Civilising the Ex-Colonisers? Counter-Hegemonic Discourses at Workplaces in Maputo

LISA ÅKESSON
(University of Gothenburg)

ANETTE HELLMAN
(University of Gothenburg)

INÉS M. RAIMUNDO
(Eduardo Mondlane University)

CESALTINA MATSINHE
(Research broker)

This article follows the call in decolonial research to recognise other ways of knowing. It explores a specific kind of knowledge: namely, what we describe as ‘counterhegemonic civilising discourses’, or everyday efforts by the ex-colonised to civilise the ex-coloniser. In the article, we analyse Mozambican workers’ discursive attempts to teach what they see as ‘proper’ or ‘moral’ behaviour to Portuguese bosses and managers whom they meet at workplaces in Maputo. We have chosen to discuss this transmission of knowledge as a civilisation process, and we focus on forms of knowledge that concerns knowing how to do, or practical competences. This constitutes a break with the (post-)colonial civilising mission. The ‘white man’s burden’ of civilising the unwilling colonial worker is implicitly turned on its head when Mozambicans describe their strong dislike of uneducated Portuguese people’s behaviour and their own attempts at correcting this. Research on labour relations in colonial Mozambique is extensive and established, but this article moves the focus to contemporary relations of coloniality. It brings up three different sets of counter-hegemonic civilising discourses. The first concerns language and the use of blasphemies; the second has to do with social and moral norms and values in relation to sickness and death; the third concerns civic integration or the compliance with Mozambican rules and regulations. The everyday character of these discourses is important, and we see them as emerging from people’s struggle to challenge the abyssal line separating the epistemologies of the global north and south. The delineation of these inconspicuous discourses of civilisation is our contribution to the field of decolonial studies in lusophone Africa and to post-abyssal research on ‘emergence’.

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
Keywords: counter-hegemonic civilising discourse; labour relations; coloniality; emergences; abyssal line; Mozambicans; Portuguese

Introduction

The article follows the call in decolonial research to explore and recognise other ways of knowing. It explores the interplay between Portuguese and Mozambicans at workplaces in Maputo and the transmission of a specific kind of knowledge. We present ‘counter-hegemonic civilising discourses’, that is, instances of everyday conversations, when Mozambican workers try to teach what they see as ‘proper’ or ‘moral’ behaviour to Portuguese bosses and managers whom they meet at workplaces in Maputo. We have chosen to discuss this transmission of knowledge as a civilisation process, and we focus on forms of knowledge that concern knowing how to do, or practical competences.

In exploring transmissions of knowledge between Mozambicans and Portuguese, we rely on how decolonial research discusses the production of different kinds of knowledge. Decolonial research demonstrates how certain people’s experiences and knowledge are construed as non-existent, invalid or irrelevant, whereas other people’s production of knowledge is understood as real, universal and true.1 The sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos describes this epistemological division between the global north and south as ‘abyssal’ and argues that the exclusion of knowledge produced in the global south contributes to the radical invisibility of the humans on that side of the abyssal line.2 There are, however, instances when people struggle to erase the power hierarchies inhabiting this dichotomy, and Sousa Santos describes such instances as ‘emergences’.3 Our article focuses on a specific kind of emergence, namely the ex-colonised’s efforts to civilise the ex-coloniser.

Since a central tenet of colonial ideology was the image of colonialism as a bearer of civilisation, we found it intriguing that our Mozambican interlocutors consistently referred to the uneducated behaviour of the Portuguese and their own efforts to try to influence them to display what the Mozambicans saw as morally and socially acceptable forms of behaviour. Yet, as we underline, we discuss thwarted attempts of spreading civilisation and overcoming the abyssal line rather than fully recognised practices.

In the last decade or so, the kind of workplace encounters that we explore have become more frequent due to increased Portuguese migration to Mozambique. In the aftermath of the north Atlantic financial crisis starting in 2008, many Portuguese lost their businesses or became un- or underemployed. To migrate to one of the former sub-Saharan colonies became a way out. Most went to Angola, but, for reasons such as historical family ties and negative images of life there, a substantial number chose to go to Mozambique. Expectations of new investment opportunities related to extraction of mineral resources also played a role.4 The statistics on the number of Portuguese in Mozambique are unreliable, but, in 2015, the Portuguese Consul General estimated that 25,000 Portuguese lived in the country.5

---

1 S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization (London and New York, Routledge, 2018); W. Mignolo, The Idea of Latin America (Malden and Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005); A. Quijano, ‘Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality’, Cultural Studies, 21, 2–3 (2007), pp. 168–78; B. de Sousa Santos, The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South (Durham, Duke University Press, 2018).
2 Sousa Santos, The End of the Cognitive Empire.
3 Ibid., pp. 28–32.
4 I.M. Raimundo and J.A. Raimundo, ‘O impacto do discurso das “descobertas” dos recursos minerais no despovoamento rural de Moçambique’, Iberografias: Revista de estudios ibéricos, 13 (2017), pp. 137–52.
5 ‘Comunidade portuguesa em Moçambique com tendência para diminuir’, Diário de Notícias, Lisbon, 29 March 2015, available at www.dn.pt/portugal/interior/comunidade-portuguesa-em-mocambique-com-tendencia-para-diminuir-4482272.html, retrieved 6 April 2022.
This figure included not only the recent migrants but also elderly Portuguese who had stayed on in the country since colonial times and those who had left for South Africa after Mozambican independence in 1975 but later returned.

