

Moving South: Understanding the Development Potential of the New Portuguese Migration to Angola



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New kind of postcolonial labour migration



- European migrants seeking improved living condition in African ex-colony on a large scale
- Background: Oil-fuelled growth in Angola, protracted economic crisis in Portugal
- In 2013 remittances from Angola were 21 times the size the transfers in the opposite direction
- 100.000 – 150.000 migrants?

Extremely short background Portugal - Angola



- 500 years of Portuguese colonial rule until 1975
- Civil war in Angola 1975-2002
- MPLA party-state, José Eduardo dos Santos president since 1979
- Comprehensive infrastructure reconstruction program in Angola 2004 →
- Economic crisis in Portugal 2008 → construction sector and financial services especially hard hit
- 2015 decreasing oil price

Ambiguous position



Symbolic power as ex-colonisers, but dependent on Angolan authorities and business owners

Power

- Some are well paid and have management positions
- Portuguese business elite protected by the President's office

and vulnerability

- Non-elite migrants feel vulnerable in relation to Angolan authorities and the powerful political elite
- Many have problems with migration documents (working without permits, undocumented, etc.) and the last year also with transferring remittances

What kind of migrants? Returnees? Labour migrants? Expats?
Colonisers?

Understanding the Portuguese' potential contributions in terms of human and social capital



How do the Portuguese understand their role in relation to development in Angola, and how do they experience and navigate around the changing power relations?

How do Angolans working together with Portuguese understand their contributions to development?

Links to return-development nexus



- Research traditionally attends to transfer of human and social capital from migrants in the North to developing countries in the South
- Capital gained in the North is seen as having a superior value
- Migrants returning to the South are in policy seen as "the new developers" - can this line of thought be transferred to the Portuguese migrants?

Postcolonial studies



- Often stress the continuance of the colonial
- Tend to focus on former colonial powers
- Focus mainly on British postcolonialism

Contribution of present study:

- Integrate the ex-colonisers and the ex-colonised into a common analysis
- Probes into the limits of the colonial (sees “post” as signifying both “going beyond” and “continuity”)
- Focus on recent processes with altered economic and political power relations

Portuguese postcolonial studies



- Underline Portugal was a “subaltern empire” (dependent on the UK) and has had a long history of emigration
- Analyse *lusotropicalismo* (the lusotropical ideology): The Salazar regime’s idea that because of a inherent national propensity for mixing Portuguese colonial rule created harmonious creolized social formations

Method and material



- Long-term experience, worked in Luanda 1988-91
- 61 ethnographic interviews carried out in 2014 and 2015 (29 “Angolans”, 32 “Portuguese”)
- Mixed Luso-Angolan identities: family history, passport(s), accent, looks, etc.
 - Portuguese adult children of *retornados*
- Two thirds highly educated

Human capital: work ethos and experience



Portuguese:

Mostly brought up generic attitudes, values and practices: work ethos, organizational skills and rational thinking

- Sometimes explained differences by criticising Angolan educational system.
- Sometimes relied on colonial constructions of Africans avoiding hard work and being irrational – in need of education and modernity

In short....



”We contribute to positive changes, if they close the border the country would collapse. The big problem in Angola is primary education. We can pass on a lot, help them structuring their minds. This is not a question about intelligence. There are different ways. But they are bad at synthesising, they are not pragmatic, they are enslaved by bureaucracy, and don’t think. There is a lack of intellectual independence and structured thought” (Portuguese female 31 years)

Human capital: work ethos and experience



Angolans: Ambiguity

- Need for experienced professionals in Angola
- Work ethos: "Angolans are too relaxed", "Portuguese do nothing, only complain about Angolans not working"
- Portuguese do not understand Angolan reality (lack of local capital)

Human capital: Conclusions



- Angolans:
 - + positive ideas about professional experience of Portuguese in general → critique of lack of sustainable development in Angola
 - often talked about negative experiences of Portuguese they worked with (linked to subjugation, inequality)
- “We need labour from Portugal, but we resent it”
- Portuguese: presented their experiences, skills and work ethos as indispensable (little reflection)

Portuguese social capital → Exclusion of Angolans?



- Portuguese often relied on pre-migration social capital accumulated in Portugal
- Angolans argued that possibilities of entering and advancing on Luandan labour market are related to national identity, Portuguese argued they are related to merits

“TAP is the most efficient university in the world”

Lack of Angolan social and cultural capital: Navigating the tensions



- Modifying accents and using Angolan expressions
- Being overtly friendly
- Displaying reverence and obedience in front of Angolan decision-makers
- Underlining a Portuguese capacity of mixing: "We mingle, we aren't invasive, we tend to do that, it's in our DNA." → *lusotropicalismo*

Conclusions



What kind of migrants: (Post)colonial second generation returnees??

Contributions to development:

Portuguese see themselves as essential for development in Angola (as do many of Africa's return migrants)

Quite low commitment to development in Angola (different to many returnees) and lack of local cultural and social capital (less capital than returnees)

Angolans are ambivalent (as are many stayers towards returnees) – ambivalence heightened by postcolonial power relations

Conclusions: Power



- Contested and unstable power relations at multiple levels
- Portuguese economic dependence
- Colonial imaginaries still very much at play (Portuguese dominance in terms of education, language, life style)
- Understandings of contributions to development is an arena of contestation

Development MPLA-style: A perfect fit



Angolan MPLA party-state projecting power and development through built environment.

Development = Progress, modernity, prosperity

“Good understanding” Portuguese construction companies / Angolan authorities

Novo Dubai - Só para Inglês ver



Local opinion:

Perverted development
benefitting local oligarchs
and foreign economic
interests.