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MOBILITY AND LABOUR REGIMES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: FROM MOBILE WORKERS TO WORKERS ON THE MOVE. A PERSPECTIVE FROM MOZAMBIQUE[1]

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Abstract

In the XIXth century, the discovery of the gold mines launched an industrialization process in what is today the Republic of South Africa. From then on, wage migration in southern Africa has been a subject tackled from different academic disciplines. However, mainstream academic literature keeps the focus on the core of the mining region. Mozambique, despite being the origin of many miners, is not well represented in the regional debates. In this article, through an analysis of existing literature on Mozambican migrants and their impact in present day rural livelihoods, I argue that a perspective from Mozambique can contribute with new insights to several long lasting academic debates. Furthermore, the Mozambican perspective proposed is useful to show

Resum

Els estudis sobre migracions i condicions de treball són extensos a l'Àfrica Austral. Des del segle XIX, les mines sud-africanes han estat un pol d'industrialització que ha atret treballadors de tota la regió. La bibliografia dominant és en anglès, i principalment tracta sobre les antigues colònies o protectorats britànics. La literatura sobre Moçambic, malgrat ser un dels països que més volum de miners ha aportat a les mines d'or, resta en un segon pla. Aquest article vol fer patent que cal superar aquesta manca de protagonisme i, a partir de l'anàlisi de la bibliografia existent sobre Moçambic, obre el debat sobre les possibles aportacions als debats regionals. A més a més, a partir d'un petit exemple exposa com les diferents disciplines tenen zones d'ombra que només es

1. An earlier version of this text was presented at the Human Economy Seminars of the University of Pretoria. I am grateful to all participants for their suggestions and contributions.

some disciplinary shortcomings and to encourage multidisciplinary approaches to rural wage migration.

Keywords: mobility, labour migration, academic disciplines, interdisciplinary approaches, Southern Africa, Mozambique.

poden superar amb el diàleg interdisciplinar.

Paraules clau: mobilitat, migració laboral, disciplines acadèmiques, enfocs interdisciplinaris, Sud-àfrica, Moçambic.

Introduction

Bibliography on labour and migration studies in southern Africa is huge. Intensive labour recruiting techniques preceded the establishment of colonial states, and they ranged from capturing slaves to be sold across the Indian Ocean, to innovative sets of young soldiers, such as the zulu and gaza type, who were encouraged by powerful kings to raid any small polity found on their way. During the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries South East Africa was ridden by violence and forced displacements of many types (Ferguson 2013, Harries 1981, 1982).

In the second half of the XIXth century diamond and gold mines were discovered in the highlands of what is today the Republic of South Africa. As the international financial system was then supported by the gold standard (Polanyi 1944), so much capital rushed into the Witswatersrand mining area, and by so doing they pushed the European empires to step into southern Africa. The British Empire finally managed to take control of the region, especially after defeating the Boer Republics in 1901, but they could not avoid that the most strategic port, Lourenço Marques (present day Maputo), remained under Portuguese control. Until the very end of the XIXth century, Lourenço Marques was a rather remote and uninteresting area, and the Portuguese were focused on monitoring and taxing the lively trade existing north of the Zambezi river while, simultaneously, some of their high officials also engaged in trafficking slaves. However, the gold mines radically changed the geopolitics of southern Mozambique. The railway connecting Lourenço Marques to Johannesburg was ready in 1895, and the capital of the Portuguese colonial administration was finally transferred to the southernmost port of the colony some years later (Harries 1984). By the end of XIXth century, increasing numbers of young men tramped long distances in order to reach the gold mines.

In sum, Mozambique's transition from slave labour to contract labour was especially fast and chaotic, and this essay is built on this regional context.

The whole colonial system in southeastern Africa was established with an especial point in mind: how to curtail the bargaining capacity of mining workers in a situation of intense labour demand (Harries 1994). Finally, the different mining companies decided not to compete for scarce labour, and establihed a common contracting agency —the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) - that imposed the same conditions to any black man willing a contract. In addition, migrant workers were not allowed to settle in town with their families. Confined in all-men compounds while contracted, migrants were forced to return to their rural home once the contract was over. There they met their wives and children, and this gave way to a peculiar industrial working class all around southern Africa (Davies & Head 1995; Covane 2001).

