

# **ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS AND THE LEGITIMIZATION OF THE STATE: THE CASE OF THE CENTRE OF AFRICAN STUDIES, MOZAMBIQUE (1975- 1990)<sup>1</sup>**

## Abstract

Using the Centre of African Studies Centre from the Eduardo Mondlane University, as an example, this article analyses the processes of knowledge production and the legitimization of the state during the socialist years of post-independence Mozambique. It argues that the processes of knowledge production in a context of nation-state building generated dynamics that challenged the assumptions within which the CEA should have produced knowledge. For instance, in the production of a type of research that not only took into consideration its function as a policy-oriented research but, mostly important, in identifying and questioning the very process of knowledge production. These inter-relationships between knowledge production and legitimization of the state, could then not only explain the specificities of the CEA, but also the emergence of a new field of research in post-independence as well as the conditions under which, the social sciences gained contours in Mozambique as a privileged mode of knowledge production in society.

## Introduction

This paper proposes to discuss the processes of knowledge production and the legitimization of the state in post- independence Mozambique, during the period of “socialist transition” (1975-1990<sup>2</sup>). The case study is the Centre for African Studies (CEA), from Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM). The study has two specific objectives. The first objective is more descriptive; it tries to reconstitute the intellectual history of the Centre, describing the social and political context of its creation, their members, the research organization, the epistemic objects and theoretical approach. The second objective is analytical and can be subdivided in two parts. First, it proposes to analyse the relationship between the production of knowledge by the CEA and the political context of the construction of socialism in Mozambique with the national liberation struggles in the southern Africa region. Second, it examines the intellectual

role CEA played in legitimating the worldview and aspirations of the dominant political group. This examination will be based fundamentally on the concept of “organic intellectual” from the Italian theoretician Antonio Gramsci (2004), and also the concept of “field” from French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (2004).

The central thesis of the study is that the processes of knowledge production (conflicting most of the time, as Pierre Bourdieu would say), in a context of nation-state building, where FRELIMO, the ruling party, defended the idea of national unity and the development of an applied social sciences towards the socialist transformation, generated dynamics that extrapolated the assumptions within which the CEA should have produced knowledge. For instance, in the production of a type of research that not only took into consideration its function as a policy-oriented research but, mostly important, in identifying and questioning the very process of knowledge production. These inter-relationships between knowledge production and legitimization of the state, could then not only explain the specificities of the CEA, but also the emergence of a new field of research in post-independence as well as the conditions under which, the social sciences gained contours in Mozambique as a privileged mode of knowledge production in society.

### 1. The Birth of the Centre for African Studies

Mozambique witnessed, at independence in 1975, the mass exodus of Portuguese university teachers, and students. In the first years of independence, only between 1975 to 1978, the number of students dropped from 2,433 to 740, while the number of Mozambican teachers was reduced to less than 10 teachers<sup>3</sup>(Bevwijk 2005:102). Due to this lack of teaching staff, the university in the early years of the post - independence had to improvise using “student-monitors” who collaborated in teaching and research under the direct guidance of a teacher. The only social sciences courses in the university were Romanic Filology, History and Geography. These courses were profoundly eurocentric, focusing solely on Portuguese history and culture. Only the first year was available in the colony. Students had to go to Portugal in order to finish their degree (Cruz e Silva 2005:36). After independence the picture remained relatively the same. For instance, courses of sociology, anthropology, political sciences were only introduced in Mozambique in 1995.

In January 1976, commenced the first academic year of the single university in the Country. In May of that year, FRELIMO government changed the colonial name of “University of Lourenço Marques,” to “Eduardo Mondlane University” (UEM), in honor of the first president of FRELIMO. This modification marked, symbolically, the attempt of political power to make a “complete break with the colonial past” and to create a new conception of higher education: a people’s university in the service of Mozambican society towards socialism (Ganhão 1844:7). For FRELIMO leaders the genesis of social theory could not be exclusively linked to the study of text, the classroom, but should also be linked to "practical and social struggles” (Ganhão 1844:7).

It was then in this context of building a socialist university system, shadowed by the flight of the Portuguese cadres, and the consequent blockage of many courses, that the idea for the creation of the CEA emerged. According to Fernando Ganhão, high-ranking member the of FRELIMO party and the Rector of the “new” university,

There were no Mozambicans to replace them. We went to the socialist countries in order to find people to fill these gaps. First in the socialist countries, because I myself came from a socialist country, Poland, where I was doing my PhD. However, I was aware of the limitations they had in the Social Sciences. Thus, we didn’t want to use these models here in Mozambique. Then I decided to turn my attention to the University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania where I found the Centre for Graduate Studies in Development, among which, some researchers such as Marc Wuyts who I invited to work in Mozambique in order to create a learning area in the Social Sciences here at UEM<sup>4</sup>.

This project never materialized and the Rector reflected on the need to create “something” around research in History, using for that purpose the finalist’s young Mozambican students of the History course. Again according to Fernando Ganhão,

I talked to several people. I invited Dr. Aquino de Bragança, who was a journalist of Afrique-Asie, and contacted my students of the

Bachelor of History. I was then a professor of History. I invited some students, among them, Luís de Brito, Carlos Serra<sup>5</sup>, Teresa Cruz e Silva, Isabel Casimiro and others that I do not remember. Anyway, all that group of students from high school. It was then that I remembered to make homage to the African Studies Centre that was created in 1949 in Lisbon by Amílcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto, Marcelino dos Santos and others who were in exile<sup>6</sup>.

