

Moving beyond the Colonial?

New Portuguese Migrants in Angola

In July 2012, I was riding a bus in the centre of Lisbon when something suddenly caught my attention: a long queue of people standing in the merciless sun with passports in their hands, waiting patiently for a consulate to open its doors. I have seen this sight many times before during fieldwork trips to different African countries, but this time the anxious people in the queue were white and looked middle class. I alighted from the bus and discovered that the people lining up had applied for visas to the Republic of Angola, and were now anxiously awaiting the consulate's response.

This queue signifies an historical turning point. For the first time in African postcolonial history, citizens of a former colonial power in Europe are seeking a better life in an ex-colony on a massive scale. Angola is often pointed out as one of contemporary Africa's economic success stories, with average oil-fuelled growth estimated at 4.8% per year between 2010 and 2014¹. During this same period, Angola's former colonial master, Portugal, experienced negative growth averaging minus 1.2% per year (World Bank 2015). One consequence of this divergent development is that while, until recently, Angolans moved to Portugal in search of economic and personal security, in recent years this migration has been reversed: today between 100,000 and 150,000 Portuguese live in Angola (Observatório de Emigração 2014).

The main objective of these new migrants is to earn enough money by working hard in order to achieve an economic independent adult life, or, in the case of middle-aged migrants, to support family members. Thus, integration into the labour market is the goal of most of these migrants. The acute need to secure a reliable income is a reality these migrants share with labour migrants all over the world. What is unique in this case is that this vulnerability is associated with a sense of symbolic power grounded in Portugal's historical identity as a former colonial power.

This article focuses on everyday workplace relations among Angolans and Portuguese in Luanda, Angola's capital, where most of the Portuguese

1. The international consultancy ERNST & YOUNG (2013: 1) dubbed Angola "the world's fastest growing economy for the first ten years of the new millennium".

live. Based on ethnographic interviews (Skinner 2012) carried out in 2014 and 2015, it discusses the changing relationships between the ex-colonisers and the ex-colonised in the wake of ongoing global economic transformation. In particular, the article focuses on the following: In what ways, if any, do colonial power relations still resonate among Angolans and Portuguese? Are their imaginaries of each other in any sense moving beyond the colonial past? These questions are pertinent to the present context where the Portuguese are labour migrants and businesspeople rather than settlers and rulers. This situation produces new ruptures and continuities with the colonial past, which this article sets out to analyse. Are there signs that this development challenges the symbolic power of the Portuguese grounded in colonial history?

In addressing how colonial history shapes contemporary identities and power relations, this article departs from a postcolonial perspective. A key focus in postcolonial studies is the cultural and identity aspects of the constitutive relationship between (ex-)coloniser and (ex-)colonised (Abrahamsen 2003). Postcolonial scholars argue that coloniser and colonised, as well as ex-coloniser and ex-colonised, were/are shaped by colonial history, albeit in different ways (Hall 1996). Much empirical postcolonial scholarship has dwelt on colonial history's continuing role in shaping the societies and identities of former colonial powers. Few empirical studies have—as this one does—sought to analyse postcolonial dynamics by integrating ex-colonisers and ex-colonised in a common analysis. Moreover, postcolonial studies have been slow to recognise the shifts in the global landscape, such as the changing relations between Portugal and its former colonies, and probe how such processes shape identities and power relations. Hence, the contribution of the present study is unusual: rather than taking continuance of the colonial as a starting point, it probes the limits of the colonial. It focuses on recent processes that reflect altered economic and political power relations, and explores how these processes shape identities. This article also differs from most other postcolonial studies by looking at the Lusophone world, thereby helping to offset the dominant focus on British colonialism in postcolonial studies (de Sousa Santos 2002).

Below, I present a brief background on Angolan-Portuguese relations, including recent Portuguese migrations to Angola. The next section discusses the specifics of Portuguese colonialism and postcolonial theory, followed by a note on methods and material. Then follows a representation of the voices and perspectives of Portuguese migrants as well as of the Angolans working with or under them, and a discussion of the controversies arising from this situation. The article then reverts to the question of whether Angolan-Portuguese power relations are moving beyond the colonial past.

Portuguese-Angolan Relations

The widespread notion that Portugal dominated Angola for five centuries is only partly true. As late as 1904, barely 10% of the territory was controlled by the Portuguese (Soares de Oliveira 2015: 6) and the biggest influx of white settlers occurred only in the two decades before independence in 1975. During this period of decolonisation in most of the rest of Africa, Portuguese dictator Antonio Salazar promoted Portuguese settlement in order to buttress the claim that Angola was an “overseas province” (Lubkemann 2005: 259). In 1973, as many as 324,000 persons categorised as “white” lived in Angola (Castelo 2007: 143), the majority of whom had been born in Portugal. After Portugal’s revolution of 25 April in 1974 and the decolonisation that rapidly followed, over 300,000 *retornados* “returned” to Portugal. Almost 40% of these had never before lived in the country (Lubkemann 2005). A significant number of those who have migrated to Angola in recent years are actually children of *retornados*, and were often born in Angola.

