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Portrait of an ethnography during pandemic times: Bagamoyo remote reconstruction and the (Un)Freire of literacy policies in Mozambique

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The remote reconstruction of the beginning of the language and literacy policies developed by the Frelimo School in Bagamoyo (1970-1975), Tanzania, is the ethnography I have been developing since 2019. I went to the field supported by previous ethnographic fieldwork, in which encounter between national languages and the official language became one of the central issues to understanding the reconstruction of national identity, looking for the origin of that reconstruction legitimated through language(s). Taking this on board, Paulo Freire, who contributed to the development of critical pedagogy, was a key actor in the literacy policies in post-independent Africa. In Mozambique, the field brought me the other side of the (hi)story, the (Un)Freire (hi)story. During pandemic times, my ethnography was done remotely, supported by a network of shared contacts, tuned with my long personal journey of research and experience in Mozambique, based on, as I argue, an ethnographic interconnected line of inquiry, in which I was *not there although I was then* through collective work and using a participatory approach as in the 1970s, in Bagamoyo.

Keywords: Remote ethnography, language, national identity, Bagamoyo, Mozambique

Introduction

Since the start of Covid 19 in 2021, provisional remote ethnography is the path I have chosen to (re)follow. This denied me physical access to the field, and I was *not there although I was then* (Gray 2016; Postill 2016). The idea of *being then* is reinforced by the notion of collective work as a methodology of applied social inquiry (Bragança and O’Laughlin 1984, Fernandes 2012, Cruz e Silva 2012, Darch 2014, Williams 2014), developed by the Mozambican Centre of African Studies (CEA), in 1976. The subject of my ethnographic enquiry is the collection and analysis of life histories, photographs and documents, that describe the participatory approach applied by the teachers of the Frelimo School in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, in the 1970s. These teachers began developing the literacy policies for the future liberated Mozambique during the beginning of the new nation, in the proto-state of Mozambique (in Tanzania) and in the Liberated Zones of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete (Mozambique)¹. This school considered knowledge production as a dialectical process, using people’s own experiences to develop literacy policies, what Freire (2005, 2013) refers to as an ‘open learning paradigm’ (Beck 2009). In order to collect the (hi)stories of the Bagamoyo teachers, I did ethnography at a distance. This form of remote ethnography was made specifically possible through the use of the collective work methodology followed by CEA within a participatory approach, as argued in this article.

Furthermore, the notions of *being then* and collective work are underpinned by hybrid ethnographic practices of inquiry (Przybylski 2021) that allow us to develop “platforms for fieldwork, where we co-exist with people in time, but not necessarily also in space” (Podjed and Muršič 2021, 36), while waiting for a breach in disruption and uncertainty allowing us to go back into the field.

I developed this ethnographic interconnected line of inquiry (i.e., *being then*, collective work and hybrid ethnography) since I began ethnographic fieldwork in 1996, based upon the epistemological legacy from my informal education network (family, friends and community) within the liberation theology and participatory research approaches. Since then I have grasped all opportunities to be in and out of the field, because constraints were always there,

due to uncertainty and disruption. The most recent was created by the Covid-19 pandemic, but in the past by military conflict, flood, drought and cyclones; new armed attacks in the north; and, finally, funding issues related to ethnographic fieldwork on-site. Indeed, the latter issue is a question about knowledge and power: “securing funding raises many questions about the control of the direction in which anthropological research is going” (Ardener 1998, 243).

I argue that my interconnected ethnographic journey is dependent on my network of shared contacts, the outcome of longstanding relationships and living experience developed over the years that connected me with the field and allowed me to continue doing research within conditions of disruption. As argued by Postill (2016, 63), “doing remote ethnography at a safe distance, it is not new”, just provisional, and requires experience. With Covid, the need to continue my line of research allowed me to (re)access a network of contacts and (re)establish online conversations and ethnographic interviews, exchange documents and photographs as primary sources. My participants are from different regions of the world and used email, WhatsApp, Zoom and Skype to talk.

This particular research is based on my previous ethnographic fieldwork (2011-2016), which led me to question the relationship between national languages and Portuguese, as this is a central issue in understanding the construction of national identity. Mozambique has 23 national languages and Portuguese is the official language of political and educational interaction, but is spoken only by 16,5% of the total population.² To explore this, I have focused on how the Frelimo School in Bagamoyo have addressed language issues within their use of Freire’s method and the expansion of literacy policies during the struggle for Mozambican independence during the 1970s, using the same participatory approach that was applied by the Bagamoyo teachers in the 1970’s.

Ethnographic interconnected line of inquiry – methodology and epistemology

To explain what I mean when referring to an ethnographic interconnected line of inquiry, I present the methodology I used in the table below, followed by the epistemology underpinning my research.

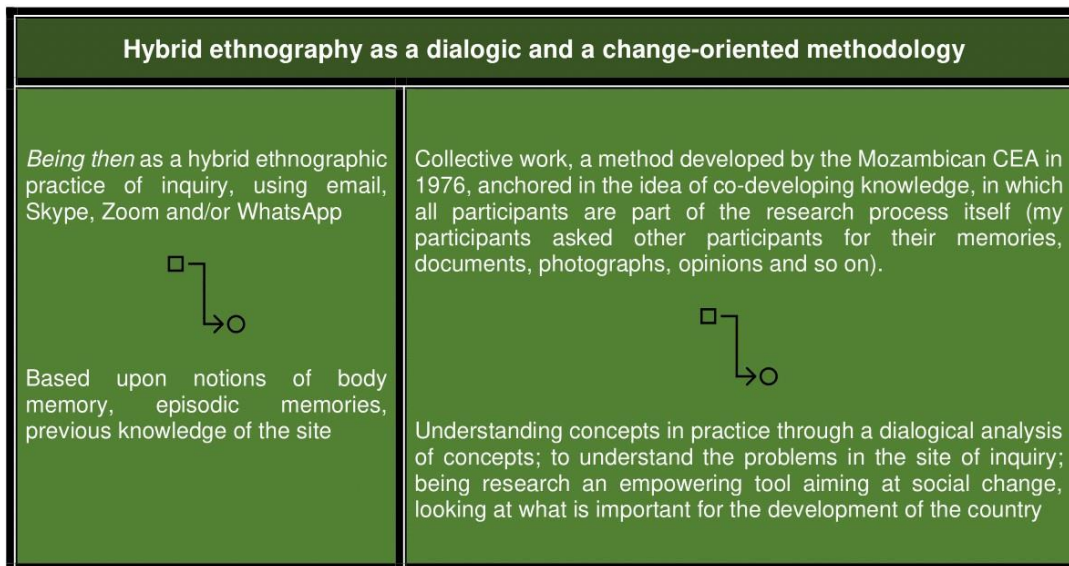


Figure 1. Methodology for provisional remote ethnography during disruption © Author

During the Covid pandemic, I (re)accessed the field while physically outside of Mozambique, *being then*, just like on other occasions. I argue that *being then* (Gray 2016; Postill 2016) is part of the process of developing ethnographic fieldwork and is highly dependent on previous experience and knowledge. According to Postill (2016, 67):

it is indeed legitimate to conduct anthropological fieldwork from afar. For one thing, anthropological research is a technologically plural, open endeavor—we use whatever technical means will help us gain insights into the lives and deeds of our research participants (provided they are ethical).