The Centre for African Studies (CEA) was then formally established in January 1976, with its Director Aquino de Bragança, militant of the lusophone liberation struggles in the 1960's, a well-known journalist, political activist, scholar and the personal advisor of President Samora Machel. In the first year of the creation of the CEA, the team of researchers consisted, exclusively of the first generation of young Mozambican historians, namely, Luís de Brito, Eulália de Brito, Miguel da Cruz, Ana Loforte, Teresa Cruz e Silva, Salomão Nhantumbo, Amélia Muge, Nogueira da Costa, João Morais and Ricardo Teixeira and António Pacheco. However, foreign researchers like Marc Wuyts Kurt Mandorin, Barry Munslow, and David Wield, had started to come to the Centre. Some of these researchers were initially recruited to teach in idealized social science courses, designed by Rector Fernando Ganhão. As this project did not succeed, these researchers were gradually integrated into the CEA as collaborators.

The Centre was structured around research on the history of colonial Mozambique, divided into sections, each representing different historical periods. The research group on Southern Africa (Luís de Brito, Eulália de Brito and Antonio Pacheco, including the Director); the XIX Century research group (Nogueira da Costa and Miguel Cruz); and the Anthropology research group (Ana Loforte, Salomão Nhantumbo and Amélia Muge). It was then with this composition that the CEA has carried out in 1976, their first collective research on the ongoing peace negotiations for the national independence of Zimbabwe. This Report entitled “Zimbabwe - The Rhodesian Question<sup>7</sup>”, would change decisively the dynamics of social science research in the post-independence bringing a research that was basically collective and that was concerned with the present and not exclusively focused on the past like in the first year of its foundation<sup>8</sup>.

The CEA gained a new momentum in 1977 with the arrival of Ruth First<sup>9</sup>, who came originally to lead a collective research (with the collaboration of CEA researchers), on

the Mozambican migrant labor to the mines of South Africa, which was published first as a Consultancy Report to the Mozambican government and in 1983, as book entitled, "Black Gold: The Mozambican miner, Proletarian and Peasant". This study turned out to be the best work of the Centre<sup>10</sup>. After its completion, Ruth First was nominated in 1979 for the post of Scientific Director of the CEA. From there, Ruth First would lead the majority of scientific research of the Centre<sup>11</sup>.

The old structure of the CEA strictly focused, as described earlier, in pre-colonial history of Mozambique, began to lose its strength. There was now the Nucleus for Southern African Studies<sup>12</sup>, the massive research under the brand new CEA research/teaching project, the post-graduate course on Development (*Curso de Desenvolvimento*)<sup>13</sup>, the *Oficina de História* (The History Workshop), created in the beginning of the year 1980, by the hand of the Director of the Centre, Aquino de Bragança, which was concerned in developing a systematic research on the historical experience of the national liberation struggle, with special focus on its teachings for the on-going revolutionary process of building socialism in Mozambique. Finally, there was the documentation center directed by the South African scholar, Colin Darch.

## 2. The Emergence of Creative Tensions: "Factions"<sup>14</sup> and Contested Versions

The purpose of this section is to show that the CEA was not a homogeneous institution of scientific production. Although it shared some common traits, it was also a place of struggles and competitions for scientific capital, reputation but also for the definition of the research objects, methodologies and theories. There is a tendency in this section to give too much credit to the responses of the interviewees. I tried in the last paragraphs to make an analytical approach to the CEA researcher's responses.

During these interviews with researchers from CEA, one of the topics mostly referred by them was the relationship of complementarity (but also, as we shall see, of ambiguity), between the Director of the Centre, Aquino de Bragança<sup>15</sup>, and Ruth First, scientific director. Aquino de Bragança would have a minimal role in the definition, formulation, organization and approval of the research. We could say that the "intellectual capital" of Aquino de Bragança was more attached to his body of

knowledge and experience about the history of liberation movements in Africa, as well as its proximity to the "backstage" of political power. For the largest share of respondents, the "engine" of the CEA was embodied by the figure of Ruth First. It was repeatedly mentioned her leadership skills and organization of research and teaching in the CEA. Dan O'Meara, South African researcher from the CEA, for example, did not hesitate to reiterate,

Everyone in the CEA, including Aquino, clearly realized that it was Ruth who ran the place, who took almost all the decisions and who garnered most of the money to fund the work of the CEA<sup>16</sup>.

Ana Maria Gentili, Italian historian was also one of the CEA researchers that also highlighted the leadership skills of Ruth First,

Ruth First was a person who had great qualities as a researcher, journalist and a great capacity of organizing the research at the Centre. With her, you had to show that you were a good researcher, and had everything finished on time<sup>17</sup>.