During the 40 years since independence, Angolans have lived through violence and dramatic changes. A few months before independence in 1975 war broke out between various independence movements. The conflict was aggravated by international issues, such as the trade in oil and diamonds, the Cold War and the struggle against apartheid South Africa. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the market economy and multiparty elections were instituted. The first elections occurred in 1992, and were followed by intensified warfare as the rebels belonging to UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) refused to accept defeat by the party already in power, MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola). After four decades of brutal warfare, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi was killed in 2002 and peace finally came about in Angola. Since 2002, comprehensive infrastructural “reconstruction” has been pursued by the MPLA government under President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, who has been in power since 1979.

The oil-funded reconstruction programme has created many opportunities for Portuguese business interests. A handful of Portuguese, Brazilian and Chinese companies dominate the construction sector, and all have beneficial ties with the president’s office. Powerful Angolan oligarchs do business with these companies, and there are abundant opportunities for corruption (Soares de Oliveira 2015 : 6). Moreover, Portuguese businesspeople are hired as managers by the state and by powerful individuals. In all major sectors of the Angolan economy there are Portuguese consultants and subcontractors, and “behind every Angolan tycoon there is often a mostly Portuguese managerial team” (*ibid.*: 76). Thus, the Portuguese play a critical role in the postwar Angolan economy. At the same time, Angolan business interests have “reached the heart of Portugal’s economic and political life” (*ibid.*: 193) through large investments in Portuguese banks, telecommunications, media and energy. Thus, Angolan interests play a vital role in the economy

of the former colonial power. Another important implication of this bilateral trend is that the interests of the economic and political elites in both countries have become increasingly intertwined (Costa *et al.* 2014).

Sociologist Ricardo Soares de Oliveira (2015: 75) characterises the contemporary Portuguese community in Angola as highly diverse: “One can find anything from top managerial staff in leading corporations to mid-level construction types and fly-by-night unskilled opportunists.” However, it is clear that the construction workers were the first Portuguese migrants to arrive in number. Large-scale infrastructure construction took off a few years after the peace agreement in 2002, and Portuguese construction companies initially relied almost exclusively on Portuguese workers. Today, many construction workers are returning to Portugal in consequence of dropping oil prices, which negatively affected the Angolan economy in 2015. Highly educated young people started to arrive in 2008, when economic crisis hit Portugal. Many of them work in banking, construction and telecommunications. Middle-aged children of *retornados* also left Portugal as a result of the crisis. They are seldom highly educated, but often they are eligible for dual citizenship, which is a highly coveted asset on the Angolan labour market. Among Portuguese small-scale entrepreneurs, many are restaurateurs. They require an Angolan partner, as one million US dollars is the minimum threshold for foreign investments.

Portuguese Colonialism and Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial studies adopt a constructivist approach to identity, whereby identities are conceived as relational and shaped by shifting discourses and power relations. However, as mentioned above, despite attention to change and context, postcolonial studies have mostly been preoccupied with documenting continuity, specifically how colonial history shapes contemporary identities and power relations. They have generally not considered changing North-South relations in the wake of the emergence of new powers, or changing migration patterns.

In Portuguese postcolonial studies, the preoccupation with the colonial past is evident. In the introduction to *Portugal is Not a Small Nation: Telling the Empire in the Postcolonial* (author’s translation) it is argued that: “Even in our times, the narrative of the constitution of the nation and the cultural practices related to national identity still exists under the shadow of an ‘empire’” (Sanches 2006: 13, author’s translation). Thus, Portugal is inescapably marked by its colonial past, but so arguably are its former colonies. Sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2002) claims in his landmark article on Portuguese colonialism, postcolonialism and “inter-identity”, that identity processes in the Portuguese-speaking world reflect the specificity of Portuguese colonialism. Arguably, the pervasive influence of this colonialism is believed to persist until today.

What, then, was specific about Portuguese colonialism? The difference between Portuguese colonialism and other European colonial projects is a central tenet in Portuguese postcolonial studies (Feldman Bianco 2001; de Pina-Cabral 2001: 487; de Sousa Santos 2002). Lusophone researchers criticise the normative focus in postcolonial studies on British colonialism, and stress Portugal's status as a subaltern colonial power occupying a subordinated and marginal position in Europe. This subaltern character is also evident in academic discourse, where Portuguese colonialism is often represented in terms of what it was not, namely not hegemonic British or French colonialism (de Sousa Santos 2002).

