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“It’s all about money”: urban–rural spaces and relations in Maputo, Mozambique

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ABSTRACT

Within the anthropological urban scholarship on sub-Saharan Africa, there is a shared notion of the continued, and in some cases re-emerging, importance of rural spaces, values and relations in cities and towns. In Mozambique’s capital city, Maputo, associations with the rural are shaped by the urban dwellers’ different positions on a scale of social (dis)advantage. This has led to very diverse types of engagement with the rural among the population, primarily differentiated along positions of class but also gender and age. For the best-off, who are able to live up to urban expectations, the rural is seen to have little to offer and is largely disregarded. For the poorest and most destitute, rural areas are effectively out of reach and unheeded. For the rest, the rural continues to be an important part of their cosmologies and struggles to survive albeit without losing their urban base and identity.

RÉSUMÉ

Les travaux d’anthropologie sur les villes d’Afrique subsaharienne ont en commun la notion d’une continuité, et dans certains cas d’une réémergence, de l’importance des espaces, des valeurs et des rapports ruraux dans les grandes et les petites villes. À Maputo, capitale du Mozambique, les associations avec le monde rural sont déterminées par les différentes positions des résidents urbains sur une échelle d’inégalité sociale. Cela a conduit à des types très divers de perceptions du monde rural par la population, principalement différenciables selon les rangs sociaux, mais aussi selon les genres et les tranches d’âge. Pour les mieux lotis qui ont les moyens d’obtenir ce qu’ils attendent de la ville, le monde rural est considéré comme ayant très peu à offrir et largement ignoré. Pour les plus pauvres et les plus démunis, les zones rurales sont véritablement hors d’atteinte et invisibles. Pour les autres, le monde rural continue de représenter une part importante de leurs cosmologies et de leurs luttes pour survivre, sans qu’ils aient pour autant à perdre leur base et leur identité urbaines.

KEYWORDS

Mozambique; anthropology; poverty; urban–rural relations

MOTS-CLÉS

Mozambique; anthropologie; pauvreté; rapports urbains-ruraux

1. Introduction

Research on urban–rural spaces and relationships has a long history in the anthropology of sub-Saharan Africa. Many studies have explored people in cities with urban or rural

orientations (see, for example, Mayer's 1961 "School/Reds" theme, or Ferguson's 1999 distinction between "Localists" and "Cosmopolitans"); others examine such issues as the "detrribalization" (Gluckman 1961) or the "ruralization" (Englund 2010) of the city, and of the urban and the rural as a "single social universe" (Andersson 2001). In the more development-oriented anthropological literature, the persistence of urban–rural socio-economic relationships and interdependencies has been emphasized, for instance, by Gugler (2002, 22–24): he claims that not only are many urban dwellers in Africa still "firmly rooted in a rural context," but that urban–rural connections "frequently take on a normative character" (see also Satterthwaite and Tacoli 2002; Tvedten 2004; Mberu, Ezeh, and Chepngeno-Langat 2013).

Thus, sub-Saharan African anthropological urban scholarship seems to share a notion of the continued, and in some cases re-emerging, importance of rural spaces, values, and relations in urban contexts – with cities marked not only by opportunities for employment, income, education, and a "modern life,"¹ but also congestion, unemployment, poverty, crime, and social isolation (Myers 2011). De Boeck (2011, 267; see also De Boeck and Plissart 2004), in his beautifully crafted work on Kinshasa, perhaps the most dramatic urban conglomerate on the sub-continent, notes that:

[a]ided by a never-ending political and economic crisis, the city is (re-)ruralised in many ways, not only in terms of its social structures and spheres of social interaction but also in terms of its economic survival and coping strategies, engendering a new type of agrarian urbanity.

In Mozambique's capital city, Maputo, perceptions of – and relations with – rural spaces and values in the sense of economic adaptations, the nature of social relations and networks, the importance of kinship and tradition, etc. may be represented in a more composite fashion. With reference to statistical data on rural relations/agriculture and poverty/inequality, our observations during longitudinal fieldwork in Maputo and extended case studies of seventy-five households in two of the city's *bairros* (neighborhoods),² this article argues that associations with the rural are shaped by urban dwellers' different positions on a scale of material and social (dis)advantage from the very poorest and most destitute to the wealthy and most affluent (Ortner 2006; see also Moore and Saunders 2014). This has led to very different types of engagement with the rural among the population in the two *bairros*, primarily differentiated along class lines but also according to gender and age.

In fact, the assurance that "*é tudo dinheiro*" (It's all about money) was highlighted as the most salient feature of urban lived experiences of poverty among our interlocutors – meaning that practically everything has to be paid for and social relations have to be filled with material content to be viable. Those who fail in their quest for employment and income are truly impoverished and vulnerable in urban contexts such as Maputo. Being poor and unable to live up to urban expectations for employment, income, housing, and "style" (Ferguson 1999) are not only constant reminders of inadequacy in the city that position the urban poor as "failures" in their relations with the rural, but also influence perceptions of the relevance and presence of the rural in people's daily lives (Paulo, Rosário, and Tvedten 2011; see also Tvedten 2011).

