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**The genesis of a field – Social Sciences research dynamics in post-colonial
Mozambique, the case of the Center of African Studies (1976-1986)**

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Research Proposal¹:

The genesis of a field – Social Sciences research dynamics in post-colonial Mozambique, the case of the Center of African Studies (1976-1986)²

This study proposes to discuss the relationship between social sciences research and the political and social context of nation-state building/ in post – colonial Mozambique, during the “socialist transition” (1976-1986), dominated by FRELIMO³. The case study is the Centre of African studies (CEA), the first and most prolific social science research institution after independence. The CEA was also well known internationally because it congregated a great number of foreign scholars (mostly Marxists from Europe, Latin America, USA and particularly South African anti – *apartheid* intellectuals⁴).

This work will be guided by four specific objectives; Firstly, to examine the intersections between the priorities defined at a political level, and the social research priorities of the CEA, also how they influentiated each other. Secondly to look, critically, at the topics of research privileged and the ones “marginalized”⁵. Thirdly, to analyze, using the concept of “critical engagement”⁶, the ways in which the scientific discourse of the CEA brought to the surface, the contradictions of the FRELIMO policies, questioning, for example, the new socialist development strategies in relation to the socialization of the countryside, the construction of a planned and centralized economy, the project of the “communal villages” etc. Finally, to discuss the role that the intellectuals played in perpetuating and spreading the worldview of the dominant group and the construction of a “modern” national identity based on socialist

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² My current PhD research work.

³ *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Mozambican National Front). FRELIMO started in 1964 the armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism, which culminated in 1975 with the national independence. In 1977, in their III Congress FRELIMO, changed to a outspoken “Marxist - Leninist vanguard Party”, with the mission to build a socialist country in Mozambique.

⁴ For example, the activist and scholar Ruth First, who was the Scientific Director of the CEA until her assassination in 1982, in her office at the Centre, by a parcel bomb sent by the South African Apartheid regime

⁵ For example, the discipline of Anthropology, in the first years of the independence, was seen with suspicion and hostility by some CEA scholars. For example, the Congolese historian from the CEA, Jacques Depelchin, claimed that the discipline should be eradicated from university because it was unable to suppress its colonial and ethnocentric heritage. According to him, the discipline was studying what was called as the “primitive” and “uncivilized”, the non -European people. Moreover, the Mozambican politicians feared that the discipline would jeopardize the political project of national identity, and the creation of the “new man” in Mozambique, when dealing with cultural differences, ethnicity, “tribes” and “traditions” and the internal dynamics of the post - colonial war in Mozambique (1976-1994).

⁶ Isaacman, Allen. “Legacies of Engagement: Scholarship Informed by Political Commitment”, *African Studies Review*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Apr., 2003), pp. 1-41.

principles. Here, I will use (the) Michel Foucault's concept of "truth regimes"⁷, which, I believe, allows us to understand the political context of the CEA social research, the power relations within and outside the center and the different interpretations about the social reality propagated by the CEA intellectuals.

The relationship between social research and political context will be analyzed through the use of a qualitative approach (analytical reading of the CEA texts, discourse analysis etc) to the scientific production of the CEA. For this purpose, I will select a representative number of their works, using the three main CEA sources of knowledge dissemination: the journal of social sciences, *Estudos Moçambicanos* ("Mozambican Studies"), the historical journal, *Não Vamos Esquecer!* ("We Shall Not Forget!"), and also the "*Relatórios de Investigação* (Research Reports) produced by the CEA researchers and students from the *Curso de Desenvolvimento*"⁸. Most of the consultancy reports were often "requested" by the Mozambican government in order to help them with practical solutions in the strategy of "social transformation of production". The Scientific Reports will be chosen taking into consideration the priorities of the government for the "Mozambican revolution", as well as the strategies of social research by the CEA.

Semi - structured interviews will be conducted with the social scientists from CEA and other relevant research and teaching institutions. I will also interview politicians, representatives of the state institutions like, ministries, national directors, and members of political parties. Finally I will (also) conduct interviews with students of the *Curso de Desenvolvimento*. I intend to use the statistical software SPSS in order to assess the number of publications, topics, disciplines, year of production and nature of the research done from 1976-1986. This statistical work will be useful in making the connection between the research and the political priorities within a specific ideological and social context.

⁷ Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972 - 1977*, Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books.

⁸ The first post - graduate study (Master degree) in the history of Mozambique. It was introduced by the CEA in 1979, and was designed to be a "revolutionary" course on development studies, involving not only students from a variety of disciplines but also cadres, mostly without a university degree, from the state institution, like ministries, banks, army etc.