Most research addressing Portuguese colonialism has engaged in critical analysis of *lusotropicalismo*, the "lusotropical ideology", which had gained scientific weight through the studies of Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1933, 1961) and was adopted in the 1950s during the Salazar dictatorship. A fundamental tenet of lusotropicalism was that Portuguese colonial rule was unique in creating a hybrid creolised social formation wherever it was entrenched. As a representative of a colonial dictatorship, G. Freyre argued that Portuguese colonies were characterised by harmonious unity as colonial masters adapted to the culture of the territories they ruled and rejected the ideas of ethnic purity that characterised, for instance, British colonialism. These ideas tied into a national understanding in Portugal that the country was a different coloniser, less violent, less distant and with a special inclination for miscegenation or mixture (de Almeida 2008). As I make clear below, Portuguese migrants in Angola still relate to this imaginary about a special Portuguese predisposition for mixture.

The discourse about a lusotropical communalism across the (former) empire continues to shape official Portuguese rhetoric on the African ex-colonies. Political and economic alliances with former colonies rely on references to a specific brotherhood of cultural continuity and language. The issue of Lusophony has become a leading theme in reconfiguring a Portuguese global community. This community presupposes a common language and shared cultural continuity, but omits its historical imposition (Maeso & Araújo 2010: 26). This omission is also evident in an article by Portuguese anthropologist João de Pina-Cabral in which he describes "the time/space originating in the historical expansion of the Portuguese" as an "ecumenical Lusotopia" characterised by relations of *amicitia* (lat. *amity*) (Pina-Cabral 2010: 5, my translation). He refers to Pitt-Rivers's definition of *amicitia* as "a moral obligation to feel—or at least to feign—sentiments which commit the individual to actions of altruism, to generosity. The moral obligation is to forego self-interest in favour of another, to sacrifice oneself *for the sake* of someone else" (Pitt-Rivers 1973: 90 in de Pina-Cabral 2010: 6, italics in original). As I will make clear, such feelings do not characterise the way most Angolans frame their relations with the Portuguese they meet in Luandan workplaces.

One reason for the omission of historical imposition may be the dearth of empirically based works in Portuguese postcolonial studies, as in the postcolonial study field generally. Even though a fundamental aim of such studies is replacing the dominant understanding shaped by ex-colonisers with “narratives written from the point of the view of the colonized” (de Sousa Santos 2002: 13), the actual voice of the ex-colonised is seldom represented in any ethnographic detail. This is certainly true of the Angolan case, but neither is the voice of the grassroots Portuguese ex-coloniser heard. Few, if any, scholars have presented everyday understandings among Portuguese at home and in the diaspora of the colonial project and its repercussions for power relations in the contemporary Lusophone world.

Note on Research Method and Material

Between 1988 and 1991, I worked in Angola for the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). This experience proved crucial for establishing contacts in Luanda and contextualising my interviews. In 2013, I returned for the first time in 22 years, and in 2014 and 2015 I carried out ethnographic interviews (Skinner 2012). Such interviews involve close listening and a dialectical partnership between researcher and interlocutor. I interviewed 45 persons in total, of whom 23 primarily identified themselves as Angolan, and 22 as Portuguese. Among the Angolans, there were a few who had worked and studied in Portugal, but all of them saw themselves as Angolan. Identity was somewhat more ambiguous among the Portuguese. Five of my interviewees had been born in Angola, had left for Portugal as *retornados* in the mid-1970s, and had secured Angolan passports upon their recent return to Angola. These persons stressed to me that they were “Angolan”. In the interviews, however, it became clear that other people mostly viewed them as Portuguese, and that they themselves largely identified with the other Portuguese. Yet, it is important to note that many people in Angola do have various kinds of mixed Angolan-Portuguese identity. When I use the terms Angolan and Portuguese, they should therefore be understood in the sense of “a person who mainly identifies her-/himself as Angolan or Portuguese”.

The prompting for migrating from Portugal related generally to economic factors and career opportunities, and most Portuguese informants indicated that they have stayed on in Angola for the same reasons. About half my Portuguese interviewees mentioned they did not like living in Angola, and would, if it had been possible, immediately return to Portugal. Some of them had been unemployed in Portugal, while others had been attracted by the higher salaries in Angola. For the younger among them, the opportunity to obtain a more qualified job was an important pull factor. About two-thirds of the Portuguese I interviewed hold qualified jobs mainly in construction,

banking and telecom, and the remainder worked in lower administrative positions or as self employed.