However, while the frame remained the same, the intricacies of labour and migration were different in every district or locality. For sure, every colonial state in southern Africa developed some differences as they expanded over the territory under its rule, but none of them had the capacity to unify what the administration was actually doing on the ground. Mozambique was no exception, and in this article I focus on Massinga, a colonial district 600km north of Lourenço Marques.

This article has two main objectives. First, I want to review some regional debates, keeping a Mozambican perspective. As for most academic work on labour and migration in southern Africa is in English, and related to former British colonies or protectorates, the Mozambican complexities have been underestimated. Moreover, existing bibliography in Portuguese is unknown for many scholars. To understand this situation we will have to address relations of power in knowledge production. In a sense, the first objective is about the need to overcome some past legacies when debating about wage migration in southern Africa.

The second objective is about the creative dialogue between academic disciplines. I proposed in another place that there has been a major shift in labour regimes of Mozambican migrants that remained unnoticed for several decades (Farré 2013). Here, I intend to elaborate on that shift by comparing the academic production about Mozambique from different disciplines, mostly anthropology, history and economy. In this comparison I am inspired by Keith Hart's essay on Marcel Mauss' life and works (Hart 2007).

In order to ground my argument in Mozambique, I will take some words of a retired man I met in Massinga[2] as starting point of my argument. I will call this man Nducuane and I will present a brief sketch of his life just to contextualize his speech. Note that I'm

2. Massinga is 600 km north of Maputo, and it had the northernmost WNLA contracting agency. The WNLA ceased its activities in Mozambique after the independence of Mozambique in 1975.

not proposing an ethnographic case study based on Nducuane's life, which will require much more data and space. I'm interested especially in how he expresses his longing for a pension, as well as the frustrating relationship with his sons and daughters-in-law. Building on Frederick Cooper (2001) I just try to link local dynamics in Massinga with global historical trends. It is through Nducuane's words that later on I will be able to introduce broader academic debates, notably on knowledge production, disciplinary fragmentation (culture versus economy debate) and finally on wage migration and social reproduction of miners.

Nducuane's lament

While doing ethnographic fieldwork in Massinga district, I had the chance to chat with many older men who told me about their life experiences. I found out that many of my informants had worked outside that district for several decades and, once retired, they decided to come back to their home village with the explicit aim of spending their last years there. Some had worked in South Africa, others in Lourenço Marques/Maputo or other Mozambican towns (Farré 2013). All those men began adult life during the colonial regime, which ended in 1975.

Thanks to the Methodist mission's school in Cambine (some 25km south west of Massinga town), some of my informants had the chance of studying up to the maximum allowed to a rural African (*4ª classe*; 4th year). One of them, the son of a local chief (*régulo*) appointed by the Portuguese, told me that 'At that time if you completed school up to 4th year you were almost white'. This may be an exaggeration, but with these words he meant that most of those who completed school in Cambine could expect to work as low-rank clerks in district administration, public companies (the railways or the post office), or private companies. Nducuane is also one of these people. Talking to me while sitting under the trees surrounding his rural shack, he explained he knew that after so many years of working with contracts he has the right to a pension, but that he was not receiving one. He also added that, during the moves forced by the long Mozambican civil war he lost most of his documents, among them the contracts and salary receipts stating contributions to the social security system. To make things worse many administrative archives had been destroyed or abandoned during the civil war in Mozambique (1977-1992). Present-day district-level administration is not yet capable of coping with everyday management, let alone trying to look for old papers pertaining to individual cases. At a certain point in his exposition I asked if he didn't have any

relatives in Maputo who could try to find out how to claim for his pension for him. His answer was 'Oh! All my sons are living in Maputo, but they only know the *dumba nengue.*[3] They don't speak Portuguese fluently, and they are not capable of stepping into a Ministry to ask a thing like that'.

