SEEDS OF REVOLT. INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN RURAL KWAZULU, SOUTH AFRICA[*]

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Abstract: The social role of youth, in the last twenty years, has become a key point of the political agenda of many African nations. In South Africa, the consequences of segregationist politics, market economy and migrations have profoundly shaped the social and cultural role of youth, both in urban and rural contexts. Moreover, the end of apartheid has opened a new period of wide transformation. Based on my ethnographic research in KwaMashabane, a rural region of South Africa, this article analyses how the social role of male youth is shaped by national state policy and by local dynamics. I will focus on the relationship between models of adulthood, and the strategies that youth adopt to cope with conflicts and continuities. This analysis will show how post-apartheid freedom and the constraints of the local social structure are negotiated, and how society is coping with the complex relationships between cultural reproduction and social change.

Keywords: adulthood, KwaZulu, South Africa, youth.

Resumo: O papel social dos jovens, nos últimos vinte anos, se tornou um ponto-chave da agenda política de muitos Estados-nações africanos. Na África do Sul as políticas segregacionistas, a afirmação do capitalismo e as migrações têm moldado profundamente o papel social e cultural dos jovens, seja no meio urbano, seja no rural. Além disso, o fim do regime do apartheid *inaugurou um período de amplas transformações.*

*Baseado numa pesquisa etnográfica em KwaMashabane, uma região rural da África do Sul, este artigo analisa como o papel social dos jovens homens é moldado pelas políticas do Estado-nação e pelas dinâmicas locais. Mediante uma comparação entre os padrões de maturidades afirmados localmente e as estratégias que os jovens adotam para lidar com a condição deles, de "não adultos", será possível evidenciar como a "liberdade" implícita da época do pós-*apartheid *lida com a estrutura sociocultural local e como a sociedade enfrenta a complexa dinâmica entre reprodução e mudança social.*

Palavras-chave: *África do Sul, juventude, maturidade, KwaZulu.*

Introduction

The category "youth" is produced and used in a pioneering manner in South Africa, compared to other African countries, as it has been important in the national social and political arena, particularly since the 1970's. Political resistance movements and particularly the African National Congress (ANC) diffused the idea of "youth" to stimulate their political activism in the anti-apartheid struggle (Seekings, 1993). Thus, the social and cultural role of youth in South Africa has a particular role in the intersections between local cultural structure and global trends.

The location this article describes is called KwaMashabane that is now part of the KwaZulu-Natal region. During the nineteenth century it was a small independent kingdom under the influence of the Zulu Kingdom, one of the major political structures in Southern Africa in this period and to which KwaMashabane was obliged to pay tribute (Vailati, 2011). This history is still visible in current group and individual' identity-negotiation processes, mainly as a consequence of the apartheid regime. During that period, KwaMashabane became part of a Bantustan, an ethnically based state in which social life was formally regulated by Zulu customary law. Bantustans were political structures that allowed the segregation and control of black South Africans (Mamdani, 1996; Maré, 1992). Since the democratic transition, KwaMashabane has remained one of the most rural areas in the country and its infrastructural development has been quite slow.

The research I am presenting concerns the social role of youth in the KwaMashabane rural context. I started to work in KwaMashabane in 2005

and my relationship with many local people, especially with some youth, has become a long-term one. Historically, youth have been subjected to strong coercive forces. During the time of the Zulu Kingdom they were generally regimented in order to create a powerful army (Bryant, 1949; Junod, 1962; Krige, 1936). In the twentieth century they became, through a migrant labour system, the major providers for the family budgets. While the political power has strictly remained in the hands of elders, from an economic point of view, youth were the ones who maintained their parents' households. This study is based on a comparison between an analysis of ideologies and narrations that are diffused in the people's imagination (Taylor, 2004), and the observation of strategies of youth and adults in what we can call the social-life stage (Geertz, 1973). This theoretical framework will allow me to reflect on processes of social change, and on how these processes intersect with a local socio-cultural system and its own particular structure.