As a researcher, I am, of course, implicated in power relations, and some Portuguese informants obviously saw me as a representative of “super-developed Northern Europe”, which dominates the EU and imposes economic austerity on a subjugated Portugal. Moreover, my being Swedish carries with it an image of “political correctness”, and I believe this sometimes limited what the Portuguese were prepared to tell me, for instance, by avoiding expressing racial stereotypes and prejudice. Despite several efforts, I was unable to interview a Portuguese manual worker. There are many Portuguese males working in restaurants and in construction, and my problems in reaching this category probably related to both power relations and gender. My position as a Swedish female academic obviously made some male Portuguese informants suspect that I would harbour prejudice against them as backward, racist and male chauvinist.

Among Angolans, only a minority have a formal job, and it is only people in this category that I interviewed. As with the Portuguese interviewees, two-thirds of the Angolans interviewed are highly educated and mainly work in construction, banking and telecom. I had easier access to Angolan manual labours, and I talked with four people working in construction and restaurants. Yet Angolans in all sectors, especially those with little formal education, were clearly hesitant when approached by a foreign researcher. Their stated reason for this was the fear of losing their jobs as a consequence of talking in negative terms about Portuguese colleagues and managers. Implicitly, this is also linked to a lingering national security culture, which leaves people afraid to talk to others they do not know or trust. The conspiratorial culture of silence is one I recognise from my stay in Luanda 25 years ago. Angolans working with Portuguese are afraid to talk not only because they fear provoking the displeasure of their Portuguese bosses, but also because they believe the Portuguese are protected by highly placed politicians and high-ranking military officers. Yet, the fear of talking was most evident when I initially contacted a person. As the interviews progressed, the fear in most cases ebbed, and I was left with the feeling that many of the Angolans I talked to were openly sharing their experiences.

Below, I seek to juxtapose (Nyiri 2013) the voices of the Angolans and the Portuguese, two groups with very different perspectives. Consistent with the anthropological tradition of recognising and representing the voice of the subjugated, it has been tempting to give priority to my Angolan informants as representatives of the historically subaltern and as frequent victims even today of Portuguese arrogance. Yet, this power relationship is not the only one, and some of the Portuguese interviewees felt they were vulnerable, and feared loss of their jobs and harassment by police and other Angolan authorities.

I now turn to the main sources of workplace conflict between Angolans and Portuguese.

Controversies: Inequality, Incompetence and Arrogance

In conversations with Angolans and Portuguese about workplace relations, a number of issues repeatedly arose. Angolans often talked of the Portuguese as arrogant, and were deeply irritated by differences in salaries and other benefits. Those who identified as Portuguese dwelled rather on their Angolan colleagues' incompetence and lack of work ethic.

The commonest grievance by far among the Angolans related to systemic structural inequalities in the workplace. Unequal salaries, benefits and advancement prospects were the most frequent complaint. Angolan interviewees saw these inequalities as a fundamental reason for workplace tension. João has an Angolan university education and works for a construction company. He could not be more explicit about what he sees as an unjustified inequality:

“The salary difference is considerable. They [the Portuguese managers] don't disclose their salaries, but we know. It is a discomfort. A foreigner without experience receives more than an Angolan with a lot of experience. I have 11 years of work experience and I earn US\$ 2,300 a month. A Portuguese with two or three years of experience earns US\$ 5,000.”

In addition, most Portuguese on international contracts also enjoy substantial fringe benefits. João is frustrated about this as well:

“The Portuguese also have a subsistence allowance, free housing and a free car, including petrol and maintenance. And they have the right to two free trips to Portugal each year. Thus, they can hire four or five Angolans for the same cost as one Portuguese. We live on our salaries only.”

Many Angolans also feel that they, and their competence, are undervalued in relation to the Portuguese, and that the chances of securing a foothold and advancement in the Luandan labour market are often based on nationality, and by extension race. Portuguese companies regularly prefer to hire Portuguese staff, and the same is true of the many Angolan companies managed by Portuguese directors. Angolan business owners also sometimes prefer to employ personnel from Portugal (Soares de Oliveira 2015: 73ff). There is a resentment among young middle-class Angolans, who feel that the Portuguese are “stealing their jobs”, but also among those already in the labour force, who believe that their upward mobility is being blocked by Portuguese in key positions. A couple of my middle-class Angolan informants were outraged that, after introducing young inexperienced Portuguese students to their first jobs, they were then required to accept the same persons as superiors. Some claimed their Portuguese colleagues had gained their positions through nepotism rather than on merit. Several Angolans jokingly told me that the Portuguese airline TAP is the world's most efficient university, “because when people board in Lisbon

they have no university exam, but when they land in Luanda they have already graduated". On a more serious note, many Angolans believe that the marked Portuguese presence prevents them from gaining new skills and experience. As Maria, a seasoned bank employee, explained:

"There is a lot of space for the Portuguese at my workplace. They want to support each other so they say there are no qualified people here. We need training, and as they don't want to give us that, there will never be any qualified people here."