Nducuane and his sons illustrate the changing conditions of livelihood in rural Massinga from one generation of rural Mozambicans to the next (Farré 2013). They were caught in the middle of the geopolitical shifts caused by the end of Portuguese colonialism (1974), the bloody consequences of the Cold war in southern Africa, and the tortuous transitions to liberal democracy during the 1990s. My point is that Nducuane and his sons exemplify the shift from mobile workers to workers on the move. If Nducuane represents what it used to be —mobile workers who managed to renew their contracts while socially established in their rural areas of origin-, his sons represent what we find today -workers on the move, living on precarious jobs without a contract and, for this reason, much less incapable of taming uncertainty than their father (Haram & Yamba 2009; Vidal 2009). In the following sections I argue that this generational break offers some insights to different academic debates.

Division of knowledge: regional dynamics versus colonial and national histories

Colonialism was an extreme case of knowledge production being shaped by unequal power relations and prejudices based on race (Penvenne 1989, 1993). As the production of knowledge depends on the social context, the priorities and debates of a certain discipline in a given polity reflect its political context. Therefore, despite two neighbouring polities may have similar challenges, the knowledge produced in each one of them can be very different. This is the cases of Mozambique and South Africa when it comes to analyse labour migration, economic development and social inequality based on race.

Mozambique's and South Africa's colonial experiences have their own peculiarities. The latter gained political independence in 1910, and from then on began to build a segregation system that marginalised the black, coloured and Asian population. Mozambique was a colony whose metropolis was ruled by a dictatorship from 1926 to 1974. Therefore in Mozambique all the consequences impinging on knowledge production and state propaganda in a colonial setting were doubled by the fact of

3. The informal street markets are called with this xironga expression -*Dumba Nengue*- that can be translated as "I trust my feet".

authoritarian rule in Lisbon. Both peculiar situations help to shed light on the evolution of the social sciences in both countries before their political transitions to democracy in the 1990s.

Precisely, the right-wing dictatorship in Portugal and its survival after World War II provided the frame for the first serious debate on migration in Mozambique. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Lisbon insisted that their empire was not an economically-driven colonial endeavour, but a political project with a 'civilising' mission. In a context where Portugal was facing increasing international isolation, an American anthropologist, Marvin Harris, asked to do some social research in Mozambique. After spending some few months in Mozambique's capital, and after convincing himself that he would not be allowed to go alone to the rural areas, he decided (or was invited to decide) to leave the country. Afterwards, he published an article in a prestigious academic journal (Harris 1959), which was responded to by the most eminent colonial ethnographer and district administrator in Mozambique, António Rita-Ferreira (1960, 1963). Both sharpened their arguments against each other and in so doing opened a debate in the international scientific forum on wage labour migration in southern Mozambique.[4] Their respective positions were well summarized by the historian Malyn Newitt.

> Two reasons have been advanced to explain these movements [migration]. One suggests that trends within Thonga society left younger sons dispossessed and men generally with little or no peacetime role on the division of labour so that travel to the mines became a 'male' occupation. An alternative and much simpler explanation suggests that labourers migrate from straight-forward economic incentives, no doubt intensified by Portuguese taxation policies. It is probable that neither of these explanations is wholly adequate and that an answer lies somewhere in the nineteenth century history (Newitt 1974: 43).

The first reason referred to Marvin Harris' cultural approach, the second to Rita-Ferreira's economic one, with the final allusion to tax policies an addition by Newitt himself. The fact is that Harris' critique of Portuguese colonialism was mixed with a cultural anthropology approach to explaining high levels of migration. Rita-Ferreira responded with much more empirical data than Harris had, and argued that migrants were not fleeing from the government but were attracted by much better wages in the

4. Despite the vast literature existing on wage migration by Portuguese colonialist since late nineteenth century, they are generally so racially biased and uninteresting that I decided to consider this the first scientifically standard debate. For an example of the type of literature I have excluded see Monteiro (1962). For an analysis of Portuguese colonial administration and its links with colonial anthropology see Keese (2003) and Pereira (1986).

mines and other industries in South Africa. He concluded that no government (regardless of its values or ideology) could stop this labour migration because it was based on common sense.

The kinship-based culturalist approach proposed by Harris was quite mechanical and didn't explain diverse social outcomes, such as why many older brothers migrated and many younger ones did not. On the other hand, while the rational-choice oriented economic argument given by Rita-Ferrerira was grounded enough to counteract Harris' claim, it did not explain why other people from southern-Africa were not as interested in being highly paid as southern Mozambicans were.