Defining youth

The first problem I encountered studying youth is classification. Around eighty years ago Margaret Mead (1949, p. 109) asked herself "What is coming of age like in Samoa?". The same question was the first step of my work. Indeed, it has been necessary to try to understand when a person, from an emic point of view, could be considered an adult. Sociology and pedagogy usually begin this analysis by focusing on age groups or cohorts. The ethnographical approach adopted in this research has been to try and analyse society in a more holistic way. The study of intergenerational relationships requires the observation of persons of different ages within a local society, and of their interactions. Starting from this consideration, a classification of differences between "youth" and "adult" has been produced.

In this study, the category of youth is considered as a social shifter, a "deictic or indexical term […] that works not through absolute referentiality to a fixed context, but one that relates the speaker to a relational, or indexical, context ('here' or 'us' are such terms)" (Durham, 2000, p. 116). Classification of the category youth therefore requires special attention. The first reflection concerns the relationship between me – an ethnographer – and the field. Youth is a relational term and its use requires a comprehensive knowledge of local

society and that the speaker be located within society. Social interactions are the primary sources of data for a study of intergenerational relationships. The act of "talking" to a person requires the knowledge of a broad relational code. To engage in communication, a child must embody the relational code that underpins social interactions. As I will show, in KwaMashabane the *hlonipha*, which is currently translated as "respect", is elementary knowledge that a person must demonstrate to have mastered. Considering this, when a male child is able to "talk" (James, 1995, p. 47) to an adult, he can be considered to be a youth. Learning to talk in the proper manner is the first step in the path to adulthood. For me, the process of "learning how to talk" required long amounts of time and energy. The observation of interactions between me and the others has constituted an extensive source of information. Implicitly, interaction means to place oneself in a social structure. The way I had been talking and behaving led local people to consider me generally as a youth, sometimes as a man, and especially in the first period of my stay as something like a confused child.

The second reflection is related to the local categories that are used to define youth. IsiZulu is the mother tongue of the people with whom I worked. Most of the youth are also able to speak basic English. In contrast, very few elders were able to speak English. My knowledge of IsiZulu did not allow me to engage in deep conversation, but it was enough to sufficient for working with terms used and their meaning. IsiZulu has many terms to define age and social roles. An analysis of those terms is useful, comparing their "official" translations with how they are used in everyday life. The word *umntwana*, can be translated as "baby, small child; child; offspring" (Doke et al., 1990, p. 609). Children are not differentiated by gender. A distinction between male and female appears only in terms used for youth. A young female is defined as *intombi*. An official translation of this term is "maidenhood; age or condition of a full grown girl; virginity" (Doke et al., 1990, p. 605). These meanings explicitly refer to the physical condition of sexual maturity and to the status of virginity. In practice, *intombi* is a term used to define any girl or woman who is not married. Nowadays, references to virginity, despite its symbolic importance, is not made in everyday social interactions.

Meanwhile, young males are not defined by their physical maturity. The term used is *umfana*, which means "boy male child (from babyhood to young manhood); son; person younger than or inferior to oneself; very derogatory

when used by another boy" (Doke et al., 1990, p. 199). Observation has demonstrated that *umfana* is clearly a relational term, used to underline difference of age, wealth or power. Moreover, it can be derogatory if used to define a peer. *Ubufana*, which means youth, does not have a clear positive connotation. This is important data for this analysis.

However, an IsiZulu speaker can use another term to indicate youth as a community. *Insha* means youth, as a group and as a new generation. *Ubusha*, another term built on the same radical *–sha*, means "freshness, newness, youthfulness" (Doke et al., 1990, p. 729). These words indicate the characteristic of youth, its sense of newness. It is interesting to consider that it was not common for my interlocutors to use of this term. *Abantu abasha*, which literally means "young people," is a term that I heard from few persons. Its use was usually related to political activism. Most people prefer to use *umfana* or *abantu abancane*, which means "small people". *Insha*, compared to *umfana* seems to have a "modern meaning" close to the "new concept of youth" that arose from the South African political past and from transnational rhetoric.

