be able to build up a tradition of research and of work which has its proper roots in Mozambican life. This approach boils

down to the need to link theory and practice. But even more significant is the need to develop theories on the basis of practice which induces social change - and here Marxism plays a dominant role.

"In our country Marxism is the product of the national liberation struggle. We did not proclaim ourselves Marxists after independence. The war itself became a popular revolutionary war as it progressed. It was this fact which allowed the Liberation Front to become a Marxist-Leninist party.... Marxism-Leninism for us is the result of our struggle, the fruit of the class struggle and of the discussion of ideas at the heart of the Front." (Machel 1980).

The social scientist is formally required to study Marxism and to use it, constantly, as the tool and method for analysing society. As stated by Ganhão

"In the case of the social scientist any distinction which he may try to make between what is social science on the one hand and Marxism on the other must be abolished" (Ganhão 1983).

This ideological requirement was to condition the development of research, and prevented social scientists from using a conceptual framework which was more consistent with the reality of life in Mozambique.

But were sociology, anthropology and the other social sciences able to provide the tools for studying certain areas of the past even within a Marxist perspective? From the moment of independence onwards (and I believe even before that) political and intellectual Party officials mistrusted anthropology. In the classical conception of anthropology, the rationality of third-world cultures is something fictitious and passive. Being built around an instrumentalist interpretation, it establishes a theoretical correlation between passivity and the non-accountability of the native under the colonial regime. The fact that anthropology needed this objectivising and reductionist view led them to question this discipline and this whole type of attitude, sometimes less because of its theoretical basis and more because of its ethnocentricity.

Because it sees in colonialism nothing more than acculturation or social change, or, in the final analysis, modernisation, anthropology is accused of justifying colonialism, since it hides the political aspects of colonialism - namely the assumption that modernisation is based on domination. In effect the notion of acculturation presupposes that there is a beneficent, positive aspect to colonial domination. Violence is forgotten in the name of the process of modernisation. As a consequence of this, and for reasons which are explicitly political and ideological, the mistrust of Party officials extended to sociology.

The Break with Classical Anthropology and the Transition to Socialism

The urgency of getting development projects into place required constant attention and involvement. In this scenario there arose the need to give some continuity to the intention to carry out anthropological research. But how could

we combine this intention with the rejection of classical anthropology? The answer is that there was a complete break. Empirically the break was made by looking at the actual history of African people. In terms of scholastic discipline, the monograph on village life was replaced by the study of social groups at national level. And at a theoretical level history was explained in materialist terms, and social life began to be studied in a continuous form within its specific time and space framework.

Marxism continued to influence these studies and to breed new areas of theoretical research. The political and economic spheres were given a recognition which ethnology had not been able to give them.

Social research, as developed more systematically in the Centre for African Studies (CEA) of the Eduardo Mondlane University at the end of the seventies, played a direct and active role in the process of socialist transformation. The strategy of transition to a socialist society, based on an alliance between peasants and labourers as defined by Frelimo, affected academic research in two ways: first in the choice of subject-matter for research, and secondly in the institutes themselves, in the teaching and application of that research.

A number of research projects in the CEA based their approach on identifying the various phases of the class struggles which took place within the colony. In this they looked as much at changes in the relations between capital and labour as at the struggle between different factions of capital (i.e. competition between different kinds of capital). The relations of inequality implicit in colonialism were analysed in terms of imperialism, seen as a global system of political and economic exploitation.

It should be mentioned that some of these approaches were directly linked to development planning, at a time when, in political and economic terms, the Party and the State were promoting the "decade of victory over under-development". Effectively this was applied research.

Many of these projects did look at the economy of the rural population, but looked at it outside of its total economic and social context. Later there would be a new orientation and new methodologies, as a result of field work which went into much greater depth, to reveal the various different forms of knowledge, the institutional development and the networks of rights and obligations which existed in those rural populations.

Reflection and Participation

This new imperative led us progressively to try to develop new insights: our societies were no longer looked at from a reductionist point of view, but were examined in the light of the meanings and significations which they attributed to themselves.

Research on the development of housing by an interdisciplinary team from the *Direcção Nacional de Habitação (DNH)* (National Directorate for Housing) is a good example of this type of research. The object of the research was to

find points of reference in the inherited knowledge and behaviour of rural populations in relation to housing, technology and use of space, in order to develop a housing and territorial policy which would be "technically appropriate, sociologically coherent, economically possible and politically correct" (DNH 1987).

The reorganisation of subject-matter along new lines led to research which involved the active participation of the people under study. For the first time, in 1983, the Mozambican Women's Organisation (OMM) conducted research to study the situation of women the country as a whole. This research led to questioning and debate on the main issues involved, namely polygamy, rites of initiation and custom in relation to marital compensation. In fact many of these practices were regarded as obscurantist and evil - practices which would have to be abolished as a precondition for the proper integration of rural groups in the grand design for the nation and for socialism.