As described by Gray (2016, 504), even when I was not there in the field, “I nevertheless participated and even maintained copresence (which is implicit in the term *participant observation*)”. Postill (2016, 17) adds that “‘being there’ from afar is becoming an ever more integral part of daily life”. Gary (2016, 505) argues that what is indeed new when doing remote ethnography is the ‘temporal dimension’: “through social media, remote access can be instantaneous” and is “more of a temporal condition than a geographic one”³.

Furthermore, *being then* is a bodily experience through media, in which memory and body are central to unfolding the experience (Gray 2016). Indeed, there are two layers of *being then*: “as if I had experienced them firsthand, as if I had been there in body” (ibid, 506). Gray (2016) uses the concept of *body*

memory developed by Casey (1987, 147), in which he argues for a “memory that is intrinsic to the body, to its own ways of remembering: how we remember in and by and through the body”. Gray (2016) adds to the *body memory* the mechanism of remembering, calling for the notion of *episodic memories* (Tulving 2002). As Gary (2016, 507) describes it, episodic memories are combined with “older personal memories”, “memories of the sensual qualities” of the site of inquiry, bringing “smells, sounds, colour, movement”, which brings the “sensation of being there”. Adding that “it is not as if I never was there (...) I have been often” (Gary 2016, 507), underlining that accessing the field in such a way is only possible “when the anthropologist has already spent time in the physical spaces where the action is unfolding and is already very familiar with the local context”.

The *bodily* distance of my ethnography is underpinned by hybrid ethnographic practices of inquiry (Przybylski 2021), based upon the notion of *platforms of fieldwork*, co-existing “with people on time” (Podjed and Muršič 2021, 36), as mentioned previously. To be able to co-exist, my network of contacts is based in different geographical locations but focuses on one site of inquiry: the Frelimo School in Bagamoyo (1970-1975), in Tanzania. My participants are from different geographical locations (Mozambique, Tanzania, South Africa, the Netherlands, former German Democratic Republic or GDR, India, Brazil, Switzerland, USA, Canada, UK, Portugal, among others), but are all co-workers in the Mozambican literacy project. We have all contributed to the method of inquiry, collective work, while sharing our experiences and calling for others to share with us.

Below is a photo of Jan and Frouke Draisma, the Dutch teachers of Bagamoyo, part of the initial group of international teachers, and key participants of my project.

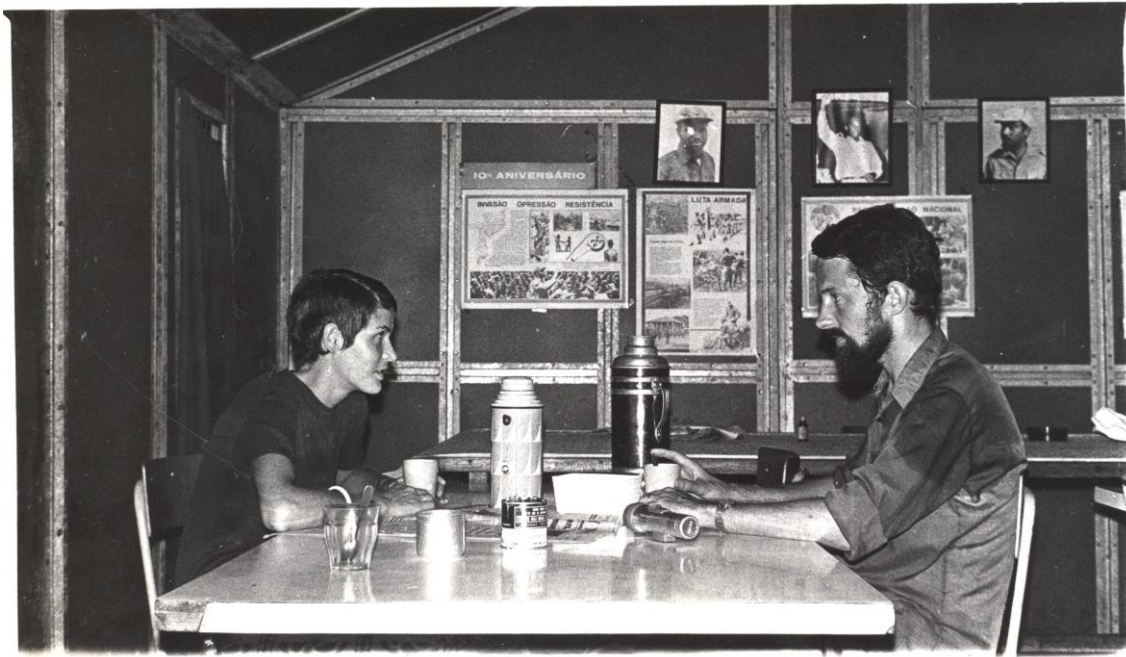


Figure 2. Frouke and Jan Draisma at the teachers' dining room, Frelimo School in Bagamoyo, March 1973 © Frouke and Jan Draisma personal archive

In the description of this photo that Jan and Frouke shared with me in July 2021⁴, they provided a description, contextualizing *being there*. About this, they wrote:

Mar73 Frouke Jan refeitório - Frouke and Jan Draisma, at night, taking tea/coffee in the teachers' dining room. On the wall, the three Frelimo leaders, from left to right: Samora Machel, Eduardo Mondlane and Marcelino dos Santos. The climate of Bagamoyo was hot and humid (tropical), therefore on various pictures Jan Draisma is seen sweating. Illumination by the pressure kerosene lamps did not allow for cooling down at night.