Departing from the category youth, we find that the condition of adulthood seems to be marked by marriage. Man is translated as *indoda*, which means adult male and husband. *Umfazi* means married woman or wife. This allows us to affirm that marriage is essential to being considered an adult. Literature on the concept of person helps understand this. A person, according to anthropological literature, is considered as a complete human being (Remotti, 2009). What is necessary to reach this "completeness" is the result of the social and cultural orientations of a group of people. In KwaMashabane, marriage is considered one of the necessary steps to reach this completeness. This life stage is usually reached after physical maturity. The payment of a bride price, which is called *ilobolo*, is currently very demanding (MacKinnon, 1999). For middle-income youth it can take ten years or more. For this reason we can state that "coming of age", for the male youth of KwaMashabane is usually reached between 35 and 40.

Finally, we can analyse a key category of the IsiZulu language: *umuntu*, which means "person or human being." The current use of this category is highly influenced by its historical stratification. It is usually considered to be an important philosophy in the understanding African societies. Moreover, it is a tool used daily to define a particular idea of "African person". *Ubuntu* means "humanity" with no differentiation between male and female. "Having

Ubuntu" means to adopt certain culturally recognized behaviours that are related to the concept of respect, *hlonipha*. It may be useful to analyze the definition of *ubuntu* given by one of the most important people in South African history, Nelson Mandela:

> A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?[1]

This quote is particularly interesting because it emphasizes the issue of economic reciprocities (Sahlins, 1972, p. 188). The core of *Ubuntu*, in this statement by Mandela, is the sharing of wealth. Here I am not using wealth in its capitalistic meaning; symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1972) is sometimes more important than monetary. Youth, as I will show, seem to be excluded from the realm of *ubuntu*. Completeness is attained through the achievement of a recognized social role in society. Social recognition for men is directly connected with redistribution. Youth are people who are able to "talk" because they have embodied the *hlonipha* code. Nevertheless, they are not men or complete persons. They do not have enough capital for redistribution processes. For this reason they are not allowed to be *umnumzane*, the head of a family. For these reasons they cannot interact with men. As many of my interlocutors used to say "they remain *bafana*" (plural of *umfana*).

Imagined adulthoods

The dichotomy that divides adults and youth is clearly a result of social processes deeply rooted in history. As Ariès demonstrated for European History (Ariès, 1960), the concept of youth can be considered an invention that is useful for shaping the social structure of a specific context. In the same way, adulthood is a construction, generally connected to issues of power relationships. The struggle for the control of the imaginary, of what kind of

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[1] This interview is widespread on the web. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Experience_ubuntu.ogg.

adulthood will be socially recognised, is a fundamental political process. To comb imaginaries looking for the most relevant ideologies that influence a local context is always a complex task, from an epistemological point of view. The researcher is obliged here to reduce complexity in order to individuate the narrations or the ideologies that have been more relevant.

Various discourses can be found in KwaMashabane history about the relationship between youth and adult. My ethnography clearly revealed that the category of respect is one of the most recurrent in everyday speech. If, at a transnational level, we can also find this word in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child,[2] locally, respect has a different meaning. Many people today relate respect with education. This is also a transnational category that is globally influenced by rhetoric concerning the rights of children. I will try to deconstruct how this idea has changed locally. This reflection will be compared in two analyses. The first one is related to the historical construction of what today is considered the most important educational system, the school. In relation to the political structure for example, schools have been the most important tools for transmitting a particular concept of society. I will also concentrate on *izinganekwane*, which are fairy tales with strong moral connotations. These are excellent for deconstructing the idea of respect that schools transmitted to youth in the most dramatic phase of the apartheid regime. This analysis focuses mainly on male youth. Zulu history has been clearly imagined as constructed on masculine led power. For this reason I am interested in using this "archaeology of adulthood" to deconstruct how this narration has been created. This orientation also reflects my "position" in the field. As a male researcher, relationships with male youth were deeper, and rich with analysis' data.