At the time of writing this article, 45 years have passed since Mozambique gained independence from Portugal. Yet the interplay between Portuguese and Mozambicans is heavily marked by past relations, which is apparent when they interact at workplaces in Maputo. In these settings, colonial structures have been transformed into post-colonial hierarchies. Generally, the Portuguese men and women in our study act as bosses or managers while the Mozambican men and women are their employees and subordinates. Many Portuguese have opened up small or medium-sized businesses in sectors that in colonial times were considered a Portuguese speciality, such as construction, agriculture, transport and hospitality services. As we demonstrate, time at some of these Portuguese-owned workplaces seems to be frozen in a colonial past. This is true not least with regard to how both parties talk about transfer of knowledge and skills, which is naturally a fundamental part of workplace relations. Both parties have naturalised the coloniality of knowledge or the epistemic aspects of (post-) colonial hegemony. Among other things, this implies that both parties generally perceive transmission of knowledge as unidirectional – from Portuguese to Mozambicans. Many Portuguese tend to see it as their natural right and duty to lecture and train the Mozambicans with whom they work, and they adopt a paternalistic attitude aimed at instilling new practices and skills among Mozambican employees and co-workers. This concerns especially theoretical knowledge and the power to decide how different tasks should be carried out. In contrast, Mozambicans often find it inconceivable that they should transfer any knowledge to their Portuguese colleagues and bosses. Sometimes, Mozambican interlocutors simply did not grasp what we meant when we asked them about their transmission of skills and ideas to the Portuguese. This was true despite many of the Portuguese being new to Mozambique and therefore needing to learn about social, political and cultural conditions in the country as well as at their workplace. Yet, by exploring this transmission and its relation to the abyssal line, we have found that there are instances when these hegemonic relations are incipiently undermined. As this article shows, Mozambicans sometimes try to impart civil capacities to the Portuguese with whom, or under whom, they work. Such capacities may be the adoption of a proper language and of moral ways of handling existential concerns. It may also concern the capacity and will to follow national laws and regulations.

Sousa Santos describes the silencing of the knowledge of the (ex-)colonised as an ‘epistemicide’. According to him, ‘metropolitan forms of sociability’ on the ‘northern’ side of the abyssal line determine what is valid, normal or ethical. To be on the other side of the abyssal line, on the colonial side, means ‘being prevented by dominant knowledge from representing the world as one’s own and in one’s own terms’. The Eurocentric epistemological ‘north’ is constructed as ‘the only source of valid knowledge, no matter where, in geographic terms, that knowledge is produced’. Yet, as we will demonstrate, a closer look at the Mozambican case reveals that the unidirectionality of the knowledge

6 Mignolo, The Idea of Latin America; Quijano, ‘Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality’.
7 According to Antonio Gramsci, this is typical for the workings of hegemony. Gramsci describes hegemony as dominant groups’ propagation of their own ideas and values so that they become ‘common sense’. In his understanding of hegemony, relations of power are naturalised and thereby rendered invisible. According to Gramsci, the dominated also participate in the construction of hegemony ‘through rituals and practices that inculcate values of allegiance to the system, and naturalize the relations of power’; J. Schubert, Working the System: A Political Ethnography of the New Angola (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2017), p. 8.
8 Ibid., pp. 5–8.
9 Ibid., p. 6.
10 Ibid.
transfer concerns primarily theoretical knowledge and the power to decide that certain things should be done in certain ways. Different forms of knowledge were discussed already by Aristotle, such as the difference between knowing that and knowing how to do, where knowing that relates to theoretical knowledge and knowing how to do concerns lived experiences and practical competences.\(^\text{12}\) While theoretical knowledge appropriates reality, ways of knowing how embody reality. For our article, the second type of knowledge is crucial. This knowledge can exist embodied in social practices, in our study primarily in the competence to perform as a civilised and moral person. As we will demonstrate, this may relate to language use, care for the ailing and bereaved or compliance with national laws. Thus, when it comes to transmission of good manners and behaviours as well as civic integration, or, in other words, civilised behaviour, many of our Mozambican interviewees found that they had much to teach the Portuguese. Thus, although extremely powerful global structures support the abyssal line between the ex-colonisers and the ex-colonised, there are ongoing practices and representations undermining it. These may be incipient and suppressed, but they are of high importance to many of the Mozambicans we met.

In line with this, our article aims to answer the empirical question ‘what kind of civil capacities do the Mozambicans try to impart to the Portuguese?’ These capacities, in turn, are important for a better integration of the Portuguese in Mozambique, if we define integration in the broad sense as standing for processes of social cohesion and continuity.\(^\text{13}\) To be able to act in ways that do not offend the local population is crucial, not least for the long-term success of the Portuguese companies. In this article, we bring up three different sets of civil capacities that our Mozambican interlocutors tried to impart to Portuguese bosses and colleagues. The first concerns language and the use of ‘heavy words’ or palavrões; the second has to do with social and moral norms and values in relation to sickness and death; the third concerns civic integration or the compliance with national Mozambican rules and regulations.

In the following, we first describe contemporary relations between Mozambicans and Portuguese in Maputo, complemented by a discussion on methods and on positionalities in our research team. Thereafter, we develop our conceptual framework focusing on ‘counter-hegemonic civilising discourses’. This is followed by a discussion of analytical as well as Mozambican historical understandings of civilisation, and then we contextualise our focus on workplaces by reviewing colonial labour relations. The subsequent sections contain an analysis of the three civil capacities mentioned above, followed by a concluding discussion.

**Exploring Contemporary Mozambican–Portuguese Relationships**

The Portuguese community in Mozambique incorporates individuals and families with different trajectories. There are the old-timers, in Maputo sometimes called ‘Laurentinos’ (from the city’s colonial name Lourenço Marques), who have spent a long life in the country and who often underline that they never left ‘even when things were really bad’ – that is, during the violent civil war between 1977 and 1992. Yet they speak with a discernible European Portuguese accent and identify as Portuguese. In the same age group, another category of people left for Portugal, South Africa or somewhere else after the independence of Mozambique and then later returned to the country. Among the younger newcomers, some have family members who lived in Mozambique in colonial times, whereas others have no historical family ties to the country.

To talk with Mozambicans and Portuguese about their mutual relations is sometimes like opening a floodgate. Few people are unaffected by the subject, and many air strong opinions

---

12 R. Nola, ‘Knowledge, Discourse, Power and Genealogy in Foucault’, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 1, 2 (1998), pp. 109–54.
13 B. Suter and L. Åkesson, ‘Introduction’, in B. Suter and L. Åkesson (eds), *Contemporary European Emigration: Situating Integration in New Destinations* (London, Routledge, 2020), p. 6.
and sentiments. In general terms, it is a strongly hegemonic relationship, where the Portuguese (and other whites) occupy positions of supremacy far away from ordinary people’s lives, which echoes the colonial order and similarities with the history of neighbouring South Africa. Yet, between Mozambicans and Portuguese, there is also a specific post-colonial mixture of attraction and repulsion. As noted by Homi Bhabha and other post-colonial theorists, post-colonial encounters are inescapably ambivalent, as the two sides are never simply and completely opposed to each other. Rather, both the ex-colonised and the ex-coloniser tend to nurture mixed feelings towards the other. In Mozambique, both sides argue that they know the other well and that they can understand and predict his or her behaviour. Hence there is an ambivalent but strong feeling of recognition between the two parties.