It is still the Mozambican researcher, Teresa Cruz e Silva, who then gave a clear picture of the differences between the two leaders of the Centre, "with Ruth First we learned the method, how to work, how to interrogate (...) it was organized, methodical, systematic exactly the opposite of Aquino de Bragança." Respondents also related her strong personality with the appearance of resentment and tensions among researchers of the Centre, as well as with other departments of research and teaching at UEM. As Teresa Cruz e Silva said,

There were some conflicts because of her personality. Ruth First, with her temperament and her way of command, did not accept very well the people of the Faculty of Arts, as well as the Faculty of Economics<sup>18</sup>.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter in psychological debates about the personality of Ruth First, but we must, however, emphasize that Ruth First had, in fact,

two distinct intellectual agendas, one related to her role as the CEA research director and other as a anti-apartheid political activist, member of the ANC and the South African Communist Party. João Paulo Borges Coelho, Mozambican researcher from TBARN<sup>19</sup>, referred to this influence of these two *personas* of Ruth First,

Within the CEA, tensions appeared when Ruth First came in. When she arrived, she entered as a researcher to build a project, but she also has brought her own agenda from the academic core of the ANC that has been created in the Centre. It was a kind of counterintelligence activity or investigation of the situation from an observation point much closer to South Africa<sup>20</sup>.

Ruth First believed that her work in the direction of research at CEA would also contribute to the struggle of the ANC, not only in the production of knowledge (for instance, the understanding of politics and South African society was seen as vital to the success of socialism in Mozambique), but also in experiencing, daily, the reconstruction of a “new” country. Ruth First believed that the political experience of Mozambicans managing a sovereign country would be very helpful and pedagogical for members of the ANC in the underground struggle (in Mozambique), to understand the daily challenges of ruling an independent country.

In fact Ruth First’s vision was in full accordance with the vision of the Mozambicans (researchers as well as politicians) that Mozambican reality could only be analyzed and understood within the southern Africa context. This is the reason why we had in the CEA a research group on southern Africa studies. Thus the research work of the Nucleus of Southern Africa at the CEA produced “political intelligence” not only to the ANC<sup>21</sup> but also for the Mozambican government who was also committed to the liberation of all Southern Africa region. Dan O’Meara, a South African researcher and member of the ANC, who joined the CEA in 1981 and worked within the umbrella of the Nucleus of southern Africa Studies, also alluded to this connection between politics and research,

We were in London to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Yusuf Dadoo, the then General Secretary of the South African Communist

party. Joe Slovo and Ruth First were there. Ruth called me aside and asked me if I was interested in coming to work for the CEA. She explained that she had the support of President Samora Machel and Vice-President Marcelino dos Santos. She said that the understanding of politics and South African society was vital to the success of socialism in Mozambique<sup>22</sup>.

In her work towards the planning, designing and leadership of the research, Ruth First relied almost entirely on a small “inner circle” of researchers from the CEA. Three of these stand out: the macro-Belgian economist, Marc Wuyts, the American anthropologist, Bridget O’Laughlin and the German sociologist Kurt Habermeier<sup>23</sup>. However, the latter would leave the CEA in the early 1980’s. Marc Wuyts and Bridget O’Laughlin were in fact the great intellectual influence of Ruth First. While Ruth First provided the political line and discipline (and was respected due to that), the analysis of Mozambican society was fundamentally done by Marc Wuyts and Bridget O’Laughlin. Marc Wuyts, as Luis de Brito once said, “the theoretical soul of the CEA<sup>24</sup>”, provided a coherent understanding of the economic development of Mozambique and the problems created by the colonial economy, but also by the policies of FRELIMO. Bridget O’Laughlin provided a compelling understanding of how rural society functioned. It was the “trio<sup>25</sup>” Ruth / Marc / Bridget, who ultimately decided on the nature of research and teaching that CEA should develop, particularly through the Development Course. Ruth First gave these two researchers a clear pre-eminence and trusted them fully.

There was a second faction, the History Workshop, which was organized around people like Aquino de Bragança, the Congolese historian Jacques Depelchin, the Italian historian Ana Maria Gentili, the young Brazilian researcher Valdemir Zamparoni and the group of young Mozambican historians, Yusuf Adam, Alexandrino José, Salomão Nhantumbo and Isabel Casimiro. This group sought to depart from the control of Ruth First, many of these researchers found that Ruth First abused their power and resented her attitude towards Aquino de Bragança<sup>26</sup>. As Judith Head said “Ruth did not want the History Workshop; her work was the *Curso de Desenvolvimento*.” The creation of the History Workshop can then be interpreted – besides its main objective of rescuing the dignity of the historical past of Mozambican people – as a form of Aquino de Bragança

to guarantee a “room for maneuver”, (outside the scope of Ruth) for the direction and definition of the objects of research at the CEA.

In the same vein, researchers at the Nucleus of Southern Africa, that under the initiative of Ruth First produced “dossiers” on policy analysis in southern Africa, to be distributed to members of the government, were constantly fighting to get their own space, free of Ruth First’s command, where they could develop other approaches to Southern Africa, with particular emphasis on contemporary sociological analysis of South Africa. They were the third faction, composed by Robert Davies, Dan O’Meara, Siphon Dlamini, Gottfried Wellmer, Alpheus Manghezi and Yussuf Adam. Their main struggle, as we mentioned above, was to conquer a space where they could set up their own research agenda, outside the control of Ruth First. Dan O’Meara’s testimony is illustrative of this tension,

We felt that Ruth did not follow the South African political issues as deeply as we followed it, and her understanding of some aspects of the struggle in South Africa was not updated, which consisted in repeating a political line rather than a detailed analysis of the evolution of various aspects of the struggle in South Africa<sup>27</sup>.