One of the most important narratives for what is today called "Zulu culture", was reified during the apartheid regime. In 1959, the Promotion of the Black Self Government Act laid the foundations for the "formal" political

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[2] Article 29, 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states: "States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations; (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own."

autonomy of the bantustans[3] (Mdluli, 1987). Education was one of the first sectors managed directly by bantustans and not by the central South African government. The political structure of KwaZulu was strictly connected with the Zulu Kingdom and dominated by the embryonic ideology that later would be the foundation of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).[4] In the 1970s, a new syllabus was introduced in public schools. It was called *Ubuntu botho*, which literally means "our humanity," and was written by the Natal African Teachers Union (NATU).[5] This syllabus was, until the democratic transition, the most important instrument in KwaZulu Bantustan Education.

The principal nucleus of *Ubuntu botho* was the concept of discipline, which is presented as a direct consequence of *ukuhlonipha*, "respect." This concept is deeply rooted in what is commonly perceived by local people as "traditional" Zulu culture. The first anthropological work on isiZulu culture, which was conducted by Krige, strongly emphasizes its importance. Krige (1936, p. 30) translated it as "shame" or "bashful". In her account, for example, a wife was not allowed to call her husband by his name. Even using a word that includes his name could be considered disrespectful. Today, *ukuhlonipha* is most often translated as "respect," which is directly related with the concept of authority. It remains a code that is implicit to every interpersonal relationship or interaction in contemporary Zulu societies. It regulates most relationships: a common man must show respect to his king; a boy to an adult. As we will see, the strictness of this code differs partially from what is transmitted within the family. This consideration is very important because *Ubuntu botho* seems here to be the main tool for transmitting the *hlonipha* code, which has influenced many generations, especially that of current day adults. Firstly, it has distilled a concept of discipline and unquestionable authority. The analysis of succession dynamics, for example, shows that in the history of the Zulu Kingdom, only once has the new king been the legitimate successor (Laband, 2008, p. 92). Starting with the founder Shaka, all the kings have been more or less usurpers. To the contrary, the way the relationship between the king and

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[3] Bantustans were rural areas where black people were supposed to live. They were created using ethnic criteria. Starting in 1959, Bantustans obtained formal political independence.

[4] The IFP has existed for twenty years, until the 2009 national election, it was the most important political party in KwaZulu-Natal. Its ideology is based on a claim for Zulu identity and a Zulu national consciousness.

[5] NATU is now the union for IFP affiliated teachers.

others is presented in the syllabus does not allow for any disrespect. *Ubuntu botho* has transmitted to various generations of men an idea of "blind" respect to an unchangeable authority. This idea has shaped intergenerational relationships between those men and their future sons. Since 1994, with the transition from apartheid, a new syllabus was promoted by a unified Ministry of Education. This syllabus embodied the transnational concept of "the right of the Child" or youth, and were more liberal and less authoritarian. But, today in KwaMashabane, one of the most common reflections of the elders regarding youth is that they do not have respect (*hlonipha*). In the opinion of elders, the new post-apartheid school system is the major cause of this. Youth also perceived that the schools they are attending are inadequate. But they blame this on a "lack of management." It is interesting to observe the difference between these two discourses. The first is based on *hlonipa* and authority and the second on administrative practices.

On the family level, knowledge transmission systems seem to draw a different picture of respect. Oral literature is one of the most important sources of data here. Since the nineteenth century, many scholars have collected a relevant number of stories in the IsiZulu language. They are both poetry and prose. In the latter category we find *izinganekwane*, which are commonly defined as fairy tales, while scholars call them folk tales. The first *izinganekwane* were collected more than one hundred and fifty years ago (Callaway, 1868; Canonici, 1993). Today, most people remember many stories, and the narrations I personally collected are particularly similar to ancient collections. These stories are also considered by some older women in the community as proper "educational tools." Nevertheless, the practice of storytelling seems to be in decline. Usually *izinganekwane* were performed by elder women within the domestic space, to entertain the family and especially children. Moreover, it is interesting to emphasize that while the use of this cultural object is declining, it is remarkably present in the memory of the youth. Unfortunately, many other cultural objects of what we refer to as "Zulu culture" are no longer practiced. The most important example here is male initiation rites, another educational practice, which for political and economic reasons, have almost completely disappeared.