Collective work as a method of inquiry was initially developed and applied by the Mozambican CEA by the foundational group of researchers in 1976 (Bragança and O'Laughlin 1984, Fernandes 2012, Cruz e Silva 2012, Darch 2014, Williams 2014). "The CEA was established within Eduardo Mondlane University [UEM] in Maputo, and Aquino de Bragança was named its first director" (Bragança and O'Laughlin 1984, 160). Indeed, "the first research project of a CEA collective was conducted under the leadership of Aquino de Bragança at the time of the unsuccessful Geneva conference on Zimbabwe in late 1976" (Darch 2014, 39). Aquino is described as

(...) an engaged intellectual for social justice and emancipation of oppressed people, considered by many as the 'anti-colonial struggle nomad' and [who] raised immediately the need at CEA of studying Mozambique in the Southern Africa context (Fernandes 2012, 117)⁵.

Furthermore, this methodology is "dialogic and change oriented" (Beck 2009, 1), meaning that my inquiry and ethnography echo participants' narratives and interpretations. The dialogic frame is described as "a re-invention, what is referred to as participatory and participatory action research (PAR)" (Beck 2009, 7), aiming at "sociocultural change, political engagement and economic development" tuned with the purpose of the Frelimo School in Bagamoyo.

At this point, I must acknowledge what brought me into anthropology, after being a young journalist, influenced by my family legacy. Using the collective work method as part of the way I do research, with or without disruption, symbolizes a way of working in and about Mozambique, calling for the notion of resilience and methodological resistance. My father taught me about the epistemology within liberation theology, connected especially with Chile, referring to several journalists (e.g., the French journalist, Régis Debray) . This positionality is an act of resilience and methodological resistance, situated in those times, supporting engaged research⁶. With Aquino, I learned about applying the collective work method, in order to create dialogue and be open to constant critique. I grew up in a collective group of people, especially connected with Mozambique and Angola and the Liberation Movements before and after independence, as well as from Latin America, particularly Chile and Cuba. Aquino was a family friend, and as my father wrote⁷, "Aquino was not a man of the establishment/power", adding that "theoretically, power was always a question that Aquino de Bragança had" (Bragança 2009, 46). This is one of the main questions in Aquino's thinking: why do human beings change after getting into power, becoming totalitarian? Aquino knew well how power impacted people – until he died, he was the personal consigliere of Samora Machel. With them I have learned to keep asking and unfold the (hi)story no matter what I encounter, keeping in mind that the voiceless must be heard.

With Aquino, CEA introduced a new way of doing research, from an individual to a collective paradigm, using research as a tool to answer what society needed at the time, developing applied research for policy supported by a dialectical positionality towards social reality (Fernandes 2012). Aquino invited Ruth First, a South African journalist, activist and scholar, to organize and establish the CEA. In 1978, Ruth “become the Assistant Director and Director of Research” of CEA (Bragança and O’Laughlin 1984, 160).

With Ruth First,

CEA quickly developed a set of practices, and a critical perspective, that set it apart from most other academic research centres. There may even have been something like a ‘Mozambican school’ in the social sciences in the 1970s and 1980s, characterized by an overarching view of southern Africa as a region, critical engagement with revolutionary change and a strong commitment to collective work methods (Darch 2014, 39).

Bearing that in mind, my methodological approach is based on an epistemological positionality anchored in the liberation theology movement of Latin America (McLaren and Jandrić, 2018) and the participatory approach developed in Tanzania, in the 1970s, within Freire’s critical pedagogy, as illustrated below:

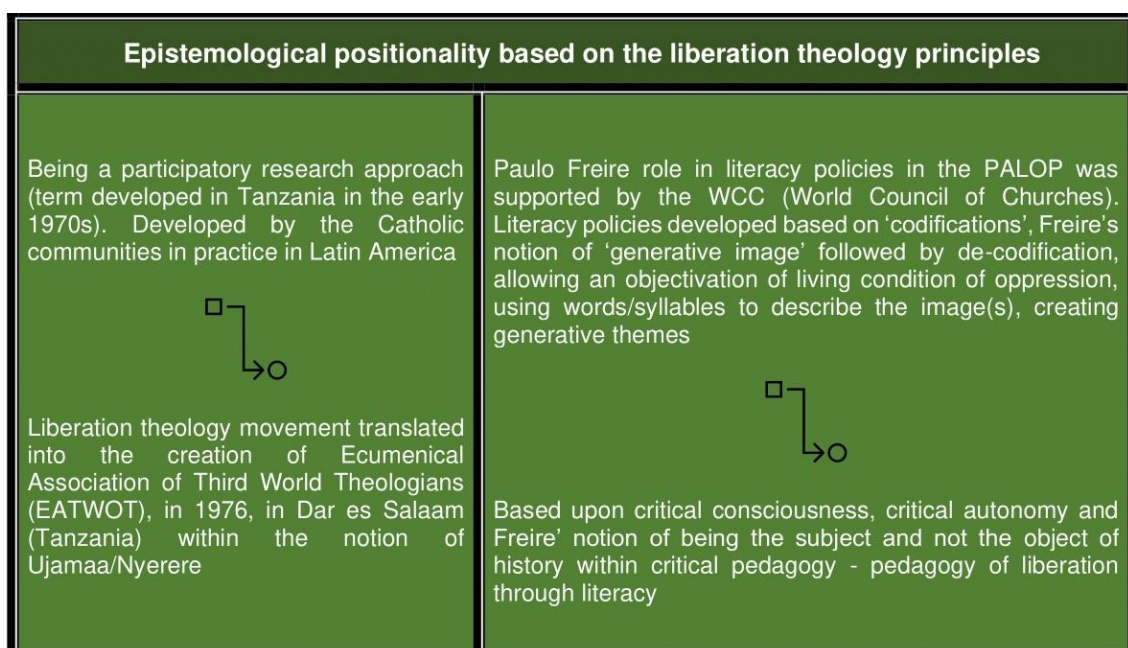


Figure 3. Epistemology framework for provisional remote ethnography during disruption © Author

Liberation theology began in Latin America in the 1950s–1960s (de Rooj and Burity 2015), and Paulo Freire shared the same principles, even if he did not formally acknowledge it (McLaren and Jandrić, 2018). The liberation theology principles were adopted in Tanzania through the creation of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), as critically described below by Joseph 2015 (36).

The so-called universal theology of the church was, in reality, a geographically localized and culturally conditioned interpretation. Theology was not universal, but White, male, and European. EATWOT was the sign of a new stage in the history of theology, the beginning of a theological transposition in terms of the epistemological priorities in doing theology as well as the geographical location of the subjects of theology. Theology was removed from the center to the margin.