As we can see, although we could point out some common characteristics that united the CEA researchers (for e.g. the intellectual support of the FRELIMO worldview, and the struggles for national liberation of southern Africa), this Center was not a homogeneous entity. It was also a “space of struggles” where the researchers and groups had also different scientific capitals, scientific practices, beliefs objects and research. As Pierre Bourdieu asserted,

Falar de campo significa romper com a ideia de que os cientistas formam um grupo unificado ou até homogêneo (...) o que se observa são conflitos, por vezes ferozes, e competições no interior de estruturas de domínio. A visão `comunitarista` esquece-se do próprio fundamento do funcionamento do mundo científico como universo de disputas pelo `monopólio da manipulação legítima` dos

bens científico, ou seja, mais exactamente, do bom método, bons resultados, boa definição dos fins, objectos e métodos da ciência<sup>28</sup>. (Bourdieu 2004:68).

### 3. Organic intellectuals and state legitimization

This section intends to analyze the processes of state legitimization through the scientific work of the CEA. It must be referred, however, that it does not make an exhaustive analysis of all CEA scientific production. It only discusses their main lines of investigation (however, with some particular reference to one or two scientific texts) in relationship with the political priorities of the state for the socialist transformation of Mozambique.

According to Antonio Gramsci, all human beings are potentially intellectuals (we all have an intellect and we use it) but not all have in society the function of intellectuals. For him there are two types of intellectuals: Traditional intellectuals and organic intellectuals. Gramsci identifies the ecclesiastics as the most typical form of traditional intellectual, who are organically bound to the landed aristocracy. Another type of traditional intellectual is the rural intellectual, a category that includes priests, lawyers, notaries and teachers. It is, on the other hand, ‘organic’ intellectuals who engage in ‘active participation in practical life as constructor, organiser, permanent persuader and not just as simple orator.’ (Elliot, 2003: 411). They were “organic” because they are linked to a social class or a specific mode of production. The organic intellectuals would be then the “managers of legitimization” (Fatton, 1986:735). They contributed to make the class which they belong, the ruling class and hegemonic in society.

This paper does not intend to use a restricted definition of the concept of organic intellectual. The operationalization of the concept for the case of CEA is directly linked to the processes of state legitimization. Thus, “class” is here conceptualized as “class of the state”. As George Balandier asserted, “it is the access and the struggle over power which contributes to the formation of the single well constituted class in Africa: the ruling class” (Balandier *and* Zamparoni, 1998). Thus, for the Mozambican context, we will focus on the role of the researchers from CEA (through their research agenda) in constructing the socio-economic configuration of the hegemonic project of FRELIMO.

The 3rd Congress of FRELIMO in 1977 (where it defined the national liberation movement as a Marxist-Leninist one-party state), established the strategic line of socialist development of Mozambique. As the new political party said,

(..) In this strategy agriculture is the base and industry the dynamizing and decisive factor. This implies that initially agriculture is the main source of accumulation for the economic development. This means that socialization - the extension and consolidation of the state sector and cooperativization of family production - is an imperative and immediate task (FRELIMO, 1977:3).

Thus, in order to better serve the objectives of the state (or paraphrasing Gramsci, the ruling class project), the researchers from the CEA sought to combine their research priorities with the political priorities of FRELIMO for the socialist development of Mozambique. This is the reason why a consistent number of “Consultancy Reports” were produced (some of these, directly requested by various State agencies, including ministries, national directorates, the President of the Republic, etc.) about the socialist transformation of production, socialization of the countryside, construction of communal villages, restructuring of the transport network in Southern Africa, among others.

Table 1 – Main Lines of Investigation of the CEA (1976-1986)

Choice of Problems for Research	Consultancy Reports
Communal Villages	2
Agricultural Marketing	3
Cooperatives	4
Cotton Production	7
Migrant Labor	2
Rural Transformation	9
Transport in Southern Africa	5
Total	32

The topics of rural transformation, cotton production, the socialization of production, and transport in the southern region, ended up being the topics mostly researched (see table I). The intellectual work was, in fact, subsidiary of the objectives of the political strategy of FRELIMO for the construction of socialism and not the reverse. It was precisely in this link between intellectual work and “revolution” that resided the critiques from the French anthropologist, Christian Geffray, which came to Mozambique in 1983-84 in the critical years of the CEA (see pag.15) to do a research on the internal dynamics of civil war in Northern Mozambique. During his staying in the university, he wrote a paper<sup>29</sup>, criticising the scientific work of the CEA. The critique of Christian Geffray rested on two points. Firstly, the author stated that the scientific discourse of the CEA on “the social existence of the peasantry was theoretically dubious” (Geffray1988:73), because the researchers of the Centre did not take into consideration the cultural specificities and social differences of the peasantry, seeing them as a homogeneous entity.

On the other hand, Christian Geffray claimed that “the social existence of the peasantry was also politically dubious (Geffray1988:76). For Christian Geffray the work of CEA

(conceptualized as an “organ of state”) accommodated itself to the discourse of power, with the main purpose of legitimizing – scientifically - the FRELIMO ideology of the nation-state building, and the socialist organization of society. As Christian Geffray said the CEA accepted the official discourse that believed into the existence in Mozambique of a “peasantry class”.