One of the most important characters in the stories I collected, is uChakijana. Sometimes he appears in the shape of a mongoose, other times as a dwarf. In one story, uChakijana was a child who fled his home after being

violently punished. In some versions, after his departure, and thanks to his cleverness was able to steal some cattle and was forgiven upon returning home with them. In many versions uChakijana is called Hlakanyana, from the term *hlaka*, which means "clever, astute". This character can be defined as a "trickster," a person who performs "tricks" (Radin, 1956, p. 132). The trickster is in many cases described as someone who is very clever. He uses his cunning to steal and kill to get what he needs. But, in most of the stories, he unconsciously provides enormous benefit to his people. In the story, the child brings home many cattle, which are the objects that represent wealth *par excellence*. In the *izinganekwane*, the trickster usually passes through different standard stages: a lack of something, interdiction, fraud, and social recognition (Canonici, 1993).

Hlakanyana can be considered a cultural hero. He is able, relying only on his' own efforts to enrich himself and to redistribute goods to his social network, usually represented by the family. This path is similar to that which KwaMashabane youth must take to "become adults." It seems that it is very important to possess cleverness, or *hlaka* in IsiZulu. In everyday life, a man is often rewarded for his cleverness. This analysis of *izinganekwane* brings us back to one of the etymological meanings of the word *hlaka*. It is interesting to note that the model of morality for a family proposed by these stories is very contradictory. Hlakanyana stole and killed but it seems that if his actions bring something good for his people, for which he will be "recognized" (Taylor, 1992) as a man, an *amadoda*. The example of Zulu Kingdom succession processes is emblematic. While structural aspects of society identified who should be the next king, it was the rule of cunning that prevailed in this determination. The trick is also a social warning that care is always important. While a trickster may be chastised, if his actions lead to social development he may be recognized. Redistribution seems to be a key factor in this determination, as the definition of *ubuntu* proposed here indicates.

It is relevant that there is a real life uChakijana in Zulu history. One of the most important revolts against the British government is normally known as the Bhambatha rebellion. Led by the Zulu chief Bhambatha, it is considered the last revolt against the colonial rule in Southern Africa. The most important military adviser to the chief was uChakijana, who is described "as a man of youth and low rank" (Marks, 1986, p. 361). Having gained practice in stealing cattle from the Boers during the war, uChakijana was able to "handle a

gun and shoot" (Carton, 2000, p. 104). Like his literary alter ego, uChakijana embodied the trickster agency. He was able to break social rules to provide advantages to his people. Carton's interpretation of the Bhambatha revolution as a youth revolt against their father´s power and their collaboration with British is also emblematic (Carton, 2000). The historical depth of *izinganekwane*, seems to prove that youth revolts have long been present in Zulu tradition.

The contrast between the fixed and pure structure of society that is transmitted through *Ubuntu botho* and the "trickster" strategies present in *izinganekwane* is particularly sharp. This is also represented in the implicit debate between hegemonic models of adulthood transmitted through the scholastic educational system and the fluidity that comes from small-scale education systems like the family. National Zulu education proposes that *hlonipha* – respect – be untouchable for every kind of authority. Meanwhile, even if families, embody the *hlonipha* code, they also propose an alternative path to "becoming an adult" that allows for the questioning of authority and social rules, although this path is recognized only if it leads to a social redistribution of capital.