In using the methodology of active participation in questionnaire and interview this research had the advantage of providing an accurate picture. Forms of expression in rural society could never again be regarded as obscurantist and as forms of "exploitation of man by man". Rather they would have to be seen as a complex but fairly mundane process tied in with the social conditions (both material and ideological) under which goods are produced and in which those who produce and consume them actually live.

With the liberalisation of the economy at the end of the eighties, a number of studies were undertaken on the impact of the structural adjustment programme on less favoured strata of society, particularly the urban class.

This was a context in which there were significant economic changes, as part of the move towards a free market economy. But it was also a time of political change, on the road to democracy, and a time of realignment for researchers as they started to question the effectiveness of organising social knowledge on the basis of rules imposed by official ideology or in accordance with limits set by the state.

Some of the studies which accompanied the structural adjustment measures tended to focus on the relief of poverty, and on counteracting the negative impact of the "readjustment" policies and of the cost-cutting by the state on health, education and other expenditure.

Some techniques for collective mapping, modelling and comparative ranking of the characteristics of different communities were developed at this time and tested in both urban and rural areas. Specific knowledge gathered through field work at local level contributed to an understanding of poverty at a national level. And the practice of conducting questionnaires in the countryside brought a new dimension to the research process, that of restoring information to the community.

The Challenge of New Concepts

The empirical work which was being carried out gradually began to demand better epistemological preparation, in the sense that we needed to understand life around us, to describe the theoretical framework of research, to define basic concepts and the links between them, and in this way to establish the conceptual structure on which we would base the propositions which in turn would form the foundation of our analytical models.

The cultural and linguistic mix of Mozambique, its class antagonisms, and other specific characteristics, require us to provide a new focus and new concepts, and to question certain orthodox approaches and scientific models.

In current sociological and anthropological practice the concept of gender social relations, which analyses the relations of men and women, has been gaining ground and has acquired the status of a paradigm. Until recently the main object of study was social reconstruction, with woman playing a subordinate role. Today the new concept is the construction of social relations between men and women, that is to say, gender relations. Is not enough to describe the place of women in society, and what they are doing or not doing. It is necessary to understand at their core the social relations which make up gender relations, and vice-versa.

The attitude of androcentrism which prevails in social science research continues to be unaware of and to sideline the contribution of women to society. It creates a subordinate role for women by promoting a sexist approach to research, which in turn legitimises a social order dominated by men. In using gender as a conceptual tool, we are challenging the conventional approach: migration to neighbouring South Africa in search of work, for example, can no longer be seen merely as a male undertaking in search of a better life, but rather as an ongoing expansion of production and distribution, where both men and women play fundamental, albeit different, roles, and within which gender relations frequently arise.

A good illustration of the challenge of the new concepts is provided also by current research at the Faculty of Letters of the Eduardo Mondlane University on the family and forms of family life in Mozambique. Research on this theme starts with a careful and detailed explanation of the concept of family, or in other words, of which theoretical elements should be at the forefront of research in the field. In order to achieve a clear idea of the family concept it is necessary to consider the ways in which it is constituted and organised as well as the symbolic representations which give it meaning.

We do not have sufficiently relevant information about, nor even broad descriptions of, the historical development and structure of forms of family life in Mozambique. Nor do we have more recent information as to how the factors of war and economic deprivation may have created new patterns, and brought about alterations in the formation and the daily life of the family. At the level of

field work, we opted to direct our research from an empirical understanding of the reality on the ground, which builds and tests theoretical models as it goes along, rather than by using any pre-established theoretical framework.

Aspects of the Social and Institutional Framework for Teaching

The model used for training in the social science disciplines in Mozambique, and specifically at the Faculty of Letters of Eduardo Mondlane University, has developed within the framework of classical academic training. Each one of its components is a discreet and rigid unit. This model is quite clearly inadequate to provide for the country's needs in respect of the qualified people which it requires. Moreover it cannot cope with increasing social demand, given the very low number of new vacancies. In effect none of the courses can accommodate more than 35 students every year.

Social science training in this university does not seem to pursue that inter-disciplinary approach which is the hallmark of the great family of the social sciences. Graduates come out with a very narrow profile: the courses produce individuals who in essence are able to work as professional geographers, historians or linguists. The rigidity of these courses appears not only to prevent any effective horizontal linkage between them, but also renders it extremely difficult for future graduates to change their subject, and therefore highly unlikely that they ever will change disciplines.

Currently efforts are being made to introduce a new concept in the training of social scientists at the Eduardo Mondlane University, by simultaneously starting up new disciplines which until recently did not exist there. These are political science and sociology.

This integrated type of teaching and research is based on international considerations and experience, where there has increasingly been a move away from compartmentalisation - either into specific historical disciplines or into separate teaching, training of lecturers and research. These forms of compartmentalisation have been shown to be unproductive on the scientific plane, unworkable in terms of teaching and instruction, and onerous in terms of resources.