On the Mozambican side, the centuries of enforced obedience to the Portuguese colonial regime and the ensuing individual and collective memories of colonial subjugation have created a historical trauma. There are many untold or not fully told stories about physical and psychological suffering. These represent a sensitive and tacit knowledge shared by many Mozambicans, especially those who have personal memories of colonial times or have elderly family members who suffered from assaults, injustice and exploitation under Portuguese rule. These stories are often associated with a sense of humiliation: the victim’s burden of feeling that he/she should have fought off the assailant. The war of independence and its successful outcome cannot appease the feeling of having been dominated for centuries by a power that, in the contemporary world order, turns out to be quite a small, insignificant country.

Yet, despite most of our interlocutors expressing negative feelings towards the Portuguese, there are Mozambicans who harbour other kinds of sentiments, and these may follow political lines. People who are critical of the ruling Frelimo party sometimes argue that Frelimo taught the population to dislike Portuguese rule, which has implied that everything coming from the Portuguese is seen in a bad light. In line with this, a couple of elderly informants criticised what they described as negative attitudes towards the Portuguese and argued that they themselves had learnt much from the Portuguese whom they had met in their work life.

There is also bitterness sometimes among the Portuguese. Mozambicans often read these sentiments as strongly marked by the events at the moment of Mozambican independence. Some argue that the behaviours of the Portuguese build on strong feelings of resentment, grounded in their abrupt banishment from the country. Directly after independence in June 1975, the newly formed Frelimo government introduced the ‘24/20 order’, which stipulated that settlers who refused to relinquish their Portuguese nationality had to leave the country within 24 hours with no more than 20 kilograms of luggage. Many families lost their houses, belongings and investments, which the socialist Frelimo regime nationalised. The rationale was to eliminate all private businesses, most of which belonged to Portuguese nationals.

14 For an in-depth discussion of the historical roots of the hegemonic relationship and a comparison with Portuguese–Angolan relations that are characterised by hybridity, see L. Åkesson, ‘Hybridity and Hegemony: The Integration of Portuguese Migrants in Luanda and Maputo’, in Suter and Åkesson (eds), Contemporary European Emigration, pp. 19–38.
15 H. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London, Routledge, 1994).
16 Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique), Mozambique’s liberation movement and, since 1975, dominant political party.
17 A. Nafeesah, ‘Indo-Mozambicans in Maputo: Oral Narratives on Identity and Migration 1947–1992’ (PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2019). M.A. Pitcher, Transforming Mozambique: The Politics of Privatization, 1975–2000 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).
Among the Portuguese we met, people seldom talked openly about these events. For some newcomers, they belonged to a distant past with no connections to their own family history. Elderly people who had lost property in 1975 mostly avoided the subject, as it was both personally painful and politically sensitive. They knew perfectly well that the success of their contemporary enterprises in Mozambique depended on them keeping a low profile and avoiding their critique reaching the Mozambican authorities. Yet it would be a simplification to describe contemporary relationships between Portuguese and Mozambicans as formed only by this particular lusophone colonial and post-colonial history. The deep power difference between the global north and the global south and the concomitant racial regime obviously serve to consolidate hierarchies between Portuguese and Mozambicans. The existing global order fortifies Portuguese sentiments of naturalised superiority and the Mozambican ‘inferiority complex’.\textsuperscript{18}

The ethnography for this article, focusing on transmission of knowledge, has been produced by Lisa Åkesson, Cesaltina Matsinhe and Inês Macamo Raimundo. The three of us embody different positionalities, which has benefited our common work. Lisa, a Swedish anthropologist, contracted in 2019 Cesaltina, a Mozambican anthropology student, to be a research broker in Maputo. Cesaltina used her social network to set up interviews with Mozambicans working with – or under – Portuguese. Although the city of Maputo and the suburb of Matola accommodate about two million people, Cesaltina seemed to meet somebody she knew on every street corner, and the width and variation of her networks implied that we had access to people of many different backgrounds, which, in turn, led to a strong intersectional variation among our interviewees. In addition, Cesaltina played an important role in carefully explaining to the Mozambicans whom we interviewed that we would never give away anything they said to their Portuguese superiors. As Lisa is a white European, this was a common initial suspicion among the Mozambicans we met. Lisa and Cesaltina carried out interviews together, and the combination of Cesaltina’s deep insights into Mozambican realities with Lisa’s long-term experience of post-colonial relations in lusophone Africa turned the interviews into lively, dynamic events, which sometimes lasted for hours. In addition, Lisa interviewed and carried out participant observation among Portuguese in Maputo. As many of the Portuguese run or manage cafés and restaurants, she spent much time at such establishments, observing people and talking to employees and customers. She was also invited to various social gatherings, such as dinners and meetings in Portuguese associations. Inês is a Mozambican geographer who, in our common research project, has drawn on her position as an insider. In particular, she has shared her insights into how colonial violence, the fight for independence and the first post-independence period continue to shape the relations between Portuguese and Mozambicans. However, the insider–outsider divide is seldom clear-cut,\textsuperscript{19} and Inês’s long-term experience from academic environments in South Africa, Europe and the USA has also formed her contribution. Inês carried out interviews with people in her own networks, particularly with elderly male Portuguese, who belong to the category of those who never, or only for a short time, left the country. Together, the three of us interviewed 39 persons who identified as Mozambicans, 27 who identified as Portuguese and four who described themselves as mixed. Lastly, Anette Hellman, a Swedish researcher in education, has contributed to the article by sharing her expertise on knowledge transmission and learning processes. Anette also participated in some interviews and made notes about body language and the physical

\textsuperscript{18} F. Fanon, \textit{Black Skin, White Masks} (London, Pluto Press, 1986 [1967]).

\textsuperscript{19} See J. Carling, M. Bivand Erdal and R. Ezzati, ‘Beyond the Insider–Outsider Divide in Migration Research’, \textit{Migration Studies}, 2, 1 (2014), pp. 36–54.
and social environment of the interviews. Our analysis of the ethnography builds on three common workshops, where we developed the thematic organisation of the material.