Trickstering respect

The analysis of the narrations diffused in the KwaMashabane people's imagination has described two possible paths to "becoming an adult" in this context. Observation of peer interactions' in both youth and adult groups provide data useful for grasping how this imaginary is acted. Firstly, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of "peer". It is common to say in KwaMashabane that "peers are those who can eat from your dish." The interactions are thus based on generalized reciprocity, which refers "to transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given and, if possible and necessary, assistance returned" (Sahlins, 1972, p. 192-193). Reciprocity is based on a very practical and fundamental rule. If you have resources, and food is the most elementary example, you are not allowed to deny it to your peers.

This definition seems perfectly applicable to the *ubuntu* concept, but it is important to critically interpret this category. These norms that could lead to thinking of an idyllic idea of egalitarian society, in many cases cause strong

envy and social control within a small group of peers. Everybody is usually very alert to what others are "putting on the table," in terms of monetary or symbolic capital. This must not be considered as an absolute rule because I have observed many transactions that were not equivalent. However, peer relations were usually based on reciprocity and this seems to be the leading criteria by which a person chooses who to spend time with.

Within a group of peers, the sense of camaraderie is particularly strong. In addition, it is very difficult to encounter dynamics where strong leadership is absent. The centrality of the transaction of goods for interpersonal relations is very high. Usually, the group's leader is the one who has the most resources to redistribute: money, but also ideas, or a planning strategy for a particular aim. A common result of these social interactions was indeed that no one did anything because of a fear of failing. The topic of many days discussion was based on decision making. For example, if I propose something to my peers it is probable that if my idea is successful I will earn more social recognition; if not, I will be criticised. The assumption of responsibility therefore becomes a difficult step.

Concerning these issues, I will now analyze the different trends that I have observed in KwaMashabane that distinguish adult society from youth society. It is necessary to highlight that what I describe is behaviour that I observed repeatedly and thus considered to be common. I can state that from my point of view that youth try to reproduce the types of interaction that they observe among adults. Moreover, among youth, the relevance of resources and redistribution is very high. Young individuals must, in addition to try to acquire capital, also learn how to manage it in everyday life. They must become able to occupy a place on the stage of social life (Geertz, 1973) acquiring both the instrument needed to manage social relations, and the capital required by their future position. As an ethnographer – and a youth – I must say that this was one of the hardest parts of the local *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1972) that I had to learn.

One basic difference is that adult interaction patterns seem particularly fixed compared to those among youth. Considering that in the KwaMashabane village it is common for everybody to know everybody else. In every situation, it will be clear who the most relevant person is. Merely observing the degree of *hlonipha* that people pay each other, helps to understand who will sit on the "highest chair." This is always recognizable among adults. To the

contrary, among youth, relationships are unclear, and it is not easy to determine who, in a particular situation, will be the leader. Potentially, anyone can be a leader if they can provide resources to the group. As one youth told me, "you may only be clever." What he means is that you need to demonstrate to be *hlaka* with some particular action. In this case, all the previous relationships based on *hlonipha* will probably change and the group will have a new configuration. This highly variable role playing is common in the youth peer groups. Among adults it is unthinkable. This duality between youth and adults at times surprised me.

Concerning social exclusion, the analysis shows that only if an individual repeatedly failed to redistribute goods would he be ostracized. This seems, to be a sin that leads to a social death, at least in a metaphorical sense. I did observe somebody being expelled from a group because of a failure to redistribute goods. The older the members, the more the interactions among them become structured, and "social mistakes" are punished. as social space becomes less malleable. The comparison of social interactions in adult groups' and those observed among youth shows that there is a high degree of experimentation and role playing among the latter. To grow up seems to mean to conform to adulthood models that I have already described. Next, I will consider the political sphere of KwaMashabane society.

The political sphere is probably the space where the exclusion of youth from the realm of agency is most evident. In every village there is a recognized political institution that is called *imbizo*. This word means "assembly of men," and it is a weekly meeting open to all villagers, men and women. It is directed by the local traditional leader, who is called *induna*. *Izinduna* (plural) of the KwaMashabane kingdom are directly dependent on the *Inkosi*, the formal king. Both these positions are hereditary. This political structure is perceived by the people to be connected to the ancient Zulu Kingdom of the nineteenth Century. During apartheid, the king was the most important symbol of the Bantustan KwaZulu, a formal independent state created for black Zulu people. Nevertheless, the state was highly dependent on the apartheid regime. Today, *imbizo* is a political space for the discussion of many issues concerning everyday life. These range from disputes among villagers, to issues concerning the relation between village and regional political institutions.