The EATWOT's first meeting was held at the University of Dar es Salaam, in 1976. Since the 1970s, the university became a “centre for the guerrilla-intellectuals and activists of African liberation movements”, and Tanzania considered as a “safe haven to US civil-rights activists, including the Black Panther party, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, and Vietnam War resisters” (Chachage and Chachage 2004, 159).

The concept of self-reliance called *Ujamaa* in Swahili was introduced by Julius Nyerere, the first president of the new state of Tanzania (1964), which emphasised the notion of familyhood in African traditional societies (Gbadegesin 1994), and this was a key concept within EATWOT philosophy. Indeed, the

philosophy of *ujamaa*, which expresses traditions and values shared by the poor and marginalized and speaks for their well-being (...) [to] break free of Western epistemologies and establish a tradition that placed the poor and the marginalized at the center (Joseph 2015, 58).

However, “Nyerere was cautious enough not to impose his ideologies on the intellectual community at the University of Dar es Salaam” (Chachage and

Chachage 2004, 159). At the university, a dialogical methodological approach was born, called participatory research, a term that

was first articulated in Tanzania in the early 1970s to describe a variety of community-based approaches to the creation of knowledge. Taken together these approaches combine social investigation, education and action in an interrelated process” (Hall 2005, 5).

This approach to reality “consider[ed] knowledge production, rather than knowledge transference, as a dialectical process which uses people’s own experiences as a starting point for learning”, referring to Paulo Freire’s ‘open learning paradigm’ (Beck 2009, 7). Participatory research was “a combination of Nyerere’s vision and Paulo Freire’s work that come out of this chapter three” [from his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*]” (Zoom, Budd Hall, February 8, 2021).

Budd Hall⁸ was the person responsible for Freire’s visit to Tanzania in September 1971, having introduced him to Julius Nyerere. I got in touch with Budd through LinkedIn, and we scheduled a talk through Zoom (December 8, 2021). Budd explained the context of Tanzania and Freire’s method in Southern Africa:

(...) the official literacy campaign in Tanzania did not take up, you know, the Freire’s method (...) much more build on the Tanzania’ ideology (...) literacy crusade was much more traditional (...) but progressive in the sense of capacity of the country mobilize (...) all the Liberation Movements that were based in Tanzania (...) they were led by this visionary and charismatic leaders, Marcelino dos Santos for example, and they were busy with negotiation support from the world community (...) Tanzania gave them free space, Nyerere was an advisor, they respected him and he would help them with funding agencies and all of that, and schools were really to build, first of all, places for people to be safe and be able to learn, and they believed in education, otherwise they wouldn’t have Frelimo school, but basically they were preparing future leaders and they had few resources (...) his ideas [Freire] would have been challenging to leadership (...) the idea of putting people learning

based on their own experience, that would be a challenge for any political leader, because political leaders, what they want is their vision (...) and that vision is coming from their own world (...) the idea of people lived experience, a source of transformative knowledge, is quite radical and challenges (...) how do you control all of that? If you have a Liberation Movement, you don't have time for all these people raising all these issues (...) you want people to understand *the* Story and then get in the line-up, ready to march, according to the story.

At the same time, Budd told me that when he took Freire to speak around Tanzania, people were keen to hear him speak.

The role of the World Council of Churches (WCC), who hired Freire in February 1970 as a special adviser for the Department of Education (Haddad 2019), must be mentioned. The WCC supported Freire's visit to the Frelimo School of Bagamoyo in 1972. The WCC was founded in 1948, mainly supported by protestant churches from Europe and North America (Raiser 1994), being tuned with the Mozambican landscape that connects Frelimo with the Protestant missions before independence (Cruz e Silva 1998).

After describing what an ethnographic interconnected line of inquiry (i.e., *being then*, collective work and hybrid ethnography) means, underpinned by a specific epistemological legacy, I applied it to the (re)construction of the (hi)story of literacy policies in the proto-state of Mozambique, that somehow legitimate the so-called Mozambican national identity.

Bagamoyo remote reconstruction and the (Un)Freire of literacy policies in Mozambique

Frelimo School of Bagamoyo was the first secondary school to train student-teachers to develop literacy campaigns in the Liberated Zones of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete, in 1972, based upon the Freire literacy method. Bagamoyo is a legacy of the former Mozambican Institute of Dar es Salaam, founded by Eduardo and Janet Mondlane, in 1963, which was supported by the Afro-American Institute, University of Harvard (USA), and financed by the USA Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, with support of Tanzania (Costa 2018). However, in

1964, because of the Portuguese pressure on the US government, the Ford Foundation withdrew its support, and Janet Mondlane, through Zachariah Matthews, a member of the ANC and the WCC, provided support for the Institute (Sellström 2008).

Bagamoyo is the outcome of the 1968 crisis, a result of the II Congress of Frelimo, that led to the end of the secondary school in the Mozambican Institute. The II Congress represented the foundation of the “construction of socialism” for independent Mozambique (Brito 2019, 47), but also reflected the internal opposition in Frelimo (Cabaço 2010), which was critical of the Southern origin predominance in Frelimo’s leadership (Opello 1975).

After the Congress, education fell under “the sole authority of the military structure and its political commissars” (Brito 2019, 71), which represented a southern-led Frelimo dominant wing. The education project of Frelimo followed the principle of unification of revolution and knowledge, in tune with the II Congress principles. One of the main purposes of education was the need to “train the necessary staff, for political and armed tasks, and for national reconstruction and, in the first place, the ones’ of production”⁹ (1969, Frelimo polycopied document, 4). Concerning adult literacy, it is mentioned that there was a need to find a “literacy method more practical and efficient” (18 - see document below).