By contrast, most Portuguese interviewees avoided talking about differences in salaries, benefits and advancement prospects, instead underscoring their competence and highlighting their skills and capacities as being needed in the Angolan labour market. Some talked of contributing specific technical expertise, but many also brought up more generic attitudes and practices. Echoes of the colonial construct of the white European as harder working (Eriksson Baaz 2005: 120ff) were evident in our conversations, and Angolans were often described as irresponsible and lacking a work ethic. Moreover, the Portuguese tended to criticise their Angolan colleagues for being deficient in rational thinking and organisational skills, which they often attributed to the Angolan educational system. In a discussion of the current Portuguese role in Angola, a young, highly skilled Portuguese argued:

"We contribute to positive changes. If they close the border the country would collapse. The big problem in Angola is primary education. Good schools can change societies. We can pass on a lot, help them structuring their minds. This is not a question of intelligence. There are different ways. But they are bad at synthesising, they are not pragmatic, they are enslaved by bureaucracy, and don't think. There is a lack of intellectual independence and structured thought."

Similar opinions were expressed by a middle-aged Portuguese woman who had lived in colonial Angola up to the age of 15, and had recently returned to work as an administrative assistant. In response to my question about the importance of the Portuguese in her workplace, her opinion was very clear :

"They are important. The managing director is Portuguese, the commercial director is Portuguese, the lawyers are Portuguese and all the accountants. If it weren't for us, nothing would work. All the Angolans have a university education, but they know nothing. Their education is very deficient. The Portuguese are everywhere, the Angolans don't manage."

The Angolan informants were more divided in their opinions about whether their Portuguese colleagues contributed valuable skills and competencies. Some said there is a need for experienced Portuguese—or foreign—professionals, as Angola had been at peace only since 2002, the implication being that there is a lack of people with long-term professional

experience. Others commented on the poor quality of the Angolan educational system, or said that Angolans are too “*relaxados*” or “don’t have a working spirit”, and there is thus a need for foreign staff.

The work ethic is clearly a source of conflict in Angolan-Portuguese workplace relations, and this goes back to the colonial era, during which forced labour was a primary means of subjugating Angolans (Bender 1978). A colonial labour code introduced immediately after the ending of slavery stipulated that work was a legal and moral obligation for all Africans. Those considered “unproductive” by the colonial authorities could be subjected to non-paying labour “contracts”. In terms of colonial ideology, forced labour was the only effective way of bringing Portuguese “civilisation” to Africans. “The role of the white man remained [...] to direct and teach the Africans to work” (Bender 1978: 142). Salazar stipulated that Africans must work for a given period each year, and the Portuguese Colonial High Inspector reported in 1949 that “only the dead are really exempt from forced labour” (Galvão 1949 in Bender 1978: 143). The forced labour system was abolished only when the Angolan fight for independence started in 1961. Thus, working for someone else, especially the Portuguese, has for a long time been associated with suffering and subjection².

Yet some Angolan interviewees denied that the Portuguese had a superior work ethic or knowledge, and one woman accused her Portuguese colleagues of “sitting and doing nothing while complaining about the Angolans not working”. A university student who also worked as a waiter at a Portuguese restaurant summed up his opinion thus: “We need labour from Portugal, but we resent it. The only good thing is that the presence of the Portuguese here forces Angolans to make an effort to surpass them.” He seemed to share this sort of ambivalence with many of the other middle-class Angolan interviewees: on one hand, they might talk about the experience and work ethic of the Portuguese, but on the other were deeply critical of the structural inequalities and the attitudes of the Portuguese they met. As one informant observed: “Colonial times are over, but they are returning to command. They try to colonise us. You seldom meet a Portuguese who is not a boss.”

Although Angolan informants might be ambivalent towards, or even be positive about, the professionalism and abilities of the Portuguese they met in their workplaces, they often criticised the attitudes of the same persons. For instance, it was noted that the Portuguese did not greet the cleaners at the workplace or that they were generally arrogant or even engaged in blatantly racist behaviour. Pascoal was one of those who had experienced

2. J. COMAROFF and J. COMAROFF (1987) note that people in South Africa view work for themselves as self-construction, whereas labouring for whites is associated with self-destruction.

such conduct. He worked as a waiter in a Portuguese restaurant in one of the privileged suburbs south of Luanda where many Europeans live:

“Customers sometimes call us ‘nigger’ and ‘son of a bitch’, and sometimes the bosses do the same. But when that happens I take off my uniform and leave. Sometimes they don’t pay. I work from eight to four, and sometimes they ask me to stay until eight at night and they don’t pay the extra hours. Very bad! And if I don’t accept that, the manager talks with his fellow countryman [the Portuguese owner] and I’m out on the street. Not long ago another waiter had a soft drink [without paying], the manager didn’t like it and he talked to the owner, and they sacked my friend.”