**Knowledge, the Abyssal Line and Counter-Hegemonic Civilising Discourses**

In 1952, Franz Fanon published the original French version of *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which he denounces the kinds of exclusions that the racialised colonial system created. Since the publication of this influential text, the field of study characterised by concepts such as post-colonialism, coloniality and subaltern studies has grown and diversified enormously. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni provides a compelling overview of the different intellectual traditions supporting decolonial struggle, particularly in Africa, and he comes up with no less than 20 different traditions. In recent years, one of the most important of these currents has centred on coloniality, a concept that refers to the continuity of colonialism beyond the dismantling of direct colonial administrative structures. We have chosen to use this approach as a frame for our article, as one of the central tenets in coloniality theory is the focus on the production of different kind of knowledge. In doing that, we believe that the frame of coloniality studies and its insistence on the importance of knowledge in a productive way frame the kind of epistemological resistance that we discuss in our article.

In the lusophone world and beyond, Boaventura de Sousa Santos is a key reference with regard to coloniality of knowledge. He analyses new ways of understanding knowledge and knowledge production in which it becomes possible to identify and valorise forms of knowledge not recognised as such through the gaze of dominant epistemologies. Epistemologies of the global south are ways of knowing that emerge as forms of resistance against oppression and against the kind of knowledge that legitimates such oppression. According to Sousa Santos, epistemologies of the global south often focus on cognitive processes concerning values, meaning and justification, and, in such processes, recognition is as important as cognition. Consequently, a stress on values and a call for recognition also runs through the Mozambican voices in our ethnographic material.

Sousa Santos describes how modern thinking in the global north is abyssal, operating through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms. The division is such that ‘the other side of the line’ vanishes as reality, becomes non-existent for those on the northern side. What fundamentally characterises abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. This form of radical negation results in the construction of a radical absence, the absence of humanity. Although historical colonial structures provided the model for radical negation and exclusion, the abyssal line is still dominant. First, this means that there is a basic equivalence and reciprocity among those who, from a metropolitan perspective, are seen as ‘us’. Secondly, the abyssal line continues to structure understandings of knowledge. The dominant epistemologies are produced in the north, and other forms of knowledge and ways of knowing are deemed non-existent. This is so because the people who produce these other forms are seen as incapable of producing valid knowledge, as they are situated on the other side of the abyssal line. Thirdly, the abyssal line is constitutive of political and cultural relations and interactions in the modern world-system. According to Sousa Santos, the struggle for global social justice must therefore also be a

---

20 Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*, pp. 49–53.
21 A. Quijano, ‘Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America’, *Nepantla: Views from the South*, 1, 3 (2000), pp. 533–80.
22 Sousa Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, p. 3.
23 Ibid., pp. 19–25.
struggle for global cognitive justice. In order to succeed, this struggle requires a new kind of post-abyssal thinking and acting.

Our article is a contribution to this emerging post-abyssal field of knowledge. In particular, we demonstrate that post-abyssal thinking may include a new way of conceptualising civilised behaviour as we explore Mozambican efforts of civilising the (ex-) colonisers. In doing this, we are inspired by Sousa Santos’s concept of ‘counter-hegemonic appropriations’, which he defines in the following way: ‘concepts, philosophies, and practices developed by dominant social groups to reproduce domination, but which are appropriated by oppressed social groups and then resignified, reconfigured, refounded, subverted, and selectively and creatively changed so as to be turned into tools for struggles against domination’. In focusing on ‘counter-hegemonic civilising discourses’, we illuminate an emergent practice and explore it as a sign of a potential change. ‘Emergences’ are signs from the present that can be read as trends or the harbinger of whatever might be decisive in the future. We see our Mozambican interlocutors’ struggle for recognition through the teaching of civilisation as such an ‘emergence’.

Thwarted Transmission of Civilisation

Most of our Mozambican interlocutors painted a homogeneous picture of Portuguese people. Commonly, they portrayed them as cold, arrogant, rigorous and sometimes racist. Mozambicans particularly criticised Portuguese for being apt to hurt them through insulting expressions. These opinions referred to the people whom our interlocutors met in their daily work, but they were underpinned by colonial echoes, reverberating past humiliation. In contrast to the picture of the Portuguese, many Mozambicans described themselves as humane and civilised, particularly regarding two aspects: namely, the use of respectful language and the social support in times of sickness and death. Moreover, some interlocutors lamented the Portuguese people’s lack of civic integration. Obviously, contrastive images of us and them are not particular to this context. Yet it is interesting to note that, in Mozambique, these understandings constitute a break with the (post-)colonial civilising mission. The ‘white man’s burden’ of civilising unwilling colonial subjects was implicitly turned on its head when Mozambicans described their strong dislike of supposedly uneducated Portuguese behaviour and their own – often unsuccessful – attempts to correct this.

Processes of civilisation have famously been discussed by Norbert Elias. According to Elias, to be civilised refers to being a cultivated and distinguished person who masters recognised forms of behaviour and thereby elevates him- or herself above the uncivilised and vulgar. In this way, the concept of ‘civilising’ refers both to a specific process of normative influence and to a specific goal – proper and respectable human beings. Put simply, to assign the epithet ‘civilised’ is to suggest that a person has come to embody a particular set of bodily performances appropriate in a given time and space, whereas the term ‘civilising’ is given to the processes through which this goal is attained. We do not wish to reinforce derogatory binary distinctions relating to the ‘civilised’ and ‘uncivilised’ body here, but wish to highlight the association of the civilised body with rationality and orderliness, as this is a view that many of our Mozambican interlocutors have of appropriate

---

24 Ibid., pp. 30–31.
25 B. de Sousa Santos, Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide (London and New York, Routledge, 2014), pp. 182–3.
26 N. Elias, The Civilising Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilisation (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994).
behaviour. In line with this, many lamented their Portuguese superiors’ lack of self-control and described how their behaviour and moods shifted in unpredictable ways.

Elias has been criticised for reflecting an evolutionist, Europe-centred view in his discussions of civilising processes. In Elias’s work, however, civilisation refers to ‘culturally specific norms of proper and cultivated behaviour, which evolve through changing power relations and processes of integration between social groups, yet contribute to cultural distinctions and social hierarchies’. Thus, to Elias, there is a space for power relations and human hierarchies, which provides his definition of civilising with a critical potential. Here we make use of this space when we discuss how Mozambicans try to teach Portuguese bosses to behave as respectable and civilised people, and thus explore transmissions of civilisation from a counter-hegemonic perspective.