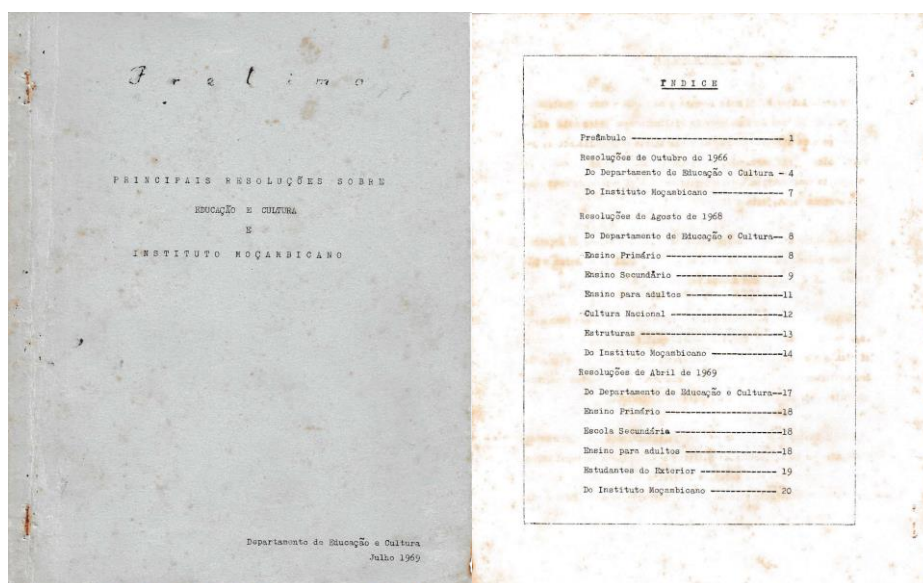


Figure 4. 1969, “Main Resolutions about Education and Culture, and the Mozambican Institute”, Frelimo, polycopied document, 21 pages © Frouke and Jan Draisma personal archive

The Bagamoyo School reflects the political scenario of the time. The school was inaugurated by Samora on October 25, 1970, a symbolical sign of Frelimo's dominant wing (photo below).



Figure 5. 25 October 1970 - Samora speaking at the opening of Bagamoyo school © Frouke and Jan Draisma personal archive

My key participants, Jan and Frouke Draisma, the Dutch teachers at the school, describe the image, *being there*, saying:

This picture was taken in the shade of enormous mango trees, which served as our meeting place. Samora Machel is addressing the students, while the teachers and other visitors were at his back. Only our Mozambican colleague Edmundo Libombo had joined the students: he is the first one on the left (with glasses). Edmundo Libombo and the students all were dressed in their uniforms of guerrilla fighters, just as they were using most of the time as teachers and students. The uniforms were made by one of the students, Daniel Sirage, using cloth coming from the GDR.

Frouke added a detail to the photo (Skype June 17, 2021), saying that besides Samora, “Marcelino dos Santos, Jorge Rebelo, all from higher positions”, were also there. As Jan explained to me when sharing the photos of Bagamoyo (email July 4, 2021): “The school was reopened, because before it had functioned in Dar es Salaam, where it was closed in 1968, due to internal problems of Frelimo”.

In 1970, Bagamoyo had national and international teachers. The first group of international teachers was a Swedish couple (the Hammarströms)¹⁰, a Dutch couple (the Draisma), a teacher from the GDR (Beholz) and a teacher from India (Fernandes). The Draisma were the only ones staying in Bagamoyo from 1970 to 1975, when the school was transferred to Nampula, Mozambique. In our second talk (Skype June 24, 2021), Jan added the following comment when I asked about the initial group of teachers in Bagamoyo:

Jan: We went, we were few. There was the Dean [Mário Sive, Mozambican], that was found at the last minute, because the one who was supposed to be the Dean was Gabriel Simbine¹¹, but for a while he had some doubts about if he stays in Frelimo or go away. So, he was founded at the last minute and the only Mozambican teacher was Edmundo Libombo. Besides, it was the Swedish couple, the GRD teacher, and teacher Fernandes from India and we two (...) but Bagamoyo was a school before. There was a 4th grade, which was the preparation for the school to start. I don't know exactly who the teachers were and at what time, but in 69, maybe. And there was a teacher training course in which, I think, Veloso also taught. It was before he was expelled from Tanzania with Fernando Ganhão. And the teacher from the GDR was there at the time, Joaquim Kindler; the American couple, Bill and Ruth Minter.

They added that the Frelimo people from Dar es Salaam with whom they had contact most of the time were Eduardo Koloma, Joaquim Chissano and Janet Mondlane, adding that sometimes Samora Machel visited Bagamoyo on special occasions¹².

Regarding the Swedish couple: they were teachers of hard sciences, provided by the Swedish government, due to a lack of teachers created by the

1968' crisis in the Mozambican Institute (Sellström 2008, 99),¹³ which led to the banishment of white Mozambican teachers such as Jacinto Veloso, Ganhão and Hélder Martins (Sellström 2008, Costa 2018, Veloso 2013).

The Draisma went to Bagamoyo with the support of the Dutch Angola Comité, having contacted the Dutch Lutheran Church as well. The Angola Comité was founded in April 1961, being a “solidarity organization for the liberation movements in all three Portuguese territories in Africa” (Bosgra and Schuddenboom 2005, 10). However, the Draisma ended up in Bagamoyo with a contract from the Dutch Lutheran Church, as they described (Skype June 17, 2021):

Jan: We went to Tanzania in 1970. We wrote one year earlier, in 69, mid-year, to Janet Mondlane of the Mozambican Institute, that we were willing to work at the Frelimo school (...) it took a while until we had an answer. Because, well, it was the year of Eduardo Mondlane's murder, well, it took time. But early in 1970, we got the answer that we could go and, as I already wrote to you, as we weren't sure if we could go to the Frelimo school, we had made other contacts to see a place in Tanzania. And there was a Lutheran school in Tanzania, here, that could have us. So, that's how we got in touch with the Lutheran Church in Holland, we weren't members, and they were interested in sending us to Tanzania, to this secondary school. But a few days before we sign the contract, we received a very short reply from Janet Mondlane, who wrote a telegram to the Dutch Angola Comité that *dat werden geaccepteerd*, that we were accepted. The telegram only said: “Draisma's accepted”. (...) So, we informed the people from the Lutheran Church, they knew that we had made this contact with Frelimo. And they ended up giving us the same contract but for the Frelimo school. We had a contract with them for 7 years. So, from 70 to 77 (...) Well, at the beginning of 75, we went to Lourenço Marques.

When the first group of teachers arrived in Bagamoyo in 1970, they had a first group of 52 students in the 5th grade, which at the time was still part of

secondary education - from the 5th to the 8th grade. “The majority were from Cabo Delgado and Niassa, but there were also some students from the Centre and South of the country, especially later, but they were few” (Skype, Draisma, June 24, 2021). With time, other teachers from Mozambique and other countries went to Bagamoyo, such as Luís Pouw, Elisabeth Sequeira, João Ferreira, José Carlos Lobo, Graça Simbine, Pamela Rebelo, Kunio Suzuki and Bill Minter.