In Mozambique, relations between Maputo and its rural hinterland have been remarkably volatile. During the colonial period, men from rural areas were often compelled to work in the city as a result of poverty and the forced labor system; many women were also forced to leave their villages – largely as a result of exceptionally poor agricultural conditions and social marginalization. After independence in 1975, urban–rural links were first re-established by the new government through "carrot" (urban green zones) and "stick" (forced removal to

rural areas) policies, but these strategies were disrupted during sixteen years of civil war from 1976 to 1992. Over this period, there was mass migration to the city and hardly any urban contact with rural areas.

Today, interactions tend to be inhibited by a combination of the long distances and high transportation costs for travel between the capital – located at the southern tip of the country – and most rural areas. In addition, large-scale imports and strong competition from neighboring South Africa tend to limit the basis for agricultural and other economic exchanges between Maputo and its rural hinterland. Significant differences in levels of poverty, and in access to goods and services, make the city exceptionally “urban” and its hinterland exceptionally “rural.” The two are, as one interlocutor put it, “*mundos diferentes*” (worlds apart). Together, this has made Maputo more of a permanent terminus for its dwellers than is the case in other urban contexts in the region, where the rural tends to be the desired final destination, giving the city a sense of provisionality (Ferguson 1999; Tvedten 2011; Bank 2015).

For the most successful and affluent urbanites, who are able to live up to urban expectations, the rural is seen to have little to offer and is largely disregarded (with rural relatives even considered a threat to their position). For the poorest and most destitute, unable to fill urban–rural relations with the money and/or commodities necessary to be welcomed and receive food or other rural products in return, rural areas are effectively out of reach and unheeded. For the majority of the poor, the rural continues to be an important part of their struggles to survive through investments in rural relations and footholds or in pursuing forms of urban agriculture, while maintaining their urban base and identity. However, for all three social categories, what are considered to be rural virtues are still invoked in situations of particular hardship – relating to insecurity, violence, and death – through what Klaufus (2012) terms “symbolic mobility” (quoted in Bank 2015, 1070).

2. Urban–rural trajectories

Maputo was established in 1781 as a Portuguese settlement (called Lourenço Marques); it was declared the capital of the colony in 1898. Strategically, it was a good location both for trade and as a place from which to control the traffic along the East African coast; later, it was also to be an important port for shipment of goods from Transvaal and the South African highlands.³ Relations with the rural hinterland south of the Save River were minimal, however, with its poor, sandy soils making the region worthless to the Portuguese settlers. These relations only intensified when the need arose for labor for the construction of the port and of the railway to Johannesburg, which took place from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. As late as 1930, Maputo had a total population of only 18,000, consisting of an equal number of Portuguese and indigenous African people. The latter were mainly male laborers; their families tended to remain in rural areas (Newitt 1995; Penvenne 1996).

With the establishment of Salazar’s corporatist authoritarian regime (Estado Novo) from the late 1930s, the city’s divergence from the rural became even more pronounced. The Portuguese set out to establish a modern cosmopolitan capital that was designed to “consolidate the grandeur of the regime’s image” (Correia, Fernandes, and Lage 2012, 2), and attempted to do so with high-rise buildings, broad avenues, parks, and spacious homes. At the same time, the African population living in the *bairros* on the outskirts of the city quadrupled between 1950 and 1970 to 378,000, as employment opportunities improved for men

(in the formal sector) as well as for women (in the informal sector). Whole households migrated, as well as single women who had no future in the rural areas: around 50% of the African population in Lourenço Marques were women from around 1960 (Frates 2002).

Except for work, the African population's access to the modern city became strictly controlled through the introduction of pass laws and the distinctions drawn among "whites" (with full access), *assimilados* (honorary whites, with partial access), and *indígenas* (Africans, with no access). For the small educated African middle class, in order to become *assimilados* it was necessary to rid themselves of rural customs including language, beliefs, clothing, and eating habits. Older interlocutors in the *bairros* of Inhagoia and 25 de Junho who we met during fieldwork still talk about visits to the *cidade* (city) as resembling coming to a different world. They also mentioned that people in the *bairros* who could afford to do so began to build "European houses" of bricks, as well as adopting European clothing customs ("trousers, shirts, and hats") and eating "Portuguese food": "rice, soup, and even salted cod – *sempre com azeite* [always with olive oil]."

The majority of poor women and men based their lives on low-paid formal or informal employment, which for women was often supplemented by *machambas* (agricultural fields) in the vicinity of the city or on *machambinhas* (small agricultural plots) in the *bairros*. As Sheldon (2003, 360) observed,

As long as women continued their customary work, such as weeding a patch of ground or pounding grain in a mortar, they were not seen, although that work was essential to African family life and brought a rural sensibility into the centre of urban development.

However, as time went by and Maputo's population grew – with an increasing proportion of Africans, making up 78% of the total by 1970 – land became scarce and women increasingly turned to market vending in their attempts to survive (*Ibid.*, 361).

Access to the formal city opened up during the 1960s, meaning that people without formal employment were also exposed to the "urban and modern." Older interlocutors from our fieldwork describe a situation of informal settlements with a mix of the "urban" and the "rural" – with brick houses next to reed huts, small fields in between congested living quarters, and domestic animals kept in *quintas* (yards). For the Portuguese city authorities, treating the informal *bairros* as rural and out of their area of responsibility was convenient, as implied by their policy of *régulos* – maintaining the authority of traditional rural chiefs in these zones.