When talking about the bad behaviour of the Portuguese, Mozambicans never used the word ‘uncivilised’, as the concept of civilisation is still intimately tied to colonial history, where it worked as a prime sign of racial classification. In colonial legislation, the Portuguese were categorised as civilisado, a classification including all Portuguese born in Europe and white-skinned foreigners. Also in the colonial juxtaposition of different groups of Africans as assimilados and indigenas, ‘civilised’ was used as the concept for singling out the former as more developed and closer to the white Portuguese. Thus ‘uncivilised’ is a heavily loaded concept, and, in their critique of the Portuguese, Mozambicans rather talked about falta de educação (lack of education) or the Portuguese being ‘arrogant’ or ‘racist’, while they presented themselves as more humane.

Yet Mozambicans’ teaching of civilisation is ‘thwarted’ because it takes place in social contexts where Portuguese bosses set the agenda and often angrily reprimand any kind of open critique or resistance from their staff. This means that Mozambicans are cautious in their efforts to bring about change. Sometimes this implied that Mozambican interlocutors rather talked about what they wanted to tell their Portuguese superiors than about what they had actually told them, as they felt that their job might be in danger if they spoke their mind. This fear of confronting the (ex-) colonisers has deep historical roots.

Labour and Civilisation

Research on labour relations in colonial Mozambique is extensive and well-established. As this article explores labour relations through a post-colonial perspective, it provides a contemporary contribution to the historical literature. It is well-known that colonial

27 Jack Goody argues that Elias selects certain aspects of behaviours and neglects others – see J. Goody, ‘Elias and the Anthropological Tradition’, *Anthropological Theory*, 2, 4 (2002), pp. 401–12.
28 L. Gilliam and E. Gulløv, *Children of the Welfare State: Civilising Practices in Schools, Childcare and Families* (London, Pluto Press, 2017), p. 3.
29 D. Morton, *Age of Concrete: Housing and the Shape of Aspiration in the Capital of Mozambique* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2019), p. 30.
30 M.D.D. Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (London, Hurst, 1995), p. 441.
31 L. Havstad, “‘To live a better life’: The Making of a Mozambican Middle Class’ (PhD thesis, Boston University, 2019).
32 See, for example, A. Isaacman, ‘Coercion, Paternalism and the Labour Process: The Mozambican Cotton Regime 1938–1961’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 3 (1992), pp. 487–526; B. Malomalo, E.M. Bernardo and L.A. Essilamo Nerua, ‘Xibalo, a ideologia do trabalho na era colonial em Moçambique no século XX’, *Cadernos de África Contemporânea*, 1, 1 (2018), pp. 57–71; B. O’Laughlin, ‘Class and the Customary: The Ambiguous Legacy of the “Indeginato” in Mozambique’, *African Affairs*, 99, 394 (2000), pp. 5–42; B. O’Laughlin, ‘Proletarianisation, Agency and Changing Rural Livelihoods: Forced Labour and Resistance in Colonial Mozambique’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, 3 (2002), pp. 511–30; J.M. Penvenne, *African Workers and Colonial Racism: Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877–1962* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 1995); V. Zamparoni, *De escravo a cozinheiro: Colonialismo e racismo em Moçambique* (Salvador, Editora da Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2012).
Portuguese exploitation focused heavily on labour. To a higher degree than the British and the French, the Portuguese colonial regime depended on violently upheld systems of forced labour. The wealth realised from Mozambicans’ work was a key to the economic growth in the metropolis. Political domination and exploitation of labour existed throughout each phase of Portuguese colonialism and built on a range of exploitative work relations, including slavery, unpaid labour, coerced labour and ill-paid labour. From the end of the 19th century, the Portuguese developed the Indigenato, or the legal system that defined a separate and subordinate status for Africans. The Indigenato, in force until 1961, stipulated that all indigenous people between 14 and 60 years old had to work and pay taxes, and those who did not were forced into exploitative labour. Women were initially assumed to have a productive role in the domestic economy based on agriculture, yet, when forced labour was extended from waged labour to cash-cropping, women’s everyday work became regulated. Sanctions employed included fines, beatings, deportation, imprisonment and wage reductions. On the ground, loyalist Mozambican chiefs or régulos appointed by the Portuguese carried out the recruitment of forced workers. Contemporary notions about sufferings associated with ‘working for the Portuguese’ clearly have their roots in this time, and our interlocutors repeatedly alluded to colonial times when they criticised present labour conditions. In particular, they criticised Portuguese bosses and managers for continuing to be arrogant, aggressive and sometimes racist.

In addition to coercion and violence, the colonial labour regime sometimes also rested upon a paternalistic management strategy, which is still identifiable in contemporary Portuguese–Mozambican labour relations. In colonial times as well as today, a recognisable character is the paternal (and today also maternal) manager who guides the supposedly innocent, loyal worker through applying a combination of strict rules and reciprocal arrangements, including both moral and material incentives. In colonial times, such arrangements were especially common between local administrators and Mozambican régulos.

As is widely known, the obligation to work was justified by European colonial rhetoric about labour as a route to civilisation. In the Portuguese empire, work became constructed as the way to civilisation, which, in turn, made labour available and legitimised exploitation. Through forcing the colonised to work for them, the Portuguese supposedly brought them closer to the civilised world. In an ideological reinforcement of the colonial authorities’ violent coercion, the Catholic Church preached that the only way for the Africans to avoid hell was to sacrifice themselves to hard work. Work was constructed as the prime civilising mode and the only way for the colonised to develop into moral beings and to improve their social conditions.

In workplaces in colonial times, one form of resistance was songs that openly decried the violence and brutality. Obviously, these were tolerated and quite widely spread, especially in

---

33 B. Bertelsen, “‘Entering the red sands’; The Corporality of Punishment and Imprisonment in Chimoio, Mozambique’, Journal of Southern African Studies, 37, 3 (2011), pp. 611–26; Newitt, A History of Mozambique; O’Laughlin, ‘Class and the Customary’.