There seems to be a strong class dimension in the experience of discrimination. Angolans carrying out manual jobs talked of unconcealed abuse and racism, especially in the construction sector. By contrast, middle-class professionals tended to dwell on the distrust or arrogance they encountered and to describe their conflicts with Portuguese superiors. “Arrogance” was a theme that nearly always came up in these conversations, and even a number of the Portuguese interviewees characterised the behaviour of (other) Portuguese towards Angolans as “arrogant”, implying that they were haughty, condescending and distant.

Turning the Tables

The fact that people know that the Portuguese political and economic elite is protected by the absolute Angolan authority, the president’s office, heightens their feelings of subjection to “the Portuguese”. Yet this is not the complete picture of the relationship between Angolans and Portuguese. Quite a few of the non-elite Portuguese migrants I met admitted to experiencing vulnerability. It was clear they felt unprotected in relation to the Angolan authorities and/or business owners.

One element of this is that many non-elite Portuguese migrants worry about their legal status. Visa procedures are slow and complicated, and especially the acquisition of work permits often involves considerable bribes. Legality is not a major problem for migrants contracted by well-established companies with good contacts in the Angolan migration authority *Serviço de Migração e Estrangeiros* (SME) and relevant ministries. However, work permits are a key concern for those working for less influential companies, the locally employed, those between jobs and for small and medium business owners. I met a couple of undocumented migrants living in fear of detection and harassment by the police, and many told me about paying substantial bribes to SME officials or to middlemen. People regularly mentioned sums in excess of US\$ 10,000 for a three-year work permit, while one migrant who had worked for various small construction companies said he had paid “all in all” US\$ 15,000 for a residence permit. The middleman

then disappeared with the money and the passport. As with migrants in other parts of the world, legal vulnerability often brings with it a risk of economic exploitation.

A couple of my Angolan informants said that the legal vulnerability of the Portuguese may explain why unscrupulous Angolan business owners like to work with them—they can easily get rid of them. One well-connected Angolan exemplified this by relating the fate of a Portuguese employed by Luandan oligarch Mello Xavier:

“Mello Xavier had a Portuguese manager whom he wanted to get rid of. He didn’t pay him his salary, and then he ordered SME to steal his passport. Then he called SME again and told them to deport the Portuguese as he had no documents.”

The absolute veracity of such stories is uncertain, but it is interesting that many stories circulate about the Portuguese being dominated or cheated by Angolans, and there is often an element of revenge in these tales, a sense of turning the tables, of postcolonial score-settling. The turning of the tables is still part of the colonial legacy, but it is clearly also part of the new chapter in Angolan-Portuguese relations, as the following story told by a male informant illustrates:

“My girlfriend used to work in a fancy Portuguese restaurant. The Portuguese owner used to mistreat her and one day he pushed her so she fell over. She called me and I went there together with two of my cousins and beat the Portuguese. He threatened to call the police, but I said, ‘If you report me to the police, my girlfriend will report you.’ Then we all went to the police station. I asked the police to put me in the same cell as the Portuguese, so I could continue to beat him. Then I called my uncle who is a policeman, and asked him to talk to the policemen. The policemen apologised to me and let me go, but the Portuguese had to pay *gasosas gordas* [heavy bribes, literally ‘fat soft drinks’] to be set free.”

This narrative was told with obvious delight, which was also apparent in other informants’ stories about police targeting white people in search of undocumented migrants. The fact that these police interventions often appear in these “revenge stories” hints at the importance of the police and the omnipresence of the party-state in Luanda (Waldorf 2014: 377; Soares de Oliveira 2015). For Portuguese migrants, feeling secure in Luanda is strongly associated with whether they feel they are protected or not by representatives of the party-state, be they local policemen, SME officials, influential MPLA members or officials in various ministries. The same insecurity is felt by many Angolans, with the difference that they are often more experienced in handling the system. As one middle-class Angolan working in a consulting company managed by Portuguese staff explained:

“The Angolans better understand the system, and the state trusts Angolans. Foreigners hate to be confronted by the state, and they call an Angolan [to help them], they are never good at handling the *‘industria do estado’* (‘state industry/system’).”