Senhora Antónia from Inhagoia A lived through this part of the city's history. She was born in the province of Gaza in 1934, and moved to Maputo with a man from her village who worked for the railways. She started with small-scale trade, first in the *bairro* and then in the *cidade*, and then obtained employment at a cashew-nut factory, using her earnings to buy a plot in Inhagoia A. Since then, her husband and twelve of her fifteen children have died, and she now barely manages by selling vegetables from a small garden in the *bairro*. While longing to be back in her village (*tenho saudades da minha terra*), she realizes she will never manage to return: "Even when I die I will be buried here [*Serei enterrado aqui mesmo na cidade*]. From my house I will go to Lhanguene."⁴

With independence in 1975, and the exodus of the Portuguese, the formal parts of the city were taken over by the new political and economic elite and middle class and by a large number of aid and other foreign workers. Despite the country's transitional economic problems partly following the flight of Portuguese professionals (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983), the city maintained its strong urban appearance with high-rise buildings, shops, and cafés at street level, cultural institutions such as theatres and cinemas bringing the world to

Maputo, and eventually also shopping centers and enclosed, gated communities (Morton 2013). In addition, the proximity to South Africa (the closest South African city, Nelspruit, is about two hours by car or bus from Maputo) has meant easy access to urban goods and tastes, for those who can afford them.

However, the new government led by Samora Machel realized the importance of the rural and agriculture and introduced two initiatives that came to have contradictory effects on their relevance to people in Maputo. One was to establish a *Zona Verde* (Green Zone) in parts of the city with fertile land along the river; as part of this initiative, it supported the establishment of agricultural cooperatives in some of the *bairros* (including Inhagoia and 25 de Junho). This opened up opportunities particularly for poor women, who represented the vast majority of the members of the agricultural cooperatives. An elderly woman, Maria, told us that she has lived in Inhagoia since 1972 and joined the cooperative in 1980: "We did not pay anything [for the *machambinhas*], but they were full of weeds and it was a lot of work."

From the early 1980s, the other initiative – which was to have detrimental effects on the perception of the one-time rural population among Maputo's inhabitants – was the forced removal of people defined as "inactive" or as "outcasts" (which included political opponents): they were moved to rural areas under Operation Production in 1983 (Newitt 1995).⁵ The idea of people "returning to rural life" to work on cooperatives never came to fruition, however, and thousands of people never came back and were never heard from again. For many people we met in the *bairros*, "going to the rural areas" is still associated with both drudgery and danger.

Throughout the post-independence period, it became increasingly difficult to maintain contact with rural areas of origin, which, for the large majority of people in Maputo meant the provinces of Maputo, Gaza, and Inhambane.⁶ With the weak agricultural potential referred to above, combined with increasing imports of agricultural products from South Africa, there was a limited basis for the type of rural–urban exchanges found in many other similar urban settings (Dávila, Kyrou, and Nuñez 2008).

Furthermore, from 1976, the sixteen-year war between governing Frelimo and the rebel movement Renamo, with some of the most intense fighting taking place in the south, made it increasingly difficult to travel between the city and the countryside. Sixty-five-year-old Tadeu from the *bairro* 25 de Junho had to leave his village in the province of Gaza under brutal war-time circumstances, and he has not returned since. According to his daughter, it is "because he is afraid the war will return."

National data on urban–rural links ("split" or "multi-spatial" households, urban households with agricultural fields, and oscillation between urban and rural areas, for example) are scarce in Mozambique, indicating the low priority given to the issue by political authorities. One of the few exceptions is data on the role of agriculture as part of people's economic adaptation/source of income. Taking this as a preliminary proxy for the relation of people to the rural in Maputo, only 7.5% of the city's adult population is involved in agriculture, in comparison to a national average of 80.5% (INE 2010).

In a study of four informal *bairros* in Maputo, including Inhagoia, 38.3% of households say they have access to an agricultural field, but only 4.2% list agriculture as a source of income – implying subsistence production or non-use for the large majority (Paulo, Rosário, and Tvedten 2011). People in Inhagoia and 25 de Junho told us that more often than not the fields do not yield anything, either because of lack of upkeep or poor weather conditions. In two *quarterões* (quarters) in Inhagoia consisting of fifty-two and seventy-two households,

respectively, only seven and four households had actually harvested anything the previous season – even though in a third of these, located close to the river/swamp/agricultural land, ten out of twenty-five households had *machambinhas*.

The same study shows that 56% of households have at least one member who regularly leaves the city, although the large majority of them leave “less than once per month but more than once a year” (*Ibid.*). The most common reasons for going are to visit family (61%) or for socio-cultural events such as marriages and funerals (16%). Twenty percent of households receive support/remittances mainly from their rural extended family in kind or in cash, with the proportion being higher among female-headed households (35%) than among male-headed households (13%). At the same time, 25% claim they send support to household members in rural areas.

Together, the historical and contemporary data indicate relations with rural areas that are relatively limited or dormant compared with many other similar urban conglomerates in the Southern African region referred to in the introduction to this article. This is due to a combination of the (perceived) opportunities for employment, income, and a “modern” lifestyle in Maputo, and the limited access to rural areas and agricultural production in the neighboring provinces from which the large majority of the population originate. In the next section, these data are juxtaposed with our own findings from fieldwork in Maputo and the *bairros* of Inhagoia and 25 de Junho at a time of increasing poverty and inequality in the city and continued poverty in the neighboring provinces (INE 2015).⁷

3. Urban hegemony

In contemporary Maputo, with the presence of the country’s political and economic elite as well as large numbers of foreign aid workers and businessmen, culture in its public sense of ideology and hegemony is dominated by urban and modern expressions at the expense of rurality and tradition (Hannerz 1992; Sumich 2016). The word “cosmopolitan” is used by many who frequent the central parts of the city, arguing that Maputo is more comparable to cities in southern Europe than larger cities in sub-Saharan Africa.