These two positions are an example of the diverse and common 'culture versus economy' debates, where anthropologists tried to include the economy in their abstract kinship models and the economist considered everything that did not fit the economic rationale as marginal - once they labelled something as a 'cultural practice' it did not has to conform to rationality (Goody 2005).

At this point Nducuane's case is helpful, given he was a labour migrant and the wages he earned may have had a significant bearing on the decisions he made. Moreover, unlike many others, his school certificate placed him in a position to choose what to do. He decided not to migrate to the South African mines but to migrate within Mozambique, working first for the colonial administration in several districts and then shifting to a big brewing company in Maputo. His wages in Mozambique were lower than those of many who worked in South Africa, but this was balanced by the fact that the work he did was much less risky and gave him more influence in his local social milieu. And his failure to build a brick house in rural Mozambique —which many miners succeeded in doing— was compensated by having a real home with a family life. He consented to the social and cultural oppression of colonialism because he was among the few direct beneficiaries of the rather small improvements the colonial state provided. For them, what happened after independence was the removal of the precarious rights they had managed to attain and their substitution by uncertainty . As (Haram & Yamba 2009; Vidal 2009). I have shown with the example of the pension, none of his sons knows, today, what having a contract means. They have not experienced —as he did— any possibility of planning for the future. It is understandable, then, that Nducuane should be counted among those who have a nostalgic vision of the colonial period (Dlamini 2009). Of course this line of reasoning tells us more about the difficulties of the present than the good times of the past (Harrison 1997).

Overcoming the Culture versus Economy debate

By the time Newitt expressed his dissatisfaction —pointing to the need to take more account of 19th century history— two South African scholars were focusing on southern Mozambique. These were the anthropologist David Webster and the historian Patrick Harries. The former was able to do proper fieldwork in rural Mozambique ten years after Marvin Harris' failed attempt. As a result Webster managed to develop a more refined and dynamic idea of kinship, as well as its interface with migration and local politics (Webster 1977, 1981). At the same time he also critiqued colonialism and the heavy burden it left on Mozambique (Webster, 1978). However it was probably Patrick Harries who most fully explored the path Newitt had pointed out: the XIXth century as the origin of long lasting social dynamics that shaped colonialism in southern Africa.

From the early 1980s Harries (1981, 1982) has published on nineteenth-century migration from southern Mozambique, focusing mainly on Delagoa Bay, where Maputo is situated today**.** He has provided a broader historical framework where kinship, employment and wage trends, ecology and geopolitics interplay with one another, showing the complex panorama in which nineteenth century migrants lived. Instead of looking at the conventions and agreements signed by state representatives —as many historians do, tending to see the mass of migrants as an undifferentiated, passive 'object' being pushed and pulled by some abstract higher forces— his analysis stressed the agency of the migrants in their specific historical and cultural context: why they decided to migrate, when, where, how and with whom (Harries, 1984). Therefore he has offered a bottom-up perspective on wage labour migration during the 'scramble for labour' that began with the progressive discovery of the mines from 1860 onwards (Harries, 1994).

However, the chronological scope of his work stops in 1910, when the Union of South Africa was established, only a few years after the Portuguese had defeated the Gaza state (1895) and the British vanquished the Boer Republics (1901). By 1910 both victors were just beginning to think how to expand the economic capacities of their newly conquered territories. How both emerging colonial states shaped Inhambane province as a deep rural area left to become a reserve of labour has been addressed by different authors **(**CEA-UEM 1998**,** Loforte 1990, Adam 2006). But all of them focus on specific aspects and their descriptions lack the capacity to link cultural and historical data shown by Harries.

Harries is a historian who takes kinship structures into account as one of the factors shaping migration experiences. Some of his concerns are mirrored in more recent work by the anthropologist Stephen Lubkemann (2009), who tries to frame transformation in

kinship relations within a longer historical process.[5] He describes the interplay between migrants and the incipient colonial administration, the South African pass laws and the expanding textile industry in South Africa after World War II, the Mozambican war and the presence of Mozambican refugees in South Africa. By tapping into all these issues Lubkemann's aim is to show how twentieth century history has shaped and reshaped marriage possibilities and preferences of Ndau men and women in Machaze, and in the South African townships to which they migrate.