In the end of his article, the author describes some of the factors that contributed to give scientific credibility to the CEA, in particular the political and scientific reputation of its founders. He referred to Aquino de Bragança and Ruth First who enjoyed some influence in political circles because of the undeniable value of their productions within certain scientific fields, the reputation of a "critical" (quotes from the author) reflection of CEA researchers and the adequacy of a language to the aspirations of the ruling elite<sup>30</sup>.

We could point out two limitations of the Christian Geffray’s article. First, his critique that the CEA saw the peasantry as a homogenous mass is incorrect. For instance, the collective research of the CEA, “The Mozambican Miner: a study on the export of Labour” on the concluding chapter entitled “workers or Peasants?” makes an exhaustive analysis, on the social base of the peasantry as well as a discussion on the political implications of organizing the peasantry into “communal villages”, due to their differentiation into social classes (the poor peasants, the middle peasants and the rich peasants such as the ones who were working as miners in South Africa). In fact, the CEA researchers moved away from the dualist opposition between “traditional” and “modern” sector (a premise which Christian Geffray falls to make), arguing that the peasants were deeply penetrated by the capitalist accumulation and wage earned in the south african mines.

Secondly, Christian Geffray’s conceptualization of CEA as an homogeneous and consensual entity, or as an “organ of state, that subordinated, a-critically, their research agenda to the aspirations of the power politics is also questionable. The emergence of factions and contested versions (discussed in the previous section) is a clear example of the heterogeneous character of this institution of knowledge production. The analysis of Antonio Gramsci can be, again, very useful here to better clarify the characteristics of the intellectual work of the CEA within the context of a totalitarian socialist project in

Mozambique. As we know, from the perspective of this author, there was a clear difference between “political hegemony”, a concept involving the leninist dictatorship of the proletariat, and the “ideological hegemony”, which meant an “intellectual and moral leadership” achieved through “ideological consent of the masses” (Salamini1974:362).

In this sense, the organic intellectuals of CEA followed the political line of FRELIMO, not because they were coerced (as would happen if the CEA was strictly an “organ of state” ( not in the legal sense, but in the idea that their research work subordinated to the political guidelines of the state), but because they voluntarily consented, since, to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci, they had “internalized” the hegemonic project of FRELIMO (or at least the interpretation that was given to the frelimist project), and its critical work serving ultimately to legitimize the state. Only in this way we can then understand the “organicity” of these intellectuals. As Dan O’Meara reiterated,

Each of the researchers employed by CEA saw their academic work as deeply politically engaged. We all believed we had a commitment to socialism for the liberation of Mozambique and South Africa and Namibia, and everything we did was shaped by it<sup>31</sup>.

How an organ of intellectual production, such as the CEA, could be at same time, committed to the ideological hegemony of FRELIMO and exercise a critical thinking? The next section proposes to tackle this question.

#### 4. Critical Engagement: An Oxymoron?

In order to understand the dynamics of social science research in the CEA, we must abandon the simple opposition between autonomy of social research and its reduction to an ideological function. In this sense, the exigencies of a “pure” and value-free research, does not allow us to capture an entire social and political context that was crucial in defining the research priorities of the CEA. It was then, what Allen Isaacman (2003) called “critical engagement<sup>32</sup>” of the CEA researchers that would make their work relevant and important to a wide audience inside and outside academia. As we saw in

the last section, the CEA advocated that “research should have an immediate and active role in the process of socialist transformation, they also argued that it was necessary to “make social research a practical tool for the Mozambican revolution. “<sup>33</sup>On the other hand, CEA researchers sought also to create a space where they could develop a type of social science that could also reflect on the very processes of knowledge production. This was, for instance, the case of the article written by Aquino de Bragança and Jacques Depelchin, “Da idealização da FRELIMO á compreensão da História de Moçambique<sup>34</sup>”. The text was an invitation to reflect on the conditions of historic knowledge production. They discussed the possibilities of re-writing the history of FRELIMO and Mozambique, in the light of the contradictions that existed within the contemporary Mozambican society. They claimed the production of an objective and iconoclastic research, that started with the national liberation struggle and ended at the present situation FRELIMO’s control of state power. For Aquino de Bragança and Jacques Depelchin (1986), it was necessary to “formulate new questions”. In this way, the historical analysis had to go beyond the “official History”, the “canonical text”, deepening the critical thinking and analyzing the “reality as it is<sup>35</sup>” not trying to give answers that solely reinforced the dominant ideology and which were not based on the critique of those same ideologies. For these authors, the official History had the “tendency to be a teleological history and a self-justification<sup>36</sup>.”

We thus find four main characteristics of the critical engagement of the CEA. First, the defense of a self-reflexive approach to knowledge production. Second, the development of a collective type of research; it sought to emphasize the unity of theory and practice, demonstrating that the solutions to the socialist development of Mozambique laid in a break with the colonial historiography and the choice of a new “theory of social change.” It also meant a close link between theoretical and empirical research of socio-economic realities of Mozambique. On other hand, it as also a collective research that was concerned with the national liberation of Southern African.