Thus, power relations between Angolans and Portuguese are to some extent inverted to colonial times, and one important reason is that non-elite Portuguese migrants sometimes are treated as outsiders by the all-powerful party-state system. These changes represent a rupture with the colonial past, when white settlers could count on protection by “the Metropolis”. In another sense, the lingering influence of colonial power structures is evident in Angolan feelings of revenge and in all the stories of postcolonial score-settling. Subverting the inequalities in colonial relationships, however, is not the same as moving beyond them.

Moving beyond the Colonial Past?

The significance of the colonial past in contemporary identities is central to my analysis of the continuity of and ruptures in colonial power relations. In general, the Portuguese I met were silent on colonial history and would not raise it except when I directly asked. Still, it was clear that the colonial period played an important role in their imaginaries of the Portuguese Self and the Angolan Other. One example is that these informants often spoke of “returning” to Angola rather than of “migrating”. This was especially common among those who had lived in Angola as children, but the other Portuguese migrants would also speak of “a return”.

Many Portuguese seemed ambivalent about the colonial period. On one hand, and like some Angolans, they suggested that Luanda was better “before”: there was less garbage, and the infrastructure was better organised and functioning³. On the other hand, some at least implicitly expressed a sense of guilt. One example of this was a Portuguese practitioner of capoeira, who said she sometimes hesitated to sing along with the others in the group:

“Capoeira songs are about conquering and trying to find happiness in a very difficult and painful situation. It’s all about the suffering they went through. Capoeira originates in the Angolan slave quarters and it started as a way for the slaves to protect themselves against the owners. So the songs are all about this and they often have this line ‘If life entraps you, you just get up and keep on playing.’ And for a Portuguese to sing that, it is [...] I hope [...] I’m the only white person in the group at the moment, and I’m Portuguese and everyone is aware of that [...]. This is history, it happened, and you can’t deny it.”

Clearly, colonial slavery and forced labour are still sensitive topics, but so is the disastrous decolonisation process that led to four decades of war. In addition to a sense of guilt, Portuguese silence on these issues also seemed to be founded on a keenness to avoid criticism from the Angolan side. Many Portuguese migrants find it important to fit in and not attract

3. Luanda’s infrastructure was created for a colonial population of less than half a million people. In 2014, 6.5 million people lived in the city (CENSO 2014).

too much attention. As noted earlier, they often feel vulnerable in relation to those in power, whom they perceive as highly unreliable. In October 2013, President Eduardo dos Santos in his state of the nation address uttered this brief sentence: “Only with Portugal, sadly, things are not good”⁴. I was in Luanda at the time, and witnessed the shock waves this remark sent through the Portuguese community. Some people even feared they would be deported without notice.

In trying to describe Angolan-Portuguese relations, my Portuguese interviewees often used the phrase “A relationship of love and hate.” The hate element they did not dwell on, but the love element they associated with similarities in lifestyle, attitude and taste. Implicitly, these similarities were seen as being shared by the Portuguese and Angolan urban middle class. As a Portuguese female engineer put it: “At a general level we are similar. We have the same language, family life, habits, eat the same food and watch the same football games. And besides, we share the same pride and vanity, it’s very important to us.”

Besides underlining the similarities that supposedly facilitate their integration into Angola, many Portuguese also talked of their adaptability. The imaginary of a national self characterised by a propensity for mixing with others was shared across different categories of Portuguese migrants. A middle-aged, Angolan-born child of a *retornado* described Portuguese integration as follows: “In general we are well integrated in Luanda. We mix with the Africans and they open up. We get on very well together. Angola was a colony, and Angola is still very Portuguese, the Portuguese are at home. A mixture.”

Younger highly educated Portuguese did not repeat these colonial associations, but they still highlighted their capacity for mixing. A lusotropical understanding could be discerned in the voices also of those who clearly distanced themselves from the colonial past and who strove for equal relationships with Angolan colleagues. A woman who had had a child with an Angolan man, and saw Luanda as her home, said: “We mingle, we are not invasive, we tend to do that, it is in our DNA. The Portuguese have a capacity for mixing. Maybe we are more human? We know how to socialise.”

Paradoxically, on the Angolan side people seem to be less bothered by the colonial past, and this may relate to the rapid pace of change in the country. Since 1975, the country has lived through war and peace, democracy coupled with the continuity of the autocratic party-state of President dos Santos, sharp macroeconomic fluctuations and a decade of magnificent and failed reconstruction programmes. Over the past 50 years, a new Angola has been born nearly every decade, and people tend to talk about recent changes rather than earlier periods. Young Angolans have perhaps learned at school and through political rhetoric to detest colonialism, but for them

4. This was in reaction to Portuguese investigations of alleged money laundering in Portugal by Vice President Manuel Vicente and other leading Angolans.

the colonial period is distant. In my experience, the only exception is the young people who have heard elderly relatives tell of their own memories of the atrocities committed under colonialism.