Observations of weekly *imbizo* and of other political meetings allow me to state that in this context the participation of youth is very low in

kwaMashabane. They remain a highly subordinate category of people, usually with no right to talk. Here only *amadoda nabafazi*, men and women, seem to be allowed to talk. The praxis of an *imbizo* and its political structure is strongly connected with what we have called the *hlonipha* code. Most of the living adults have indeed been educated through *Ubuntu botho* and have internalised a highly structured view of society. Authority in this code is not something that is questionable, especially in the public sphere. The youth, due to their "incompleteness," are excluded from discussion, and until they are recognized as men, remain offstage.

After the democratic transition, something new was born in KwaMashabane. The African National Congress political propaganda, with its emphasis on the concept of youth rights, has seemed to stimulate new kinds of associational structures. Youth have been one of the most important issues raised in ANC propaganda. In many cases they were the most important weapon in the anti-apartheid political struggle. Nevertheless, after the democratic transition, youth did not obtain a high level of political participation, but were absorbed within the ANC.[6] In KwaMashabane, due to its remoteness from the sites of political struggle, I have not heard stories about political opposition. Some villagers were engaged in the struggle, but mostly when they were living in urban spaces. After apartheid, new kinds of organizations appeared.

One of these is called the Maputoland Youth Development Programme (MYDP). It was founded approximately three years ago by youth who studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the most prestigious in the region.[7] The MYDP's initial aims have been the "development" of local youth through activities that may help provide them economic support. Two strategies are involved. The first is to organize events and activities to "employ" them and provide recreational activities. This is because after high school most of the youth enter into a liminal period in which they are highly exposed to alcohol abuse and unprotected sex.[8] Most of the local people think that the youth must

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[6] It is interesting here to consider Van Kessel's analysis of the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation (Van Kessel, 1993). The organization has played a major role in the political struggle in a social context where there was no perceived "moral order". After the transition, youth was reinstated in the ANC Youth League.

[7] I must emphasize here that in KwaMashabane the percentage of youth that are able to study at a university is close to zero.

[8] There is a very high rate of HIV/AIDS transmission in the region.

"use their time" properly. The second aim is economic. The association is trying to provide services in order to secure capital that could be useful for members. It is interesting to emphasize here that redistribution processes are not egalitarian, but in most of the cases some resources are given to a single member to help him with a personal need.

In this way the MYDP embody both elements, from local traditional political praxis and from new "democratic" ideologies. Indeed, there are transactions that are highly unbalanced and not meritocratic. We found, for example, that an inactive member receives a high amount of resources for a purpose that does not strengthen the entity. Sometimes these redistribution processes follow personal networks that are extraneous to the association. Affiliation to the association is in fact based on personal relations among members and new members and most of the participants do not have a real political awareness about the organization. Most of them state that they are involved "because it could be useful in the future." These answers are also common when they are asked about their engagement in political parties such as IFP or ANC.

What is interesting is that, in the MYDP, individuals have the choice to achieve social recognition through their actions. While in adult society certain fixed steps[9] are required to consider an individual as an adult, in this new organizational structure it seems that other praxises are recognized. I can mention here the examples of some youth who, due to their activism in the association, have reached a high level of social recognition. In some cases these members come from very poor families, in terms of economic and symbolic capital. They continue to be subaltern persons in adult society, but within the association they achieve strong symbolic importance. In this way we find different strategies for obtaining social recognition. It seems that we have a shift from giving priority to individual empowerment, which leads to redistribution, to social empowerment that can lead to individual recognition. Youth, one of the categories of people most subjected to coercion by adult society, seem to propose their own strategies in response to the influence that political communications, schooling, and the transformation of familiar and relational models pose on them.