Both Harries and Lubkemann have contributed to showing the dynamics of kinship and economy inserted into a deep historical perspective of the region. Harries convincingly argues that mobility is an structural strategy, which includes activities such as trade and hunting in southern Africa (Zimba 2003), and cannot be reduced to wage migration, despite the latter's importance after the first diamonds were discovered in Kimberley. Lubkemann shows how kinship is not a structural constraint but a flexible set of possibilities available to men and women alike. Other social factors such as limited access to money and unreliable political institutions are much more constraining than kinship.

Here, Nducuane's case is inspiring again. The fact that he feels isolated from his sons may have to do with changing conditions in rural hierarchies regarding age and status (Ferguson 2013). In the past the availability of mine contracts in South Africa meant that the condition of being a 'miner' was often passed from father to sons. Long contracts, together with compulsory return to the village at the end of the contract, created a particular way of reproducing rural life in southern Africa, to which Massinga was no exception. Many men stopped going to the mines just after some of their sons had started to engage in wage labour migration,[6] and this allowed them to retain some control and leadership over the younger generation (Harries 1982). This possibility does not exist any longer (Farré 2016).

Since the late 1970s the prospects for a young Mozambican of getting a contract in South Africa have diminished sharply (Davies and Head 1995, Brochmann 1985). Dominique Vidal (2009) has recently referred to this generational change from the point of view of the young migrants in Maputo. While migration to South Africa is still important, the 'miner' model has faded away, to be replaced by the street vendor, the occasional farm labourer, or the informal domestic servant or waiter. This is what I

5. Kinship debates have been especially intense in southern Africa, since H. Junod and E. Radcliffe-Brown confronted their views. I did a summary on these debates when I dealt with lobolo in Mozambique (Farré 2015).

6. Needless to say, many were forced to stop before due to accidents or sickness, and didn't manage to complete this cycle.

proposed to call a shift from mobile workers to workers on the move. Some successful Mozambican migrants may become taxi drivers in South Africa, or liquor smugglers from South Africa into Mozambique, but successful entrepreneurs are always a small minority. Generally speaking, when compared with the former miner, all these forms of wage labour share precarious conditions that do not allow migrants to plan for their going back and forth. Even remaining in the slums of a big city has become difficult, as high inflation of basic products punishes those with the lowest incomes the most (Potts 2011). Today rural migrants are forced to keep on moving from one place to another in a new type of circular migration characterized by uncertainty (Farré 2017, Vidal 2009).

Because today's migrants, including Nducuane's sons, grew up during the Mozambican civil war, many of them were unable to complete their schooling.[7] Today they are known for being at the bottom of the South African labour market. Aurelia Wa Kabwe-Segatti (2009) has referred to this generation of Mozambicans as being those forgotten by GDP growth and the state bureaucracy alike. Suthern Africa Development Community (SADC) treaties concerning free trade and mobility are not sufficient to improve their situation, and they remain an easy target for deportation policies and recurrent xenophobic outbursts. Nhambi and Grest (2009) have focused on Mozambicans in Durban and concluded that their migration plans are made more difficult by the fact that they are not well integrated in their society of origin.

Nducuane's life offers historical depth allowing us to identify a missing link between generations, something generally not mentioned by researches focusing on present-day urban dwellers. Distance and lack of regular contact makes difficult for fathers and sons to back each other in common kin-based future planning, as former rural migrants used to do. This gap between generations, affecting Nducuane as well as his sons, leads us to another important debate in southern Africa, concerning the production systems and social reproduction of rural households.

Production and social reproduction: migration and the role of the state

In the late 1960s, when Webster was doing research in southern Mozambique, another anthropologist, Jorge Dias, was doing research near the northern border with Tanzania also a site of frequent transit by cross-border migrants. Dias was among the first

7. This happened despite the fact that providing school for everyone was one of the priorities of the Frelimo political project, and many resources were channelled to attain this objective.