Thus, one conclusion is that the Portuguese migrants identify more strongly with their role as ex-coloniser than Angolans do with their status of being the ex-colonised. Angolans living in Luanda tend to downplay the Portuguese influence, and prefer to represent the colonial period as the distant past. Instead, they may emphasise Brazilian influences, and a peculiar Luandan “culture” based on cosmopolitanism, consumerism and a desire to enjoy the present—as nobody knows what will happen tomorrow. By contrast, Portuguese discourse on national identity still draws strongly on the history of the (lost) empire as well as Portugal’s present relations with former colonies. In Portugal, “discussing ‘the nation’ always mean[s] discussing ‘the empire’, in its multiple forms” (Cardoso 2015 : 7).

In keeping with this conclusion, Angolan grievances about “the Portuguese” are not predominantly related to the colonial past but to current workplace relations, although references to “the arrogant Portuguese” may very well have colonial undertones. As I have shown, colonial imaginaries of lazy Angolans and distant and demanding Portuguese are still in play, yet what most upset Angolans are the differences in salaries, benefits and career opportunities, and arrogant and discriminatory Portuguese bosses. This is not the full story, however, as there are many layers of domination and subjection. In the final analysis, it is President dos Santos and the small circle around him who define the rules of the game in Angola, and increasingly also in Portugal. The Portuguese business elite in Luanda is dependent on the benevolence of these powerful Angolans and is usually protected by them. Non-elite Portuguese migrants are similarly dependent on the benevolence of the Angolan authorities. In terms of everyday relations, many Portuguese feel that it is important for them to gain the loyalty of Angolan colleagues and neighbours in order to feel secure and “at home”. One Angolan woman pointedly referred to this in these terms: “The Portuguese very much want to be our friends, but we don’t want to be theirs.”

A second conclusion is that the postcolonial power relations presently in play in Luanda between Angolans and Portuguese are contested and unstable. In postcolonial studies, power is viewed as being fashioned through interconnected relationships (Abrahamsen 2003). Specifically, power permeates identities through the meanings we provide to Self and Other, and these meanings are shaped in changing practices (Eriksson Baaz 2005).

This article reveals that the dominance of the ex-coloniser is broken, since s/he is dependent on being accepted into the labour market and by the authorities in the former colony. However, power relations cannot be reduced to access to economic resources: they are also created dialectically in the ongoing production of cultural ideas. These ideas, in turn, are informed by colonial history and its articulation with changes taking place in the postcolonial era. In Luanda, many Angolans prefer to treat the colonial era as a painful but bygone past, whereas many Portuguese migrants struggle with their history. To them, the move beyond the colonial past is both threat and promise.

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ABSTRACT

For the first time in sub-Saharan Africa’s postcolonial history, large numbers of citizens of a European former colonial power are migrating to an ex-colony. Portuguese migrants are attracted by Angola’s strong economic growth and are seeking to escape crisis in Portugal. This article focuses on everyday workplace relations between Angolans and Portuguese. In particular, it analyses how colonial power relations still resonate with both groups and whether their mutual imaginaries are moving beyond the colonial past. The article concludes that dependence on access to the labour market and the goodwill of Angola’s political and administrative class has undercut the ex-colonisers’ dominance. Yet colonial imaginaries are still in play, particularly among the Portuguese. Consequently, postcolonial power relations among Angolans and Portuguese are contested and unstable.

RÉSUMÉ

Dépasser le colonial. Les nouveaux migrants portugais en Angola. — Pour la première fois dans l’histoire postcoloniale de l’Afrique subsaharienne, un grand nombre de citoyens d’une ancienne puissance coloniale européenne émigrent vers une ex colonie. Les migrants portugais sont attirés par la forte croissance économique de l’Angola et tentent par là même d’échapper à la crise au Portugal. Cet article porte sur les relations quotidiennes entre Angolais et Portugais dans leur cadre de travail. Il analyse en particulier à quel point les relations de pouvoir instituées durant l’époque coloniale ont toujours un écho chez les deux groupes et dans quelles limites leur

imaginaire mutuel a pu dépasser cette histoire. L'article conclut que la situation de dépendance des Portugais vis-à-vis de l'accès au marché du travail associée à la bonne volonté de la classe politique et administrative angolaise a atténué le positionnement dominant des anciens colonisateurs. Cependant, les imaginaires coloniaux sont toujours présents, surtout chez les Portugais. Par conséquent, les rapports de force post-coloniaux entre Angolais et Portugais restent instables et font l'objet de fréquentes contestations.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Portuguese in Angola, identities, migration, postcolonialism, power relations/*Portugais en Angola, identités, migration, postcolonialisme, relations de pouvoir.*