34 A small group of assimilados (‘assimilated’) were exempt from the obligation to work.

35 Penvenne, African Workers and Colonial Racism.

36 The position of régulo was inherited and often based on pre-colonial political hierarchies, yet the subordination to different régulos was somehow fictitious, as political boundaries rapidly shifted. E. Jossias, ‘Renegociar a comunidade e disputar territórios: terras comunitárias, posse e propriedade da terra na região do Lago Niassa’, Etnográfica, 26, 1 (2022) pp. 5–27; O’Laughlin, ‘Class and the Customary’.

37 Isaacman, ‘Coercion, Paternalism and the Labour Process’.

38 J.M. Penvenne, ‘‘We are all Portuguese’: Challenging the Political Economy of Assimilation: Lourenço Marques, 1870–1933’, in L. Vail (ed.), The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989), pp. 255–81.

39 Malomalo et al., ‘Xibalo, a ideologia do trabalho na era colonial em Moçambique no século XX’.
rural areas. Moreover, the Portuguese could not control what the workers talked about among themselves, and opposition was continually articulated through gossip and rumours. At Portuguese-owned workplaces in Maputo today, conversations of the same kind go on, but in addition there are instances when Mozambicans openly present their European superiors with criticism. In colonial times, such forms of resistance were probably quite rare or non-existent, and, even if there are more openings today, Mozambicans still have to plan carefully when and how to confront their Portuguese bosses.

The Use of ‘Heavy Words’ or Palavrões

Regarding language use, many Mozambicans felt that the Portuguese faltered in civility. Portuguese people’s regular use of palavrões, ‘heavy words’ or swear words, upset many Mozambicans, who saw such expressions as inappropriate. Besides low salaries, foul language was the most common complaint in our interviews, and many Mozambicans instantly referred to it when we asked them about their relations to Portuguese people at their workplaces. Indeed, this is nothing new. In her book about labour relations in Lourenço Marques between 1877 and 1962, Jeanne Marie Penvenne observes that ‘[i]nsultingly low wages were an important grievance, but insulting attitudes and treatment could be equally important’. Similarly, Marvin Harris notes that, when he carried out research in Mozambique in 1957–58, Africans were never addressed as senhor or senhora. Instead, they were called ‘dirty names’. The palavrões were sometimes racist slurs, but people referred more often to the use of vulgar sexual expressions. A male worker expressed his strong dislike of the Portuguese way of speaking, saying that, ‘referring to male genitals or using improper words about our mothers or our skin colour when dealing with Mozambicans are signs of disrespect and a total neglect of recognising us as humans like them’. Accordingly, he interpreted the use of bad language both as a lack of civilisation and as a denial of the Mozambicans’ humanity. Thus he acknowledged the existence of the abyssal line, while – in a counter-hegemonic move – simultaneously attributing the lack of civilisation to the ex-colonisers. Another interviewee complained, saying that he felt ‘naked’ when he heard ‘these words’. Elderly Mozambican interviewees stated that the use of swear words made them think of colonial times. For example, a retired dishwasher said, ‘when the Portuguese use these words, it reminds me of colonial times when they used to call us “boy” and obliged us to address their young children as “sir”’. Oppression did not stop, but rather has prevailed until the contemporary times. These Portuguese never change’. Mozambicans, thus, understood the use of ‘heavy words’ not only as insulting but also as a demonstration of lingering colonial hierarchies. Some claimed that the Portuguese who used these words believed that Mozambique still belonged to them, and that one day they would be back in power. Mozambican employees told us repeatedly that they worked under stress provoked by fear of insults, which made them feel less committed to their work. The palavrões made them feel mistrusted by the Portuguese. As a survival strategy, some went silent while others feared that they would be provoked to resort to violence, which meant risking being fired and taken to court.

40 O’Laughlin, ‘Proletarianisation, Agency and Changing Rural Livelihoods; L. Vail and L. White, ‘Forms of Resistance: Songs and Perceptions of Power in Colonial Mozambique’, American Historical Review, 88, 4 (1983), pp. 883–919.
41 Isaacman, ‘Coercion, Paternalism and the Labour Process’, p. 518.
42 Penvenne, African Workers and Colonial Racism, p. 10.
43 M. Harris, ‘Race, Conflict and Reform in Mozambique’, in S. Diamond and F.G. Burke (eds), The Transformation of East Africa: Studies in Political Anthropology (New York and London, Basic Books, 1966), pp. 157–84.
Some Mozambican men and women confronted Portuguese colleagues and supervisors using bad language and tried to correct them. A male supervisor in the construction sector explained his strategy: ‘I talk with my Portuguese boss when he is calm, I ask him not to talk to me in an insulting manner; for us caralho (dick)\textsuperscript{44} is not a “light” word. He asked me to forgive him’. The Mozambican supervisor tried to transmit his own cultivated and proper behaviour to his Portuguese boss, and he did so in a rational and orderly manner. Another Mozambican male explained, ‘I can’t accept insults directed towards my mother. Why does my boss give such names to my mother? [When I do something wrong] I have committed a fault, not my mother’.

Despite their strong aversion to ‘heavy words’, some Mozambicans took a step back and reflected upon the possibility that such words could have a varying weight in different contexts. As a male construction worker said, ‘their way of being is special. I already know that they use words like caralho, I know this from Portuguese soap operas. It’s not always meant as an insult, but it clashes with some Mozambicans. And sometimes it’s an insult; it depends on their facial expressions’. A male waiter shared a similar understanding: ‘they use bad words every day. It is normal for them, but I don’t like it. They also talk in that way among themselves. They do it as if they were joking, but I can’t use these words, my church doesn’t allow me’.

Like this man, many Mozambicans felt that ‘heavy words’ not only insulted them as individuals, but also constituted a breach with their societal moral and religious order. They saw the use of ‘caralho’ as blasphemous, a sacrilege of their religious faith, which, for many Mozambicans, constitutes a pillar in their moral universe. Thus the Portuguese use of foul language worked as a denial of the existence of a world view different from their own. Yet other Mozambican interviewees, especially young males, had overcome their objections to the use of vulgar words and accepted the language of the Portuguese they worked with. Some had even adapted a Portuguese style of speaking. This was the case of a young male construction worker.

Their insults, that’s something cultural. It’s culture, they want to liven up the conversation. They don’t do it everywhere, but in construction work. It’s a way to create a good atmosphere. They try to liven up so that people work with a good will. I adapted to their style. When they used bad words, I first thought it was because they were tense, but then I understood it was their way of talking. When we started to talk in the same way, they laughed.