Portuguese academics to write about the shameful labour conditions in Mozambique compared to those in already-independent Tanzania, but he addressed his writings to the colonial administration rather than the scientific community (Pereira 1986).

Labour has long been a recurrent topic in southern Africa, owing to the appearance of industrial production in mid-nineteenth century, its initial difficulties in securing enough wage labour, and its overall effects on land and agriculture. In Mozambique, as one of the main suppliers of labour to mines, farms and plantations in South Africa, the debate on labour migration has been a constant one.

During the colonial period the labour-migration debate turned on the role of the state: should the colonial state favour migration as a source of revenue, or should it attempt to alter the trend in order to keep labour in Mozambique and increase production at home? In 1930, after a great deal of political strife between vested interests in Lourenço Marques and Lisbon (Smith 1991), the Portuguese finally decided to endorse the already-existing trend and try to extract as much money as possible from every migrant by direct as well as indirect means. António Rita-Ferreira's point of view on migration, mentioned above, came out of this option.

After independence Frelimo's labour policy was the opposite: they wanted their citizens to work at home (CEA-UEM 1998). The new agenda was one of rural transformation aimed at increasing agricultural production by employing Mozambican workers in an agricultural industry made up of large estates (O´Laughlin 1981; Wuyts 1981), complemented by a co-operative system based on communal villages (O'Laughlin 1996; Wardman 1985). However, Frelimo believed it was legitimate to force the population to follow its policies, and the frame of the debate remained the same as in the pre-independence era, dealing principally with the role of the State in choosing and pursuing whichever course suited its own interests best (Roesch 1991; Harrison 1997; O'Laughlin 2002).

Since the colonial era increasing agricultural production had been a constant objective (Isaacman 1992). During colonialism there was a dual understanding of peasant agriculture. Those who managed to increase production and sell part of their harvest —owing to better geographical circumstance or privileged position— were regarded as progressive peasants (Covane 2001). All the others, the great majority who, for different reasons, were unable to increase agricultural production in order to sell in colonial markets were called subsistence peasants (Ranger 1978; Cooper 1981).

O'Laughlin (1996) has shown that one of the mistakes made by the newly independent government was to reproduce a dualistic model based on subsistence and state-run farms sectors. This approach was as simplistic as the colonial view, and ultimately also

failed to attain the goal of increasing agricultural production. Wuyts (1981) has shown a flagrant contradiction in Frelimo's agricultural labour policy. While on the one hand it wanted to employ as many former migrants as possible in state-run farms (many of them comprising a bundle of former settler farms), it also relied, on the other hand, on imported technology to increase production and ultimately enable the country to replace imports by locally produced food. This simultaneous labour intensive and capital intensive strategy ended up creating a double dependency, one at the household level and another at international level.

Those households which were long ago dependant on migrant wages now had to adapt themselves to the lower wages paid by the state. They were told that the new national collectivist production of food would be much cheaper than in the past, so that they would be able to buy the same food with less money. However this did not happen. Money may not be the unique reason considered when deciding what to do, as the rational choice economist defend, but, as Nducuane's lament on his missing pension shows money is something people actually needs.

First of all, the technology imported to mechanize agriculture had to be paid in strong currency and indebted the country. Second, the minimum preconditions necessary to use the expensive technology to its maximum capacity did not exist in Mozambique. There was a shortage of technicians and trained workers, a lack of means of transport to supply all the production inputs on time, and a lack of efficient planning to deliver the harvest to the areas of the country where it was needed (Raikes 1985, Cravinho 1998). The result was a drastic decrease in local food production when compared to the last years of colonialism (Casal 1988). Further, there was an increase in production costs for every kilo of food produced.

The resulting shortage of food coincided with a decrease in the money available from migrant remittances. Although it tried to maintain its policy of fixed prices, the Frelimo government was overpowered by the situation. As usually happens, scarcity was followed by the appearance of a black market and, for those who had cash, abuses in prices became worse than during the colonial era. Moreover, all these unexpected changes in the years after independence were aggravated by a series of floods and droughts (Manghezi 1983). Last but not least, the continued expansion of the civil war supported by neighbouring states hostile to Frelimo further strained rural households in Mozambique. The complex process I have summarized here generated lengthy scholarly debate in which ideological rivalry between Marxist and neoliberal approaches was a pronounced feature.