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[9]   In this paper I have considered the two most important: economic empowerment and marriage.

Yet these new models are still far from being recognized and therefore the models of adulthood remain the same and youth agency still has no consequence. Access to the public political sphere still depends on social and economic empowerment, based on the recognized adult models. Nevertheless, this analysis shows an embryonic beginning of a social change. Even in remote rural areas, particular subcultures can be important for understanding intergenerational relationships and social change.

Seeds of revolt

A comparison between an analysis of imagination and description of social interaction provide data for a reflection on social change. While it is clear that some knowledge transmission systems are declining, it seems that social change is still embryonic in the KwaMashabane local context. The historic fluidity of social structure, that *izinganekwane* seems to describe, was frozen by education under apartheid. The consequence was the creation of an authoritarian ideology to justify a specific social structure. Moreover, this imposed a high degree of subordination in relationships between youth and adults. If Zulu history begins with the young Shaka that take power through cleverness, today this path to agency is denied to youth. Today, the social career of a man hypothetically starts the moment he, as a child, displays reception of the *hlonipha* code. He then begins to "talk" with adults. In this way, a young man can have access to the first level of social life. From this moment, the youth has the opportunity to experiment with new types of social interactions, which in some cases contrast to those recognized by adults. These conditions of freedom seem to be progressively reduced, until the youth becomes an adult. This passage can be located in the acceptance of the recognized social order. Experimentation is no longer allowed and leads to hostility. Peer interaction clearly shows how, among youth, role playing is tolerated and how among adults it is not. In spite of this, I can state that there is a wide distance between youth and adults within KwaMashabane society. These experimentations, which are characteristic of youth, do not find a place in adult society.

These conclusions seem to lead us back to the classical theoretical framework of structural functionalistic anthropology, which had its roots in the analysis of Zulu society. Many anthropologists have stated that in various Southern African societies, the phase of youth could be interpreted

as a moment of anti-structure and rebellion to adult society (Turner 1967). After this period, youth, to be considered adults, must be embodied in the social and political structure and in their new role they must adopt proper adult behaviour. The analysis of current KwaMashabane society reveals similar dynamics. What differs from that found in classical socio-anthropological analysis is that among youth today there are some peculiar interactions that are different and contrast with those of adult society. Within "youth society" we therefore find an opposition that may lead to social change. The behaviour of KwaMashabane, according to most ethno-sociological literature, are the result of two hundred years of strong coercive forces. These forces came from distant sites, such as the apartheid regime, but also from closer ones, such as "traditional Zulu culture," considered here from an emic point of view.

Scientific research has often not revealed, due to its' theoretical orientations, agency among "olden time" Zulu youth. In contrast, an analysis of *izinganekwane* demonstrates that strategies to cope with a highly structured social organization were available in the remote past. The relevance of *izinganekwane*, as emic tools for social empowerment, can be useful for scientific debate and policy making, especially concerning education. In contrast, the imposition of heteronomic educational models, such as the rights of youth, can increase the "generation gap". Here, *izinganekwane* can be considered a useful emic tool for diffusing recognition of "youth problems," that are locally perceived as essential.

Youth are considered the future of society and the direct heirs of culture. A comparison between how social change influences peoples' lives and the strategies that individuals adopt to cope with social change reveals the complex dynamics that underpin the relationship between generations. The dialectic between socio-cultural reproduction and social change should be read through these lenses. The analysis of youth society reveals new embryonic models of individual and group experiments, which attempt to cope with a difficult social environment. These models can emphasize strategies, individual goals and, moreover, the relevance of hegemonic powers. Youth, who are currently considered the social carrier of social change (Durham, 2000), are often one of the most powerless social groups. Rethinking processes that shape their condition, such as the transmission of knowledge, is the first step for any social transformation that wants to be continuous with the past. South African history, which has suffered from many disruptions, could probably benefit from some continuity, to accompany its huge transformations.

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