Third, it was a research with a focus on the “actual” and urgent character that sought to examine (but policy-oriented, with the final purpose of providing solutions and recommendations) the development of strategies of the FRELIMO Party/State and its validity for the social transformation in contemporary Mozambique. It was a scientific research with a view that in the end, the knowledge produced had to have a practical

function in society. The Consultancy Reports, requested by the various organs of the state are an eloquent example of the choice by the CEA, of an applied social science that could provide solutions to the challenges of the socialist transition faced by the ruling party.

Fourth and lastly, it was a research that was concerned with the training of the students and cadres from the state apparatus, mainly through the Development Course and also committed to public diffusion of their findings through the historical journal *Não Vamos Esquecer!* as well as the social sciences review, *Estudos Moçambicanos*.

The great challenge of CEA was therefore to preserve a space where they could exercise the doubt and to be willing to look critically at the social and political causes that they supported (the construction of a socialist alternative to Mozambique but also the liberation of the Southern Africa region). Here, the role of critical engagement was not only to reveal the injustice of imperialism and in the Mozambican case of destabilization promoted by the apartheid regime, but also to formulate critical questions on how this scheme could be wiped out and how to build a socialist society in Mozambique. In the same vein, not only to support the development model proposed by FRELIMO, but to show, when appropriated its weaknesses and inconsistencies.

Another crucial element on the critical work of the Centre was their financial autonomy from the university or the government. These institutions have collaborated in other ways; for example, in the particular case of the government, primarily in facilitating through the local administrative structures, the fieldwork with rural communities or even providing transportation to the communities. Financially, the CEA received support mainly from foreign non-governmental institutions. According to Teresa Cruz e Silva,

The CEA had two privileged and unconditional financing partners: SIDA<sup>37</sup> and SAREC<sup>38</sup> who gave an institutional funding that remained until the times of Sergio Vieira<sup>39</sup>. The CEA received the money and did whatever they wanted with it and did not pay bills. The Swedes have always been friends with FRELIMO. The idea of SAREC was to allow an institution to play a pivotal role in

transforming the vision of what were the social sciences and especially to allow an investigation without imposition of research themes<sup>40</sup>.

The Mozambican researcher, Isabel Casimiro also mentioned that,

It was the Centre which managed their money and their research, they did not have to report to the Dean and had control over their funds. The money was in the Centre, this was one of the things that Ruth First and Aquino succeeded. There was money for training, and to do capacity building up until the 90's<sup>41</sup>.

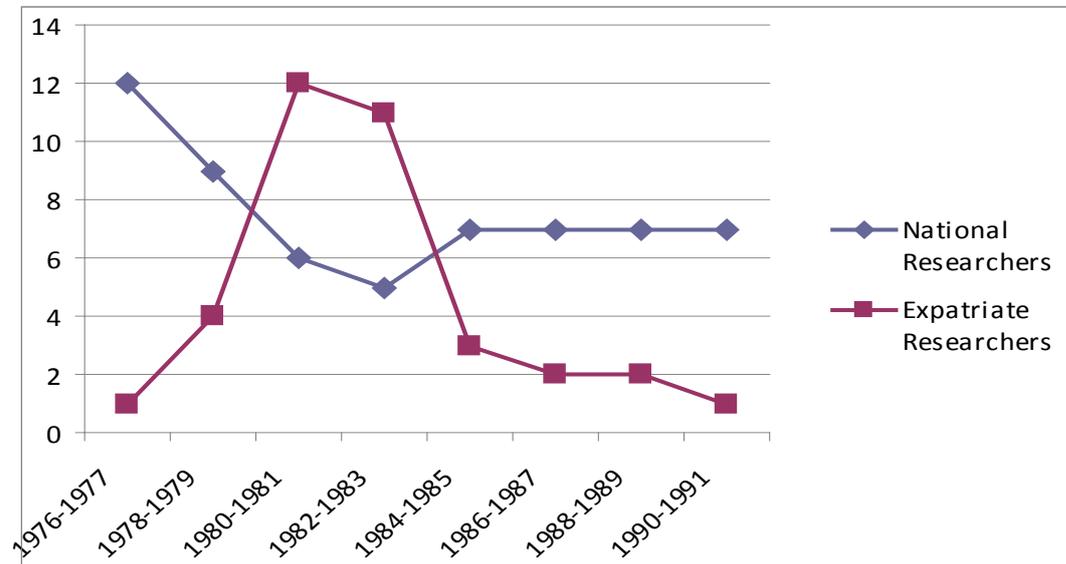
It was then all these features (the presence of researchers with a critical sense coupled with the financial autonomy of the Centre), which made the research work of the CEA, politically relevant. In the case of CEA, this work that was politically engaged should not be seen as an end in itself, or a weakness (like Christian Geffray did), but as a starting point for a critical social research. The Centre began first by supporting the worldview and aspirations (particular on its agricultural policies for the social transformation of the countryside) of the ruling party, and made these political priorities their own research agenda, but ultimately ended up criticizing all those policies which did not match with the results of their empirical research (Wolpe 1985). There were of course limits of control in the critical work of the Center<sup>42</sup>. As Michel Foucault assured,

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a number of procedures which are designed to ward off its powers and dangers, to dominate its uncertain, dodge his heavy and formidable materiality (Foucault 1996:35).