The official municipal jargon is one of Western planning and a process of the formalization of the informal – distinguishing between the “formal,” the “semi-formal,” and the “informal,” and emphasizing the need for “modernization” (CMM 2014). At the same time, the rural-like outskirts of the city (in Zimpeto and Maraquene) are conceived of in terms of areas of urban expansion (“ring road,” “belt-way,” housing complexes, sports stadiums) rather than as an agricultural “green belt.” In addition, plans for the development of informal areas (CMM 2010) are rooted in the terminology of the urban and the modern, emphasizing the need to draw a grid over “informally occupied land,” for formal divisions of property into cadastral plots, and for *casas de bloco* (brick-built houses) and straight, paved roads – rather than building on the existing divisions in public community space (the markets, playgrounds, and sports fields, for example), in *becos* (narrow alleyways), yards, and the *palhotas* (makeshift houses) that are associated with informality and poverty (Nielsen 2011).

In its architecture and physical infrastructure, the formal city is full of high-rise buildings (old and tired as well as new and modern), carefully laid out streets with the four main roads (the avenues of 25 de Setembro and 24 de Julho, Eduardo Mondlane, and Kenneth Kaunda) crossed by smaller streets, and private houses and condominiums with high fences and large yards (Jenkins 2000). The most imposing signs of the urban and modern are huge

(10×20-meter) billboards selling “urban happiness” through items ranging from luxury cars to skin cream. The rural is primarily represented by a number of markets selling (mainly imported) agricultural produce, but in the *cidade* these are hidden inside buildings (such as Mercado Municipal or Mercado Jeanette) or behind high walls (such as Mercado do Povo, located next to the imposing Municipal Hall).

As forms of media that mirror and inform popular culture, television and radio programs are dominated by young urban elements, such as game shows and hip-hop. Cultural institutions are dominated by discotheques and jazz clubs, and by theatres showing Western plays and movies. Restaurants and bars are decidedly “modern” in their appearance and menus. With a few exceptions (such as traditional dance shows and regional dishes at some restaurants), there are no attempts to celebrate tradition and rurality in Maputo’s public culture. “Land” and land ownership is a central part of the Maputo’s hegemonic discourse, but in the sense of plots for building one’s own house, rather than as a basis for agricultural production and a return to the rural. As Senhor Pedro, whom we met in 25 de Junho, put it: “[I]f you do not own your own house you are not a man.”

At a more subtle level of social interaction, the urban hegemony is also reflected in people’s vernacular and notion of “home.” While 85% of the population in Mozambique use a national language as the main form of communication, practically all of the 10.5% using Portuguese as their mother tongue live in cities (INE 2015). Portuguese is no longer primarily associated with colonialism, but with urban life.

Older people in the *bairros* have traditionally separated their “home” (*munti* in Shangana) as the place where they live with their own family and “my home” (*kaya* in Shangana) as the rural place of origin also associated with extended family. However, people increasingly use the Portuguese term *lar* (equivalent to *munti*) to signify belonging – and many of our younger interlocutors did not know the meaning of the term *kaya*.

People living in the city’s informal settlements tend to perceive the city as more complex and as organized into a number of distinct yet overlapping spaces (Bertelsen, Tvedten, and Roque 2013; Roque et al. 2016). The former split between the *cidade de cimento* (cement city) and the *cidade de caniço* (city of reeds) has been replaced by various broad distinctions, which include the formal affluent city, often denoted by the English word “town” to emphasize its modern and cosmopolitan aspects; the formal congested city (*cidade*), with high-rise buildings as the main signifier; the *suburbio* (informal suburbs), dominated by small brick houses and shacks, where the majority of the population lives; and the peri-urban “peripheral city,” which makes up the border with the *cidade periférica* (rural areas) (*ibid.*).⁸ While this breaks up the hegemony of the “cosmopolitan city,” there is no reference to rurality and tradition, neither as an historical nor a contemporary feature of urban life – as argued for in the literature referred to in the Introduction.

4. The rural in the urban

The *bairros* of 25 de Junho (A and B) and Inhagoia (A and B) are located in the center of the informal *suburbia*, and have populations of 20,000 and 35,000, respectively. Despite being adjacent, the former is semi-formal with clearly delineated streets, formalized properties, usually with larger yards, and individual/detached houses; the latter is non-formalized and crowded, with only a few roads, narrow alleyways, and a mixture of (often half-finished) brick houses and *palhotas* (shacks) with very small yards. The differences in physical outline reflect

different historical trajectories as well as differences in levels of employment, income, education, social organization, and crime. These are replicated in stark stereotypes in each of the two *bairros* about people in “the other bairro” in terms of such factors as employed/unemployed, rich/poor, educated/non-educated, and order/disorder (Bertelsen, Tvedten, and Roque 2013). Neither rurality nor tradition are used to signify “the other” in terms of socio-cultural position and forms of interaction as argued by, for example, Gugler (2002) and De Boeck (2011).