Thus, through adapting a stance of cultural relativism, this young man handled his aversion to his Portuguese colleagues’ language. He assumed that it was not their intention to hurt anyone and he disregarded the fact that, if the Portuguese had been sensitive to local culture, they would have avoided the use of ‘heavy words’ in order to accomplish a better integration.

In the next section, we develop the discussion about how many Mozambicans saw Portuguese ‘uncivilised’ behaviour as signalling disrespect and non-recognition of central Mozambican norms and values.

**Facing Sickness and Death in a Civilised Way**

Although many Mozambicans were pessimistic about their Portuguese bosses’ and colleagues’ willingness to learn to integrate, some tried to transmit what they saw as essential social norms and values. This particularly concerned attitudes and behaviour when facing suffering, sickness and death, which are constantly present in Mozambican social life. Life expectancy is 60 years, and lethal diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are a

\textsuperscript{44} Some speakers of European Portuguese use caralho in much the same way as ‘fuck’ is used in English.
constant threat. The loss of young family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues is an inescapable part of everyday life. A male engineer described how he tried to influence his Portuguese colleagues to become more supportive in times of illness:

I teach them that we are a peaceful people. I teach them peace and morality. For instance, once a Portuguese at my former workplace had a heart problem. I took him to a private clinic, and they said he had to stay a couple of days for observation. I sent a mail to all colleagues about this. None of the Portuguese visited him! I was the only one, and the Portuguese asked why I visited him. This was one of the reasons why I quit that job.

If visits to the sick created tensions between Portuguese and Mozambican staff, this applied even more to attendance at funerals. Most Mozambicans are involved in vast social networks, and it is a fundamental moral and social obligation to attend the funeral of a person in these networks. However, many Portuguese saw their Mozambican employees’ attendance at funerals as simply a way of escaping work, while to most Mozambicans funerals are a space for demonstrating solidarity with the extended family, neighbours and friends. In relation to Portuguese superiors, funerals often functioned as a moral boundary. Mozambicans tried to make their Portuguese bosses understand that premature deaths were a harsh local reality, and that it was sometimes necessary to emphasise sociality and collective solidarity at the expense of work and productivity. Many Mozambicans saw this as an important part of their ‘civilising mission’. One man working as a supervisor in a construction company explained: ‘a colleague of mine lost his mother, and we weren’t allowed to participate at the funeral. Besides being professionals, we are also human beings. I talked to the Portuguese boss, and first he was angry but then he understood’.

In the same vein, a young female working as a human resources (HR) assistant described how she had tried to make her Portuguese colleagues understand the importance of attending funerals:

when somebody dies, we worry and try to be with the persons, but when you lose a relative, they do not give us the right to attend the funeral. This will end our culture. They say they can’t give us time off all the time, but we become socially harmed. We attend funerals not only for the closest family members, we also go to friends’ funerals.

Mozambicans often pointed out the Portuguese lack of civilised manners, which referred to both linguistic usage and the fulfilment of basic norms of proper behaviour. Hence there was a need for civilising re-education. The colonial civilising mission started from the idea that the colonised societies lagged behind in the evolutionary process and therefore needed directives from the metropolis in order to develop. In the present case, the underpinnings of the civilising mission are different. Mozambicans do not see the Portuguese as underdeveloped – quite the contrary – but as embodying an arrogant and brutal national character that has its roots in the colonial period. When we asked our Mozambican interlocutors why their Portuguese bosses acted in a specific way, they commonly answered something along the lines of ‘the Portuguese have always been like that’, pointing to the continuity of coloniality. As we demonstrate in the next section, some Mozambican interlocutors also argued that persistent coloniality made their Portuguese colleagues and bosses apt to neglect Mozambican laws and regulations.

45 UN Development Programme, Human Developments Report Mozambique 2020, available at https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MOZ, retrieved 14 April 2022.
Civic Integration – Following Laws and Regulations

If the Mozambicans’ efforts to civilise the Portuguese can be read analytically as an inversion of colonial discourse, their attempts to support the civic integration of the Portuguese echoes the contemporary European debate on integration. Repeatedly, voices in this debate claim that ‘immigrants must follow our laws and regulations’ and ‘immigrants have to understand that they are not in their home country’. In north-western European countries, there are courses in civic integration for newly arrived migrants. Given the continuity of coloniality, which naturally also influences the workings of the Mozambican state, it is hardly surprising that the Portuguese in Mozambique have received no training of this kind. Instead, it is up to their Mozambican colleagues and employees to teach them the basics.

In many Portuguese enterprises, the HR manager was a Mozambican, and this person often played a key role in transmitting civic integration. The position of HR staff is both exposed and privileged. Portuguese company owners and managers expected the HR person to be loyal to their directives, but also to ‘understand the locals’. This implied that, in times of conflict between Mozambicans and Portuguese at workplaces, Portuguese bosses expected the HR officer to manage these conflicts. Mozambican employees at times saw the HR officer as a traitor acting in the interests of those on the other side of the abyssal line, but sometimes also as a possible partisan in dealing with their bosses. For the HR person, this go-between position implied room for manoeuvre but also exposure to critique from both sides. In a sense, this ambiguous position is reminiscent of the role of the régulo in colonial times. One of the recurrent duties of the HR officers whom we interviewed was to remind Portuguese bosses and managers about the existence of Mozambican laws regulating working conditions and salaries. As a female HR person in the food industry said about the Portuguese factory owner,

he doesn’t agree with our laws, so we have to show him which way is the best. He says all the time ‘but in Portugal it’s not like that’. He has learnt a lot from me; he asks me to send him laws and regulations, but he doesn’t want to follow the Mozambican rules. If somebody steals something, he wants to dismiss him directly, which is not allowed. But he respects the Ministry of Work.