This scientific praxis of the CEA of looking in a non-orthodox way the causes they supported, as well as to analyze social reality critically, with the ultimate goal of social transformation gradually began to decline (see table 2) with the assassination of Ruth First (in 1982 at her office at the Centre, through a parcel bomb sent by the South

African secret services) and worsened after the death (murder?) of Aquino de Bragança in the presidential plane crash in 1986.

Table 2 - Movement of Researchers from the CEA (1976-1990)



Other events - in between - would also contribute to the “twilight” of critical thinking in the CEA, the non aggression pact with the South African government, known as the Nkomati Accord (which implicated the total disintegration of ANC cells in Mozambique), the escalating of the economic crisis and the worsening of the civil war. FRELIMO became increasingly coercive and dominant in society, further squeezing the space for open discussion, which the CEA had then conquered. We cannot say, however, that critical research had completely disappeared, but it had become far more difficult and required great courage to those who still continued to do so. It was then that researchers like Dan O'Meara, Siphon Dlamini, Judith Head, among others, decided to leave Mozambique, abandoning their research and teaching position in the CEA. After the death of Aquino de Bragança in 1986, the government nominated his high-ranking member, ex-ministry of security and retired colonel Sergio Vieira..., but this is another story, out of the scope of the time frame of this paper.

### Conclusion

The CEA during the period between 1976 to 1986, ended up being a major research and teaching institution in Social Sciences in the post-independence Mozambique. This

Centre would, in fact, assimilate deeply the Marxist principle of “social transformation” and the urgency of solving social problems, thus permitting the emergence, of a new way of doing social research. The paradigm of political economy and Marxist class analysis turned out to be the main theoretical reference, especially from the Development Course (which as we have seen, produced the largest share of the scientific work of the CEA), but also at the forefront of research carried out by the leading “trio” of the CEA: Ruth First / Marc Wuyts / Bridget O’Laughlin. A theoretical model, that was deeply in tune with the FRELIMO ideological project of the socialist transformation of Mozambique.

The alliances with the power politics served to create institutional trust and to participate more directly in the challenges of socialist transition, as well as to demarcate a space in which the researchers from the CEA could exert, independently, criticism and doubt in the analysis of social reality. The great struggle of these intellectuals of the State was to keep and preserve an open an analytical space for doubt and to be willing to look critically at the causes they supported. Here the role of critical engagement was not only to reveal the injustices of imperialism but also to ask critical questions to the socialist development of Mozambique and the total elimination of apartheid in South Africa. The research agenda has always sought to be in close liaison with the political priorities of the ruling party. It must be stressed, however, that this relationship did not mean a dogmatic adherence to the ideology of the ruling party, despite being structured by the “regime of truth” (Foucault, 1996) of that particular historical context. Therefore, we can then argue that the CEA functioned more as a loyal and responsible critic of the government rather than as an autonomous agent of radical change.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Carlos Fernandes. This article is related to my doctoral dissertation. In this way, I would like to thank professors Valdemir Zamparoni and Elisio Macamo, for their critical comments on the dissertation version. My gratitude goes also to Ana Fernandes for the English proof-reading of the manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> Mozambique gained independence in 1975 from Portuguese colonialism through an army struggle led by FRELIMO. In 1977 it turned to a self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist party. The year 1990 marked the emergence of the new Constitution of the Republic, which meant the end of the one-party system and the abandonment of the Marxist-Leninist ideology by the ruling party.

<sup>3</sup> BEVERWIJK, J., 2005, *The Genesis of a System – Coalition Formation in Mozambican Higher Education (1993-2003)*, PhD Thesis, p.102.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, march, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Actually there was a lapse of memory of Fernando Ganhão at the time of the interview. Researchers such as Carlos Sierra, Isabel Casimiro were not part of the first group of young students who founded the CEA. This first group was constituted by, Luís de Brito, Teresa Cruz e Silva, Eulália de Brito, Miguel da Cruz, Amélia Muge, Ana Loforte, Teixeira Duarte, João Morais, Salomão Nhantumbo and Nogueira da Costa. Interview with Luís de Brito, March, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Fernando Ganhão, march, 2007

<sup>7</sup> FRELIMO asked the Director of the Centre, to undertake a study on the socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe, in order to the Mozambican government could have a better understanding of the type of problems, tensions and contradictions that would emerge in the peace negotiations, for the independence of Zimbabwe, between the nationalist ZANU-PF and the Ian Smith regime. See, CEA, 1978, *A Questão Rodesiana*, Lisboa : Iniciativas Editoriais; and also, FERNANDES, C., 2011, *Dinâmicas de Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais no Moçambique pós-independente: o caso do Centro de Estudos Africanos (1975-1990)*, Tese de Doutoramento em Estudos Étnicos e Africanos, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil, 285f.

<sup>8</sup> Marc Wuyts mentioned during interviewed that this Report brought into the Centre a new way of doing research that was “team-based research” with a focus on the “actual” and a “sense of urgency on the research”. Interview with the author, July, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Ruth First, journalist, scholar and anti-apartheid activist. Her dedication to the cause of national liberation struggles in Southern African countries, her commitment to anti-imperialist struggle and rigorous scientific research would have a major impact on the history of CEA and a profound impact in an entire generation of young Mozambican social scientists.