What the two *bairros* share is proximity to Maputo’s *Zona Verde* and some of the most productive land in the city – even though its low altitude also makes it among the most flood-prone parts of the city and hence uninteresting for formal city expansion. In an area of approximately ten hectares close to the Mulauze river, a crisscross network of canals has been dug, in between which are hundreds of *machambinhas* that are sub-divided into small “plots” (*canteiros*), each of which measures approximately 1.5 × 2 meters. The area was established in the early 1980s by Mozambique’s first president, Samora Machel, as part of his campaign for agricultural revival and the establishment of cooperatives (including *Força do Povo*, or People’s Power). The form of the organization has since changed and these are now *associações* (associations), with names such as *Dia da Família* (The Day of the Family), and there are options to buy and sell private *machambinhas* outside the association areas.

Each member has between five and twenty-five *canteiros*, worked by themselves and their families or with hired labor.⁹ The most common crop is lettuce, because it grows fast (“thirty days from sowing to harvesting”), but cabbage, onion, and beetroot are also grown here. According to the associations/owners, the work is hard and the pay is low,¹⁰ but trucks arrive from early in the morning to pick up the products and sell them at the large markets in the city “and even to restaurants,” according to Senhor João, who is one of the few men working in the *machambinhas*. The main challenge is access to water: there is either too little (in the dry season) or too much (in the rainy season).¹¹ Everybody has to spend hours in the fields every day, to carry water from the canals in buckets (no water pumps are to be seen) and to weed the ground.

However, some people regard the *machambinhas* as a welcome refuge from urban life. Senhor Daniel is in his mid-forties, was born in Inhambane, and moved to Inhagoia when he was seventeen. Since then, life has taken him to Portugal (as a footballer), East Germany (as a *magirmane*, or student/worker), South Africa (as a panel beater), and back to Inhagoia in 2006. He is divorced, and now runs fifty-five *canteiros*, staying most of the day in his *machambinha*. “I like agriculture,” he says. “There are nice people here I can talk with and relate to, [and] if I stay at home I think too much.” He continues: “[Here in the city] everything is about money. In the countryside there are no problems.” He goes on to add that people who get tired and leave the *machambinhas* “*Não tem moral* [have no motivation].” A woman farmer working next to him concurs: “I will never sell my *machambinhas*. I will eat [*comer*] the money I earn and then it is finished [*vai acabar*] ... If I sell the *machambinha* I will die of hunger [*irei morrer de fome*], with my children.”

As a microcosm of the rural in the urban, the *machambinhas* are interesting and revealing cases. Practically everybody working in the *machambinhas* is from Inhagoia, because “people in Chopala [the local nickname for 25 de Junho] have employment and don’t need to work here,” as Senhora Conceição from Inhagoia A phrased it. Interlocutors in 25 de Junho confirmed this, with some youngsters adding that they would in any case not know how to farm (tilling the soil, sowing, planting, and weeding). At the same time, the *machambinhas* are

also inaccessible for the very poorest. Except for the few original families among whom rights have been handed down from generation to generation, farming requires initial investment in land (each *canteiro* is usually sold/transferred for 150 MT or, more commonly, rented out for 30 MT per month). Investment in buckets to carry water, hoes and seeds, and social relations to secure stable buyers is also necessary. All these factors are way beyond the means of the very poorest.

People's relationships with their rural areas of origin are largely based on the same types of material and socio-cultural constraints. For the very poor, or destitute (the *xisiwana*, or "somebody who has nothing," in the local Shangana vernacular), there are practical as well as social hindrances to visiting their *terra* (area of origin). A return bus ticket to the provinces of Gaza and Inhambane (where most come from) costs between 200–400 MT, and it is impossible to visit rural relatives without bringing with them money or commodities from the city. Having been away for a long time, or having a history of not living up to expectations when visiting, makes it increasingly difficult to go back. In any case, with a history of entire extended families moving to the city, many no longer have close family members remaining in the village. Also, buying land on the outskirts of Maputo for farming is becoming increasingly difficult because prices have surged as a result of the kinds of gentrification outlined above.

Hardly any of our poorest interviewees aspired to one day return to their *terra*, probably because they, consciously or unconsciously, know that their poverty will prohibit them from doing so. Senhor Manuel was born in Maputo in 1973 and lives in 25 de Junho B, and considers Inhambane, where his father was born, his *terra*. Manuel says that he will not move to Inhambane, partly because he depends on city-based *biscate* (petty sales), and because in the city he at least knows how to move around (*pelo menos aqui sei me virar*), and if he has nothing to eat he can get by engaging in illicit activities (*saio e vou zarascar*). Senhora Mafalda from Inhagoia A acknowledges that older people who were born in the villages have closer ties to the rural than youngsters born in the city, but also that "old people today like the city and don't return to their homes [*para casa*]. Some people even bring their parents from the village to the city. Old people don't want the bush [*mato*]¹² anymore – it is a battle to return [*é uma guerra para voltar*]."

For the more affluent in the two bairros (known as *aganhile*, or "to win," in the local Shangana vernacular), the rural areas are not regarded as having much to offer. Their aspiration is an urban lifestyle not only in terms of physical infrastructure and commodities, but also in terms of access to urban culture, which ranges from ways of clothing (*capulanas*, or traditional dresses, are rarely used among the upper and middle classes) to what to eat (rice, meat, and bread rather than porridge, fish, and local plants/nuts as sauce or *cariil*).¹³ Even investing in one's own agricultural fields in the vicinity of Maputo is often seen as a dead end: as Senhora Laura, who is a well-off informal trader of goods from South Africa stated, "[t]hat will not be a good business. It will be cheaper to buy food in the market." Senhor Augusto, who is 66 years old, relatively well off, and lives in 25 de Junho, told us: "You know, the city is no problem for people who like to work; here we have everything that we need."