However, if one looks at Nducuane's present situation one can identify some major changes in agricultural production in southern Mozambique. In the past migrants used

to leave their wives at home in charge of food production for the household members. In this way they secured their land, and their elderly parents could be assisted in food production by their daughters-in-law. Therefore, although many young men left rural areas to look for wages, social reproduction continued according to rural conditions dependent on kin hierarchies and unpaid labour (Young 1977, Van den Berg 1987, Farré 2008). Savings brought by migrants were invested to reinforce this pattern, by building brick houses, paying lobolo, increasing kin via polygyny, and buying goods (clothes, radios, bicycles, cars, and so on.) (Farré 2010).

Nowadays, however, rural social reproduction occurs (or fails to occur) under very different circumstances. Young women do not want to wait in the village while their unemployed men are *on the move*, walking around looking for precarious jobs. They know there will be no saving left to invest in the rural home, and they prefer to migrate to town themselves. In this way they get rid of agricultural duties and have more opportunity to find their own source of income by doing informal trade or domestic service (Farré 2015).

Young people from rural areas are now founding their first households in the ever-increasing shanty towns surrounding district and provincial capitals. Therefore after a hard working life and raising many children, Nducuane and his wife are alone in the village today and must do all the work to feed themselves. This is the reason Nducuane misses the pension he deserves to have: If he had this retirement subsidy he would have at least some money to attract some younger relatives, and all them together, adding money to domestic work, would have better access to a reasonable diet.

Concluding Remarks: coping with African mobility demand for scholar flexibility

Nducuane's example have made it possible for me to identify issues that cast doubt on two common abstractions deployed in studies of labour migration from rural Mozambique. First, being in a position to choose, Nducuane did not choose the option that offered him the highest wage. Migrants do not necessarily choose the highest wage at any cost. Second, his family history shows that kinship is not a self-contained system that works autonomously from the historical process. His present loneliness in Massinga, a result of the difficulty of sharing a common life project with his sons, shows that kinship relationships are part of that process.

Like many of his generational peers, Nducuane feels somehow abandoned by both close kin and the state. His case study points at some grey areas between disciplines,

which are difficult to grasp if one sticks to the abstract models on which many scholars are keen. His life history uncovers a complex and ever changing picture of rural life, and its interface with labour migration. This is a picture where economy cannot be confounded with short-term material interest, and culture in the form of kinship is not a solipsistic device untouched by material interest and individual agendas (Sharp 1985).

Through Nducuane's example I wanted to emphasize the necessity to overcome disciplinary boundaries and, at the same time, I intended to point to some important issues faced by southern African migrants looking for a living in South Africa. Today many low-skilled workers do not have a chance to have a contract. And the lucky ones that have it do not always know the rights and duties embedded in the contract as regards, for instance, to social security. The difficulty increases when the worker is not a South African citizen. Due to bureaucratic impediments and a lack of coordination between the different countries involved, many foreign migrants who once worked in South Africa are in the same situation that Nducuane: They get no pension even though they have the right to receive one.[8] If all those people were actually receiving their due the rural areas would have more money in circulation, and rural markets could be better supplied. The well-being of the whole region would be improved as a result (Francisco and Suhagara 2015). Economist, anthropologist and historians will all do a better job if they read each other as a way to overcome academic fragmentation. Marcel Mauss' pursuit of the whole (Hart 2007) deserves being considered again.

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8. The South African weekly *Mail & Guardian* has been paying attention to this fact through different reporters. For instance, Eva-Lotta Jansson wrote on "Migrant workers owed billions in 'unclaimed' social security funds" in *Mail & Guardian* February 22 to 29 2013: 20-21. And Mandi Smallhorne has written two pieces, the first titled "Going the extra mile pays off for miners' stranded beneficiaries" in *Mail & Guardian* July 5 to 11 2013: 20-21; and the second on "Social security without borders" in *Mail & Guardian* August 30 to September 5 2013: 30-31.

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