<sup>10</sup> For a further details on the antecedents, objectives and content of this book, published in Mozambique as *O Mineiro Moçambicano – U estudo sobre a exportação de mão de obra*, see, FERNANDES, C., 2011, *Dinâmicas de Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais: O caso do CEA (1975-1990)*, Tese de Doutoramento, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, Brazil.

<sup>11</sup> As Dan O'Meara said: “despite her difficult personality,” a sense of professional competence and leadership of Ruth First in the Centre, had left Aquino de Bragança without any significant role in defining, organizing, administering the research program. Interview, august, 2007.

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<sup>12</sup> This research group was focused on the analysis of political and economic situation in Southern Africa with particular emphasis on the internal dynamics of the struggle of the ANC and the analysis of the South African politics on economic and military destabilization of the region.

<sup>13</sup> The first draft of the project was designed by Ruth First, Marc Wuyts and David Wield (in consultation with Aquino de Bragança), shortly after the completion of the book *The Mozambican Miner*. The Course was initially designed to be a Bachelor's degree; however, it was found that there were not enough candidates with a bachelor level to fulfill the vacancies available. According to Marc Wuyts the weak adhesion was due to the educational colonial legacy that had been extremely limited for black Mozambicans. Students of the Course were thus recruited in various sectors of society, from government, ministries, provincial governments, armed forces, the party FRELIMO, the press, public, university, as well as researchers from the CEA itself. The focus then became to train staff directly involved in the tasks of building socialism in Mozambique. Alongside this educational component, which included the acquisition of knowledge on political economy, the Course had a very strong research component. For a more detailed on the *Curso de Desenvolvimento*, its objectives, curriculum, research program as well as the tensions emerged within the CEA and the University, see, FERNANDES, C.,2011, *Dinâmicas de Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais no Moçambique pós-independente: o caso do Centro de Estudos Africanos (1975-1990)*, Tese de Doutoramento em Estudos Étnicos e Africanos, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil, 285f.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Dan O'Meara.

<sup>15</sup> Aquino de Bragança in fact, would have a minimal role in the definition, formulation, organization and approval of the research. We could say that the "intellectual capital" of Aquino de Bragança was more attached to his body of knowledge and experience about the history of liberation movements in Africa, as well as its proximity to the "backstage" of political power.

<sup>16</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>17</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>18</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>19</sup> Centro de Estudos de Técnicas Básicas para o Aproveitamento dos Recursos Naturais (Centre of Studies of Basic Techniques for the use of Natural Resources). It was founded in 1976 within the university like the CEA. Their work was focused on the communities, giving training to peasant in Gaza province, on how to produce efficiently using local knowledge and innovative techniques, for instance, in the use of soil. The Centre disappeared around the year 1979.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>21</sup> O'Meara mentioned the way that many of the investigations conducted by the Centre were used as a source of debate and discussion within the ANC circles. Interview,July, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Dan O'Meara.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with the author, august, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> We could also add the British agronomist Helena Donly (despite having reached the Centre much later, in 1980). Donly also provided Ruth First with a better understanding of agriculture in Mozambique.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Yussuf Adam, and Dan O'Meara. august, 2007.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>28</sup> This is my own translation from Portuguese: “Speaking of field means breaking with the idea that scientists form a unified or even homogeneous group (...) what is observed are conflicts, sometimes fierce, and competitions within domination structures. The `communitarian` vision forgets the very basis of the functioning of the scientific world as a universe of disputes over the `monopoly of legitimate manipulation` of scientific goods, or more precisely, the proper method, good results, good definition of the aims, objects and science methods”.

<sup>29</sup> GEFFRAY, Christian, 1988, “Fragments dun discours du pouvoir (1975-1985): Dun bon usage d’une meconnaissance scientifique”, *Politique Africaine* n.29, Bourdeaux, France.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.p.76.

<sup>31</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>32</sup> ISAACMAN, A.,2003, “Legacies of engagement: Scholarship informed by political commitment”,*African Studies Review*, Vol. 46, n°.1, pp.1-41.

<sup>33</sup> CEA.,1982, “Strategies of Social Science Research in Mozambique,” *Review of African Political Economy*, n°. 25, p. 29-39.

<sup>34</sup> BRAGANÇA, A.; DEPELCHIN, J.1986,” Da idealização da Frelimo a compreensão da História de Moçambique”. *Estudos Moçambicanos*, n°.5/6, Maputo: CEA/UEM, p.30-52. My personal translation of the title: “From the idealization of FRELIMO to the understanding of the History of Mozambique.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem,p.33.

<sup>36</sup> Idem.Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> SIDA – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

<sup>38</sup> SAREC – Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Counties.

<sup>39</sup> Founding member of FRELIMO. Ex-Minister of Agriculture (191-1983), Minister of Security (1984-1987) and director of CEA (1987-1990), after the death of Aquino de Bragança.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, august,2007.

<sup>42</sup> For example, CEA never questioned the personalistic rule of President Samora Machel, in the late 80s when the country was already beginning to face a serious economic crisis, largely arising from the intensification of RENAMO’S war. In fact, it was precisely the theoretical interpretation of this armed conflict, which was also another key indicator of boundaries of the critical work of CEA. RENAMO was seen exclusively as a destabilizing force created outside Mozambique. There was not in the university or elsewhere, a serious discussion of the internal dynamics of the armed conflict.