In fact, most of our better-off interviewees explicitly stated that they have no plans to go back to their village of origin to live. Senhora Rita from Inhagoia, a producer and trader of vegetables, moved to Maputo from Inhambane in 1971 and has never returned:

I do not intend to go back [*voltar para terra*], because there I have no family. My whole family is here in Maputo; my life is here in the city, therefore, I do not have to go back [*não tenho que voltar mais para lá*].

Those who are better-off are conscious about the transition they have made:

As I left the rural area [in 2004], I feel like a man of the city. I only visit the village some times, and my family tell me I have changed a lot ... When I leave my house here, people do not know I am from the rural areas because I changed my appearance [*aparência*]. (Senhor Pedro, Inhagoia A, born 1983)

For the majority of the poor (the *xakwiantxhhana*, or “too many mouths to feed,” in the local Shangana vernacular), agriculture presents itself as among several options in their strategies for survival. Low-paid formal employment – mainly working as security guards and builders, being paid a minimal wage of 2300 MT per month, at best – makes it necessary for households to have additional sources of income and to reduce costs. This will usually involve informal economic activities or agriculture. For people in Inhagoia, agriculture involves work on their urban *machimbinhas* and/or having their own *machambas* either on the outskirts of Maputo (in Maracuene or Manhiça, for instance) or in their rural area of origin. The importance of the rural and agriculture is seen as material – in that it reduces the need to buy food and may yield additional income – and as nurturing rural relationships that may become important in a vulnerable urban context. Senhor Mateus from Inhagoia B, who was 50 years of age, commented:

In the city people die of hunger because you need money for everything, [while] in the countryside this is no problem as you can get food from the *machamba*. There are people who will not move to the city because of hunger; the rice is expensive.

In most of the households interviewed, older women take care of the agriculture, usually by staying on the *macambinhas* all day or in their *machambas* outside the city for days or weeks during critical phases of the planting and harvest seasons. They do this to secure a good harvest, but also to save money on transport. It is difficult, they lament, to get younger family members to join them because they prefer city life. While acknowledging that the costs are high and the returns low, they also state that they “do not have money to buy food.” Many also comment that they “like to own land” and “like agriculture,” and refer to the “tranquility” and “peace” outside the city. Some, such as fifty-five-year-old Senhor Rachi living in Inhagoia B, believes that the ideal strategy would be to split the household, but they do not have the means to do so:

I have lots of land in Gaza, but what I don't have is money. When I get that I want to have one house there [in the countryside] and one here [in the city], and move my wife there for her to do the agriculture while I will stay in the city and work.

For some of the poor, perceptions and relations are built on a nostalgic view of rural life. Senhor António (56 years old, Inhagoia A) has a nearly blind son in his late twenties and says that he urges him to move to his village of origin, claiming that there, “men are always the bosses [*no campo o homem sempre é chefe*].” He contrasts this situation to the city, where “[t]he women like money [*as mulheres daqui gostam de dinheiro*]; they stay with a man because of the money.” He also wants his son to buy pigs, claiming that he can hire five people who “will work hard and don't need that much money.” Senhora Cátia from 25 de Junho B argues that things are lost when people become urban:

People from the countryside [*campo*] show respect [*têm muito respeito*]. When you meet people from the villages they greet you and tell you everything about them, their family, and even the neighbors. But here in the city people only say “good day” and that's it [*as pessoas da cidade só dizem bom dia, acabou*].

However, it is equally common among the poor to express a deep skepticism of things perceived as traditional and rural. A twenty-nine-year-old man visiting Inhagoia from one of the other *bairros* in Maputo says he has only been to his father's village in Gaza once (for a funeral); he does not generally visit because "[t]hey don't develop. They are very backwards [*Não se desenvolve. São muito atrasados*]." He adds, "They don't have anything [*La há falta*]." Senhora Beatriz, in her mid-fifties, still recalls her single longer stay in rural Gaza, complaining about the way people related to each other, dressed, and ate ("They did not even know how to use oil in the food!"); she uses the words *estilos* (styles) and *coreografia* (choreography) when describing urban–rural differences: "I was a stranger in the countryside [*Era estrangeiro no campo*]." Senhor João, who is head of one of the *quarterões* in Inhagoia B, abruptly stated: "The problem with the countryside is that it is full of witchcraft [*O problema do campo é que está cheio de pessoas com azas feiticeiros*]." And the secretary of one of the *bairros* emphatically added:

The difference between the city and the countryside has to do with work: in the city we work little, while in the countryside it is a question of grabbing the hoe [*é só se pegar na enxada*]. There they work hard and die [early]; work here is easy.

Reflecting an urban perspective, the secretary added,

People from the villages are much darker [than we in the city], as they do not have products to put on their bodies to smooth it [*as pessoas do campo são pessoas muito escuros por falta de produtos para aplicar no corpo para o suavizar*].