In 1970, Eduardo Baciao Coloma, later known as Koloma (deceased in 2020), was the Secretary of the Department of Education and Culture, previously the Dean of the Mozambican Institute (Veloso 2013). Apparently, Coloma was the person who invited Paulo Freire to go to Bagamoyo, in 1972, to share his ideas on literacy methods. According to a letter written by Eduardo Coloma, on 8 November 1971, to Baldwin Sjollema, the first Director of the WCC’s Programme to Combat Racism (PCR), Frelimo expressed interest in a “stay in Dar es Salaam of Professor Freire next year”. In the letter, Coloma describes the last visit Freire made to Tanzania, in 1971, giving a “lecture on his famous literacy program method to our students who were then taking [a] Teacher Training Course at Bagamoyo”. However, the lecture was not enough to create “a clear knowledge about the method”, and students asked for “more time and more lessons”. The letters between Coloma and Sjollema were given to me by the Draisma, who acquired them from Catarina Simão, a Portuguese artist and researcher. When I contacted the archives of the WCC, the answer was that there was ‘no record’ of Freire’s visit to Bagamoyo:

Unfortunately, Freire’s involvement in Frelimo’s education programmes is very scarce. In fact, there is nothing more than the letter that you are already aware of. The files of the office of Education, to which Freire belonged, do not contain any document about Freire’s trip to Tanzania and/or contact to Frelimo” (email November 26, 2021, WCC archives).

The only record I found regarding Freire’s writings related to his visit to Tanzania is in 1970/1971. As he wrote (Freire and Macedo 2021, 104-105), “In 1970, or 1971, I did my first trip to Africa, Tanzania and Zambia¹⁴”. After being in Zambia, Freire went to Tanzania, describing his visit as follows:

At the University of Tanzania, a Tanzanian man engaged with Frelimo approached me. He asked if I would accept an invitation to meet the Frelimo people in Dar es Salaam. I accepted. Among the presents, there was the widow of Mondlane, the murdered leader of Frelimo. The Minister of Education of Mozambique was also there (...). After, I was invited to visit the training camp that the president of Tanzania had given to the Frelimo fighters. Intensive training was given to literacy teachers who, after that, would go to Mozambique to work in the literacy campaigns that took place at the same time as the liberation war. An important issue in this training was the emphasis on non-dichotomization between liberation struggles and literacy. At the training camp, I found educators, among them a lot of Europeans engaged with the liberation struggle, that was there to help (...) During that meeting, we debated literacy techniques and methods they were using” (Freire and Macedo 2021, 104-105).

In the rather puzzling description of Freire’s seminar in Bagamoyo in 1972, the Draisma reconstructed the (hi)story of the seminar that resulted in the 1972 Literacy Book written “by the teachers at the Secondary School in Bagamoyo, after the visit of Paulo Freire that, for a couple of days, explained his literacy method. The book was printed at the Mozambican Institute in Dar es Salaam” (Jan Draisma, email June 29, 2021). Jan explained that they had lost all their notebooks regarding Bagamoyo’s work (1970-1975), including Freire’s seminar notes (email June 16, 2021).

According to the reconstruction by the Draisma, Edmundo Libombo (deceased), and Luís Pouw, a Dutch teacher who arrived in 1971 in Bagamoyo, were part of the group that wrote the 1972 Literacy Book as the outcome of Freire’s seminar. However, Pouw does not remember much about this and he did not have any documents, because he lost everything when he moved from Bagamoyo to Ribaué, in Nampula (according to Elisabeth Sequeira). This 1972 book (see image below) replaced the two literacy books that were given to the Bagamoyo teachers by the Mozambican Institute before Freire’s method, probably in 1970, by Koloma, and which the Draisma shared with me.



Figure 6. 1972 Literacy Book written in Bagamoyo under Freire's influence and printed in Dar es Salaam © Frouke and Jan Draisma personal archive

The Draisma remembers the following about the 1972 Freire seminar at Bagamoyo:

Jan: ... he came to Bagamoyo, I think it was for several days and he meet the teachers at the laboratory, and he spoke, mainly it was him speaking, we didn't debate how was going to be the literacy process. It was him explaining things and then him. When he left, a group of teachers wrote a literacy book. Frelimo had made rudimentary books on literacy, but now there is a beautiful book, well [show to me the 1972 Literacy Book], I don't know if you know it. (...) he spoke (...) at the laboratory there was a bench of 3 or 4 meters (...) he would stand in front and sit on it...

Frouke: He lay down!

Jan: Yes, sit on it, but sometimes lay down and keep talking (laughs). It was a show! Ya, unfortunately, our notebooks got lost.

Frouke: And we didn't work on the preparation of the teachers' guide for literacy, because after, they tried to make the books of

literacy that the students took during their activities of holidays, to do the literacy campaigns (...) there was no document of Paulo Freire that we have knowledge besides this book (...) be two, three days, I don't know, I only remember one day that we were at his meeting. It was short to be able to influence or give guidance, not possible!

To reconstruct the (hi)story of the 1972 Literacy Book and Freire's impact on literacy policies in Mozambique, the Draisma contacted several people from several periods. Pamela Rebelo, an English teacher in Bagamoyo, of British origin and a member of MAGIC (a recruitment organization of the British solidarity committee), who took part in the Literacy Seminar of 1974 in Bagamoyo from the 14th of April until the 14th of May, which the Draisma did not attend. This seminar explains how Freire's method was actually adopted by Frelimo.

The 1974 Seminar portrayed by Jan in the photo below, is described by the Draisma as follows:

In the center of the photo are, from left to right: Gabriel Simbine (Educational Center of Tunduru), Edmundo Libombo (teacher of Bagamoyo), Valentina Peixoto, a person I don't know [later, Jan, after speaking with others, told me she was a Brazilian consultant maybe hired by UNESCO, according to Agneta Lind, and that she wrote a report on the 1974 Seminar, according to Judith Marshall] and Kunio Suzuki (Brazilian teacher of Bagamoyo).



Figure 7. 1974 Literacy training at Bagamoyo © Frouke and Jan Draisma personal archive

According to Judith Marshall (1993), during the 1974 Seminar, the debate regarding adopting Freire's method was addressed. Marshall is a Canadian activist, who worked for eight years in Mozambique after 1975 for the Ministry of Education. Judith (1993, 274) writes that:

There is little documentation to reconstruct the kinds of policy debates around the establishment of a national literacy service, either from FRELIMO or from other institutions participating in literacy at the time. Some clues about the thinking in FRELIMO circles may be gleaned from a document reflecting on the seminar on literacy which had taken place in April 1974 at the FRELIMO Secondary School in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, (...) Adaptation of the methodological approach of Paulo Freire was discussed as a possible solution. The reasons for its rejection are revealing. The first was the problem of second language teaching and how to conduct generative discussions in a second language. Secondly there was a perceived tension between the need for generative themes to serve the general purposes of the nation and the Freirean approach which derived generative themes from local issues of immediate relevance to particular groups of learners. The third reason to reject the Freirean approach was perhaps most telling of all and had to do with power.