As Sousa Santos argues, the abyssal line reduces the global south to a social reality beyond the workings of law. According to this logic, Mozambican labour legislation is irrelevant, especially when it does not follow the colonial model. This implies that, 45 years after independence, a Portuguese owner of a Mozambican company can dismiss Mozambican labour regulations as a matter of little importance. Respecting the Ministry of Work is also telling, as Portuguese company owners and managers know that if they do not follow national law, they run the ultimate risk of the Mozambican state forcing them to leave the country. Accordingly, when an employee launches a serious complaint against a Portuguese enterprise, the owners have to handle it in a strategic manner (which might include bribes), in order to evade the risk of deportation. To Mozambican employees, this means that they can tacitly remind their bosses about ‘not being at home’ when a conflict arises. This was the case of a Mozambican driver, who was accused by his Portuguese boss of having lost an important document. The boss insulted the driver and accused him of having committed other serious errors. ‘However’, the driver said, ‘when I taught him that I

46 In the Netherlands, a migrant must pass a civic integration examination to apply for a residence permit; in Denmark, there is a citizen test controlling migrants’ knowledge of the Danish state and society; in Sweden, there is a course in civic orientation for newly arrived migrants.
47 Sousa Santos, The End of the Cognitive Empire, pp. 20–21.
was in my country and therefore had my rights he calmed down. I didn’t go to his country and ask for work, it was he who opened a company here. He has to respect me as a human being.

Thus, despite lingering post-colonial power dynamics and contemporary workplace hierarchies, some Mozambican interlocutors took comfort from the fact that they were in their own country and thereby had an advantage in relation to their Portuguese bosses. There was an incipient sense of being a person with certain rights, which was articulated by people across socio-economic strata. Thus there was an emerging resistance against the ‘coloniality of being’ or the dehumanisation and invisibility of the ex-colonised. Yet, when it came to Mozambicans striving for recognition of their professional knowledge and skills, only those who had higher education and a high-status job said that they had tried to make Portuguese colleagues recognise their capacity. Only those who possessed the kind of knowledge acknowledged on the northern side of the abyssal line tried to transmit the value of their professional qualifications and experiences.

Conclusions: Everyday Acts of Civilisation

To conclude, the coloniality of knowledge still dominates the transmission of ideas, skills and practices between Mozambicans and Portuguese at workplaces in Maputo. Fundamentally, this is bound up with the two parties’ hierarchical positions on the labour market, which are expressions of the continuity of coloniality. Most of the Portuguese we met were business owners or managers, while most Mozambicans were their employees and subordinates. It is impossible to disregard these material conditions, and they are linked to other elements that impede a reciprocal transfer of knowledge.

Despite the heavy influence of the colonial past, there are Mozambicans who try to impart civil capacities to the Portuguese people with whom they work. We describe these efforts as everyday counter-hegemonic civilising discourses. The everyday character of these acts is important, and we see the delineation of these inconspicuous discourses of civilisation (in Norbert Elias’s sense), as our contribution to the field of decolonial lusophone studies and post-abyssal research. These discourses develop organically out of the flow of everyday life, and that is exactly why it is important to pay attention to them. They are not tools for conscious struggle but signs of shifts that, in the long run, may challenge the continuity of the abyssal line. Thus counter-hegemonic civilising discourses work as emergences or signs of a potential change that might be decisive in the future.

According to our ethnographic material, the capacities that our Mozambican interlocutors try to transmit has to do, first, with the adoption of a non-aggressive mode of speaking free from vulgar sexual expression and racist slur. Second, it concerns the moral imperative of visiting the sick and demonstrating solidarity and empathy with those who have lost a loved one. Third, Mozambican middle managers try to teach their Portuguese colleagues the importance of following national laws regulating salaries and working conditions. The teaching of these different capacities is counter-hegemonic in the sense that it moves the claim of being civilised and law abiding from the northern side of the abyssal line to the southern. Yet, contrary to the colonisers’ view of the colonial subjects as lagging behind in evolutionary terms, the Mozambicans do not see the Portuguese as underdeveloped. Rather, they attribute their lack of civilisation to a lingering colonial mentality that has shaped an arrogant and cold national character.

48 See L. Åkesson, ‘European Migration to Africa and the Coloniality of Knowledge: The Portuguese in Maputo’, Third World Quarterly, 42, 5 (2020), pp. 922–38.
49 N. Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Being’, Cultural Studies, 21, 2–3 (2007), pp. 240–70.
The kind of knowledge that Mozambicans try to transmit is embodied mainly in social practices, such as language use and appropriate behaviour. It is part of a civilising and moral discourse, in which many of our Mozambican interlocutors describe themselves as peaceful. It is the kind of social knowledge that Nola describes as knowing how to do.\textsuperscript{50} Moreover, it has to do with ‘the effects of coloniality in lived experience and not only in the mind’;\textsuperscript{51} thus it concerns the coloniality of being. When Mozambicans try to correct Portuguese people’s bad language and lack of respect for existential concerns, they also implicitly protest against being positioned as not fully human and therefore dispensable. It was clear that many of our Mozambican interlocutors took comfort from being in their own country and saw themselves as persons with rights. This means that, while fully acknowledging colonial continuities, we still have to appreciate the long-term importance of dismantling colonial administrative structures. This implies a fundamental change, primarily with regard to people’s understandings of their rights as human beings. From a Mozambican perspective, there are cracks in the abyssal line, although these are seldom recognised by the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{LISA ÅKESSON}

\textit{School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Box 700, Gothenburg, 40530, Sweden. Email: lisa.akesson@gu.se}

\textbf{ANETTE HELLMAN}

\textit{Department of Education, Communication and Learning, University of Gothenburg, Box 300, Gothenburg, 40530, Sweden. Email: anette.hellman@gu.se}

\textbf{INÊS M. RAIMUNDO}

\textit{Centro de Análise de Políticas, Eduardo Mondlane University, Av. Julius Nyerere, nr 3453, Maputo, Mozambique. Email: inesmacamo@gmail.com}

\textbf{CESALTINA MATSINHE}

\textit{Research Broker, Distrito de Boane, Bairro da Matola-rio, Maputo, Mozambique. Email: matsinhecesaltina2016@gmail.com}

\textsuperscript{50} Nola, ‘Knowledge, Discourse, Power and Genealogy in Foucault’, p.110.
\textsuperscript{51} Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Being’, p. 242.
\textsuperscript{52} We have presented our research to various Portuguese audiences, among them a number of non-academic ones, and have now and then been criticised for portraying Portuguese as ‘worse’ or ‘more racist’ than other nationalities. We want to emphasise that different cultural variations of Eurocentric thinking and abyssal exclusions dominate throughout the global north. In this case, however, we have chosen to focus on the ethnographic particularities of contemporary Mozambican–Portuguese relations.