5. Rural imprints

Above, we have seen how people's economic position has a significant part to play in their perceptions of their rural area and village of origin, the rural in the city, and their place in the urban–rural continuum. Both extreme poverty *and* wealth seem to remove people from their rural past materially and mentally albeit through dissimilar forces and processes, while the majority of poor urban dwellers in Maputo incorporate the rural as part of their daily struggle for survival. At the same time, urban women convey a stronger attachment to the rural than urban men – probably because of their closer affiliation with agriculture – but without losing their urban base. According to Senhora Conceição, who maintains linkages with her rural area of origin in Manhiça (Maputo province):

There are advantages in Manhiça. One can get many things from the machamba, like wood and maize from which I make the drink I sell [*xivembo*]. But I belong to Maputo. This city is good to me [*esta cidade para mim é muito boa*].

However, the increasingly harsh and unequal urban environment for the destitute and the poor, as well as the struggle of the better-off to maintain their urban way of life in the midst of recent economic hardships (Orre and Rønning 2017), has also revitalized or reinvigorated what seem to be *shared* notions of rural culture/rural values. This relates to the values and ideas used to address collective/common urban concerns of the destitute, the poor, and the better-off – such as crime (by invoking perceived rural virtues), increasing vulnerability (through witchcraft), and the afterlife (through funerals). All these represent more symbolic than social and material linkages with the rural and traditional – which Klaufus (2012) terms "symbolic mobility" (quoted in Bank 2015, 1070).

Returning to the *machambinhas* in Inhagoia and 25 de Junho, people eagerly told us that "[n]obody would steal from the *machambinhas*" – in a context where crime and theft are

seen as considerable problems. People explain the fact that theft hardly ever takes place in the agricultural fields with reference to the *machambinhas* being a rural area in the city (*o campo na cidade*).¹⁴ Thus, honesty is seen as a “rural virtue” of which there is a deficit in the city. Senhora Graça from 25 de Junho made fun of rural people in the city, stating that they “always seem confused” and “don’t understand traffic,” but conceded that they could be trusted. João, a twenty-five-year-old man from Inhagoia A, claimed he could name everyone in his *quarterão* who came from the same district as him in Inhambane – but of his family, only his father had been there when he was a child. To him, this was not a way to establish rural relations, but rather a means of defining people he could trust by invoking shared rural roots.

In volatile and complex urban settings such as Inhagoia and 25 de Junho, incidents such as robberies and beatings, flooding and fires, the loss of a job, or the destruction of a dwelling lead to a basic sense of insecurity. To deal with this, inhabitants resort to, and are open about, their strong religious affiliations: the churches and mosques in the *bairros* are always busy. Other ways to manage this sense of insecurity, such as witchcraft and sorcery, are primarily related to the rural and traditional by our interlocutors such as Senhor João quoted above and are much less prominently displayed in the public discourse. However, witchcraft practices and beliefs are very present in the city, but in a subtle and more hidden form than would be the case in a rural environment. According to Senhor Fernandez, whom we met in Inhagoia, and is one of the few people we encountered who made a living by combining the rural and the urban, witchcraft remedies are increasingly coveted in Maputo. He runs a flourishing business with traditional cures from his rural home in the province of Gaza, selling them at Xipamanini, which is Maputo’s largest informal market located in the *cidade*: “People buy it all the time,” he says. He continues, “The rural in the city is Xipamanini [*O mato da cidade é Xipamanini*].” This was confirmed by Senhor Fernandes from Inhagoia A, who stated: “There is now more *feitiçeria* [witchcraft] in the city than in the countryside. Here there are neighbors who don’t speak to each other; in the *campo* they may not understand each other but [at least] they talk.”

The final shared notion of the rural appears around the issue of funerals and the afterlife. More affluent men and women, who explicitly state that rural areas and rural life are not for them, voice concerns about being buried in the city. Some refer to the graveyards in the city as “places where people come and go the whole time, and there is no peace” (Senhor Magaia, 64 years old, 25 de Junho A); others explicitly state that they would like to be buried with their ancestors. They also express a moral concern for taking care of the dead:

I am going home to the village, there in the countryside, at least once per year. I go there because my father and my late husband are buried there. Even my children have gone there to visit the grave of their father. It is good to go to visit our dead loved ones because it gives luck [*é bom a gente ir lá para visitar os nossos anti-queridos porque isto dá sorte*]. (Senhora Rosa, 49 years old, 25 de Junho)

Some of the very poorest know they will never be buried (*enterradas*) in their rural area, as they do not have relatives or others who would pay for transporting the coffin – but they still lament that the sections for the poor who do not have the means for a proper funeral in the city’s graveyards are no place to be.

6. Conclusion

Anthropological research on urban–rural relationships and the “rural in the city” has tended to emphasize the importance of rural areas both for material exchanges and for social relations and security. Distinctions have been made in precedent scholarship in terms of their relative importance (“School/Red” or “Localists/Cosmopolitans,” for example), and more recent studies have argued for a new type of re-ruralization and for an agrarian urbanity in larger cities in Southern Africa. Few of these studies explicitly incorporate the implications of material poverty and wealth into their analyses, despite the drama of inequality in Africa’s cities (Myers 2011; Diouf and Fredericks 2014). However, material poverty confines the range of social relationships, and forces people to think and act in short-term ways, and for a particular end only, in order to survive (Tvedten 2011).