The Eduardo Mondlane University is not the only place where the social sciences are taught. Other teaching institutions like the *Universidade Pedagógica* (Teaching University), the *Instituto Superior de Relações Internacionais* (Higher Institute of International Relations) and the *Centro de Formação de Professores Primários* (Centre for Training Primary School Teachers) include sociology and anthropology courses. At the Centre there is a course in the sociology of education which is a first for Mozambique. Its objective is to give trainee teachers an understanding of the field of the sociology of education, to provide them with tools for understanding schools in institutional and organisational terms, and to enable them to grasp the social

dimension of their profession, thus giving them knowledge and skills with which to apply their knowledge of education in actual teaching practice.

In spite of the examples of progress outlined above, there are still a number of issues which affect existing and proposed institutional developments in research. As I have already stated, the country does not have a tradition of scientific culture. It is in the process of being created. What we are trying to do in effect is to outline the structures which will themselves provide the structure of the future *habitus* of scientific research.

This creative process is a long-term one. One of its assumptions is the assumption of creativity and innovation, the belief that new knowledge will emerge. Yet another assumption is that there will be collaboration with other institutions, at regional and international level, with a view to exchanging scientific information (bibliographical data, the development of networks of researchers, the creation of databases), and to:

- increasing research capacity, both quantitatively and qualitatively;
- improving academic teaching by means of the transfer and development of knowledge;
- holding research seminars in order to create a forum for discussion and publication of results.

Efforts along the lines mentioned above would in addition seek to respond creatively to the issue of the many languages used in research and in the academic world in general. In this it is to be hoped that the solutions which are eventually found will restore the richness of the language of social science and provide answers to each of the questions raised.

Conclusion

When we look at the social implications of the changes which have taken place in the economic system, at the possibilities opened up by peace, and at the political changes which have been brought about by the introduction of a multi-party democracy, we can conclude that we need to generate systematic knowledge of the reality of social life of the country in order to meet all the challenges which Mozambican society currently faces. It will probably be easier for the social scientist who knows the social and cultural environment of the country to develop the epistemological foundation on which a more precise interpretation of social action can be built. However, the great diversity of ecological and symbolic systems, of economic circumstances and of individual feelings, all mean that he must maintain a very flexible and open mind and display great sensitivity in the building of that knowledge. This will require a permanent dialectic between theory and practice, and a search for methods and concepts which are progressively better suited to the objects under study.

The above in turn points to the need for an inter-disciplinary approach, in which the researcher develops the greatest possible capacity for understanding

and transforming the diversity of life, concentrating on the more important rather than on the secondary, working empirically whenever necessary, but scientifically whenever possible.

The success of social action, whether it be public policy or private enterprise, depends in part on the development of that kind of knowledge. What is at stake here is to make social research into something which is acceptable and useful in the formulation and implementation of policy.

The new social, legal and economic context also demands that there be many more qualified social scientists, in disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, political science, public administration, social work and development studies. Through their theoretical and practical work those social scientists should contribute to making the public and private institutions and associations where they work more effective. In this way the job of research and teaching in the social sciences will be to teach people how to approach and solve scientific problems in an innovative way, and thereby achieve results which are better suited to meeting the country's general development needs.

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CHAPTER 7 SOCIOLOGY: SOME CURRENT PROBLEMS

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Introduction

Following the end of the second world war there was an acceleration in the pace of development of sociology as practised in Europe. There is a clear gap between the founding fathers of sociology - Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Tocqueville - and the period which began at the end of the forties, to the extent that it is possible to speak of a new beginning, in the context of a Europe which was in a process of economic, political and social reconstruction.

This kind of discontinuity did not affect sociology in the United States in the same way. It was for this very reason that it was possible for US sociology, to a great extent, to feed and nurture the development of European sociology after the war.

There were various ways in which the flow of knowledge, methods and sociological techniques from the other side of the Atlantic was made possible: through books and articles, of course, but also as a result of a new generation of European sociologists travelling to America. Having obtained invitations and scholarships, they went there to learn the theory and above all the techniques of research in the field which were afterwards applied in the empirical domains of each country: France, Germany, Great Britain - where the vitality of the anthropological tradition had never been lost - and Italy. This learning process was all the more important in that the future sociologists had different backgrounds, but one thing in common: their basic qualifications were generally alien to a specific training in sociology. Finally the flow of scientific knowledge was also brought about by established American sociologists travelling to Europe to visit universities and research centres in order to give lectures and to publicise both their work and their knowledge.

In this way a new generation of European sociologists emerged. They in turn had a dynamic effect on the very rapid rate of growth of sociological practice in much of the continent, and on the teaching thereof as well (Mendras H. 1995). This whole process increasingly brought European sociology to life and gave it a certain independence, leading it in turn to develop its own capacity to spread this new knowledge.