According to one of the documents (see photo below) that Judith shared through the Draisma via Pamela Rebelo (email August 26, 2021), "Project of INDE [National Institute for the Development of Education] 1983"¹⁵, the Bagamoyo school was responsible for the development of material and training for literacy, in 1972, with the production of a book and a manual. Besides that, they organized a training course of one week for students during their holidays, including one month in the Liberated Zones to apply this knowledge. "Project INDE 1983" mentions that the literacy book was written by three teachers [Edmundo Libombo and Luís Pouw, mentioned above], one of them drawing on experience from Brazil [maybe Luís Pouw, according to Jan], also with inputs from previous interviews near Mozambican students from different regions of Mozambique.

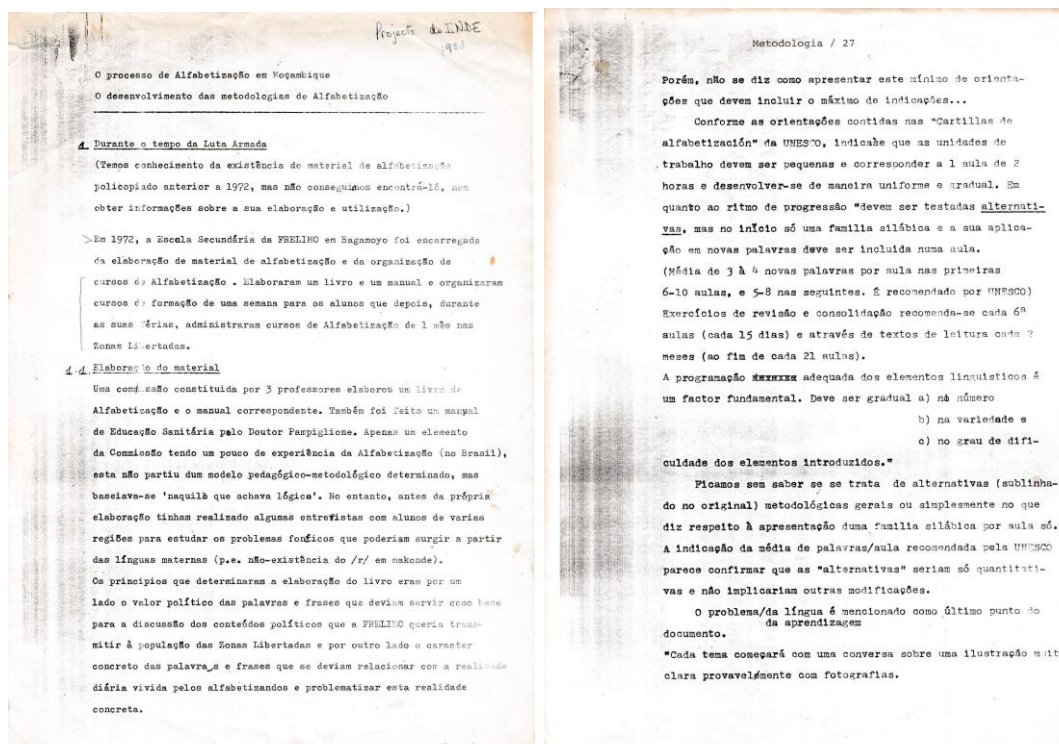


Figure 8. "Project of INDE 1983", 27 pages © Judith Marshall and Draisma personal archives

This document also mentions that "they didn't use any particular pedagogical and methodological model, [but applied] what they thought was logical" (1). However, it highlighted the "political value of words and sentences that could support political debates that Frelimo wanted to transmit to the population in the Liberated Zones". It also refers to the 1972 Literacy Book with 20 lessons, and Freire's method is mentioned, among others, but adapted to the Mozambican reality.

The issue of language was a key debate when applying Freire's method, which defended the use of mother-tongues to develop literacy programs. However, "the vast majority of literacy students did not understand Portuguese, so that explanations were given by the literacy teacher in Portuguese and then translated by an interpreter into their mother tongue by the literacy students" (Project INDE 1983, 2-3 - above image of the Project INDE 1983).

This is also supported by Jan's memories of a former student, David Xadrique (deceased), who wrote a book on the liberation struggle in the Niassa Front. Jan recalls that the alphabetization process in the Liberated Zones in 1972, in Cabo Delgado:

was not about Freire's methodology, it was the war problem and the languages problem. That's what he says, he was from Niassa and was alphabetizing in the area where people speak Makonde and there were problems of understanding within the population, that distrusted them (...) [and then] they had to alphabetize in Portuguese (Skype June 17, 2021).

Xadrique (2016, 96)¹⁶ remembers what people thought about Niassa when they arrived in Cabo Delgado with around 20 students from Bagamoyo to alphabetize in Portuguese. He described the war scenario and the difficulty that local people had to trust them, writing that:

(...) people wanted to know about me. Where was I from, why I didn't speak Makonde (...) The teacher that was with me said I was from Niassa. So, the others asked where Niassa was. Teacher Nan'gumbe answered that Niassa was also Mozambique (ibid).

According to Anton Johnson (South African, one of the first cooperators in Mozambique supported by MAGIC, working in literacy from 1977 to 1983¹⁷), besides language issues, the nature of Freire's method needed to be considered:

Since the beginning it was clear that the problem was in reaching people, as well as the political contradictions created when the method [of Freire] changed from a 'resistance against oppression' to a '[method] of participation' in a revolutionary setting, and then, in the construction of a new nation.

When I was placed by DNAEA (National Direction of Literacy and Adult Education) in Quelimane in 1976 to support the organization of alphabetization and to prepare for a national campaign, it was clear that the entire method [of Freire] had not been accepted. However, the syllabic method and the desire to use it to contribute for "the liberation of creative initiative" had been adopted. The Catholic church was more "progressive" in the province and had already started their own work of alphabetization (Domeneca Father) and had made a thick policopied manual based on PF [Paulo Freire] method available (email September 4, 2021)¹⁸.