In this article, we have followed urban–rural interactions historically as well as temporarily in two of Maputo’s *bairros*. The combination of a colonial city trying to shape its inhabitants in an urban and modern image, and a poor rural hinterland with little to offer in terms of urban–rural exchanges, has created a sharp distinction between the two types of social formation. In post-independence Maputo, attempts to re-establish rural linkages were disrupted by misguided policies and years of war. Increasing dependence on neighboring South Africa for agricultural produce has also hindered closer economic interaction between the urban and the rural. At the same time, the “modern” dominates hegemonic expressions of urban culture, ranging from huge billboards advertising “material happiness” to the ways in which urbanites speak, dress, and eat.

Fieldwork has revealed how social relations with the rural in two of Maputo’s *bairros* are closely linked to the position people find themselves in on a scale of social (dis)advantage – or class. For the wealthiest, who are in a position to relate to the hegemonic expressions of being urban, rural areas and rural culture are regarded as having little to offer. For the poorest, poverty limits their options, largely confines them to *bairro*-based relationships, and effectively keeps the rural out of their lives and imaginings. For the majority of poor urban dwellers, relating to the rural has become one of several ways to cope with a harsh urban environment either by being “rural in the city” or by nurturing rural relationships as best they can from the position they are in – but without relinquishing their basic sense of belonging to the urban and the modern.

Where the social classes meet is in their (re-)invigoration of the rural in the form of symbolic mobility at decisive moments of urban life, such as in volatile social relationships, sudden external shocks, and in dealing with death and the afterlife. Here, people in the two *bairros* try to resort to or invoke what are considered rural and traditional virtues of honesty and trustworthiness; they draw on witchcraft traditions as a way to control insecurity and dangers; and call upon rural relations and ancestors to secure a burial in accordance with customary tradition.

This way, the perceived and lived distinctions between the urban and the rural among people in the Maputo *bairros* under study seem to be more pronounced than in other similar settings in sub-Saharan Africa – with the invigoration of the rural at critical moments in life being as much an expression of the stress of urban living and poverty as a sign of a longing for rurality and tradition.

Notes

1. In line with Knauft (2002, 18), the term “modern” or “modernity” will be understood to mean “the images and institutions associated with Western style progress and development in a contemporary world,” which through processes of “appropriation, opposition and redefinition” (*Ibid.*, 25) has become associated with “urban life” in Maputo.
2. This study is part of a larger research project entitled “The Ethnography of a Divided City: Space, Poverty and Gender in Maputo, Mozambique,” funded by the Norwegian Research Council (2012–2016). This particular sub-study draws on fieldwork that took place in the *bairros* of 25 de Junho A and B, and in Inhagoia A and B in the District of KaMubukwana in February/March 2015, but also draws on fieldwork from *bairros* in the districts of KaMaxaquene and Nihamankula in other projects (Paulo, Rosário, and Tvedten 2011; Bertelsen, Tvedten, and Roque 2013).
3. As a capital for Mozambique, the city is awkwardly situated at the southern tip of the country, far from both the main population centers (in the north) and the most fertile agricultural regions (in central and northern areas).
4. One of the main public graveyards in Maputo.
5. The most remote province to which people were sent was Niassa, which was also known as “Mozambique’s Siberia.”
6. According to a report from the four *bairros* of Mafalala, Laulane, Khongolote, and Inhagoia (which forms part of this study), most of the heads of households were born in the city of Maputo (33%), in the provinces of Maputo (11.7%), Gaza (27.5%), or Inhambane (22.5%). The remaining 5% were largely located in Mafalala, with a population with roots in the northern province of Nampula (Paulo, Rosário, and Tvedten 2011).
7. According to the Third National Poverty Assessment (MPD 2010), Maputo has a poverty headcount of 36.2% and a poverty gap of 5.2%, with the poverty headcounts of the provinces of Maputo, Gaza, and Inhambane being 67.5, 62.5, and 57.9%, respectively – compared to a national poverty headcount of 54.7%. More recent data on inequality shows that the urban Gini coefficient (dominated by Maputo) is 0.55, with the equivalent figure for rural areas being 0.37 (INE 2015).
8. This also reflects recent population movements, with overcrowding and “slumification” of the formal congested city, followed by a gentrification of former peripheral *bairros* such as Khongolote and Zimpeto as people move out to avoid the city center. This entails an ensuing de facto ejection of the recent migrant/semi-rural population who can no longer find space, or afford, to live there (Bertelsen, Tvedten and Roque 2013; Paulo, Rosário, and Tvedten 2011).
9. According to a local authority source, these are usually “youngsters from the rural areas who have just moved to the city, are exploited, and hardly receive any pay.”
10. The stipulated income varies between 150–200 to 300–400 *meticais* (MT) per *canteiro* per month, depending on the work put in and the time of year.
11. The *Zona Verde* is the part of the city most susceptible to flooding, as evidenced during 2000 when all the *machambinas* and adjacent houses were washed away.
12. The term signifies “countryside” or “rural area,” but in a slightly more derogatory way than the more neutral *campo*.
13. The study referred to earlier (Paulo, Rosário, and Tvedten 2011) shows that during the week before the survey interview, 100 percent of the households had eaten rice or porridge, 95 percent had eaten bread, and 34.2 percent meat.
14. Some elders also attributed this to the fact that the cooperatives/associations were originally established by Frelimo’s independence hero and first president, Samora Machel, but thirty-five years later, most residents do not have that type of relationship with independent Mozambique’s early history.

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