From the above, there clearly is a need to go deeper into the literacy project in Mozambique because it tells the (hi)story of how language(s) is key to understanding the development of the nation, language being a legitimatising process from within. The 1974 and 1975 documents on the Literacy seminars also reflected this reality¹⁹. According to “Project INDE 1983” (6-8), in the 1975 Ribaué Seminar, the first seminar on literacy in Mozambique after independence, one main conclusion was that:

The strict use of Paulo Freire’s method was criticised, because this method was based on very different circumstances and because it hardly applied to the Mozambican reality. Gideon Ndobe [who replaced Koloma in Bagamoyo, according to Jan], the Minister of Education at the time, stated that the method issue was overvalued and that new methods would be born from a correct definition of the purposes of Literacy: ‘There will be no adoption of a single rigid method ... we should insist in the use of Portuguese language. In the areas where local language is spoken, should use them as supporting language, introducing gradually Portuguese.

The seminar therefore recommended a method in which the influence of Paulo Freire’s method was felt, but without being dominated by it.

Conclusion

The roots of my provisional remote reconstruction in this article are in 2011, when Mozambicans told me that speaking national languages was to “speak dog language” or speaking Portuguese was to speak “White people language”. From there, I have (re)constructed the (hi)story based on oral history, collecting life histories, photographs and documents, allowing me to access the other side of (hi)story – the literacy project which marked the beginning of the nation in Tanzania and in the Liberated Zones of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete in Mozambique underlined by the use of Portuguese as the official language of the new nation. Back in 2011, I began to understand the (hi)story of the elites, those who had access to formal education or school (few people compared to the majority), and these were the individuals that control power – in pursuit of the question that Aquino de Bragança had posed.

My journey into the margins of power was made through exploring the role of language(s) and following how Freire's method was adopted in Mozambique. This question directed me to Tanzania and the Frelimo School of Bagamoyo in the 1970s because it related to language(s) as a process that contributed to the construction of the new nation, legitimizing it, being an act of power. I *went there* at a distance, during pandemic times, guided by the collective work that the teachers of Bagamoyo generously developed with me.

Bearing that in mind, developing an ethnography to tell the (hi)story of subalterns or of the margins, the (un)told (hi)story, is only possible within a collective and participatory approach, because (hi)story is not of a single person, but of multiple people. This is what *not being there although being then* means, as I argue, especially because it was developed in and about Mozambique, calling for an interconnected line of inquiry, based on collective work within a network of shared contacts. In this multiple (hi)story, Portuguese language is not a neutral issue. Indeed, as argued by Liesegang and Tembe (2005, 6)

Portuguese was the language of the internal meetings [of Frelimo]. It was in that language that Mondlane addressed those who were going to training and starting the armed struggle. This marginalized Mozambicans born and raised abroad like Mmole [president of MANU, in 1961-1962, a Mozambican born and raised in Tanganyika] and from peasants to workers who did not speak Portuguese.

As Frouke Draisma (Skype July 22, 2021), teacher of Bagamoyo from 1970 to 1975, that (re)constructed Freire's visit, added,

when teaching a language, we have to know, we have to know the language and know which the simplest sounds are to teach and then how it gradually becomes difficult. And nobody knew about it, nobody did. So, we worked, and as you were saying, more in the sense of political words, it was words, we had a slogan at that time, which was ... *work, produce and study*, or whatever. And the words that are there [in the 1972 Literacy Book], go around this. The themes were the struggle, the work, the production... they are the themes.

The literacy policies developed based on Freire's method were about 'codifications', or Freire's notion of 'generative image' followed by de-codification, allowing an objectivation of the living condition of oppression, using words/syllables to describe the image(s), creating generative themes. But the themes were meant to be chosen within mother-tongues and within a local context, using a participatory approach (e.g., Haddad 2019, Freire and Macedo 2021, Freire 2013, 2005). However, in those times, the dominant wing of Frelimo decided which themes would be debated and which language should be used to unify the nation and the national project, imposing a unique vision on nation building.

This research is still unfolding, a provisional remote reconstruction, bringing together the issue of political uses of language(s) and the (re)construction of national identity, looking at Frelimo and the dominant wing that came out of the II Congress of 1968.

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In memory of Olga Martins (deceased in 2021), that put me in contact with the Draisma, through Isabel Casimiro (CEA), after speaking with Elizabeth Sequeira and Luis Cabaço. A very special *heel erg bedankt* to Jan and Frouke Draisma, that shared their life histories and commented on this article.

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¹ Debates regarding the proto-state in Tanzania, that the Bagamoyo school is a piece of it, can be found, e.g. M. Panzer's (2013), "Building a revolutionary constituency: Mozambican refugees and the development of the FRELIMO proto-state, 1964–1968", *Social Dynamics*, 39:1, 5-23; Lawe Laweki (2019), *Mateus Pinho Gwenjere - Um Padre revolucionário*, Lawe Laweki Publishing at Smashwords; Liesegang and Tembe (2005); and Opello (1975).

² See Carvalho, 2021: 155.

³ To deepen the debates regarding the turns in anthropology from the 1980s on, e.g. M. Nielsen and N. Rapport, eds. 2018. *The Composition of Anthropology: How Anthropological Texts Are Written*. London: Routledge.

⁴ For more details see Carvalho, 2023.

⁵ Original in Portuguese.

⁶ See Gustavo Gutiérrez (1975), *Teología de la liberación. Perspectivas*. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme.

⁷ In the night before boarding with Samora Machel and others in the airplane that would crash in Mbuzini on 19th of October 1986, Aquino had dinner with us, in my family house in Maputo, along with other family friends, such as Gulamo Khan (Press Attaché at the Presidency of the Republic) and Muradali Mamadhussei (private secretary of Samora).

⁸ Now co-Director, UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education and Professor of Adult Education, Community Development and Community-Based Research at the University of Victoria, Canada.

⁹ In Portuguese.

¹⁰ Bosse Hammarström died in 2020 due to COVID-19 (email July 4, 2021)

¹¹ Simbine was the first contact of the Draisma when they decided to go to Tanzania, being the Dean of the Mozambican Institute in 1969.

¹² Correction made by Jan and Frouke (email September 13, 2022).

¹³ However, the Draisma remembered that Boss Hammarström was a teacher of history and Ulla Hammarström a teacher of geography (both were nurses).

¹⁴ In Portuguese.

¹⁵ In Portuguese.

¹⁶ In Portuguese.

¹⁷ The biographical note is from the talks with Jan and Frouke Draisma, and from the African Activist Archive, Southern Africa Report, Vol. 5 No. 4, February 1990, 17-19.

¹⁸ In Portuguese.

¹⁹ For details on the documents see Carvalho 2023.