Making Modernity Accountable: A case study of youth in Mozambique

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Abstract

According to the philosopher Stephen Toulmin there is a standard account of modernity which gives primacy to the written over the oral, the universal over the particular, the general over the local and the timeless over the timely. This paper draws from Toulmin to argue that accounts of modernity in Africa are based on the assumptions of the standard account of modernity to deny modernity to Africa even though these assumptions inhere in actual practices as the analysis of the work of a non-governmental organization operating in Mozambique seeks to document. The paper will therefore argue that modernity is real and that it shows its reality in the way in which particular social conditions and categories are done, *i.e. through meanings, methods, motives and the management of the social relationship which they bring forth.*

Keywords: youth, modernity, NGO, Mozambique

Resumo

Segundo o filósofo Stephen Toulmin, existe um padrão de modernidade que dá primazia à escrita sobre o oral, ao universal sobre o particular, ao geral sobre o local e ao atemporal sobre o temporal. Este artigo baseia-se em Toulmin para argumentar que a avaliação deste processo em África se baseia em pressupostos padronizados para negar a possibilidade mesma da modernidade no continente. Contudo, estes pressupostos são inerentes a práticas reais, como é aqui demonstrado através da análise do trabalho de uma organização não governamental em funcionamento em Moçambique. Este artigo argumenta que a modernidade é real e e concretizada em determinadas condições sociais e categorias, ou seja, através dos significados, métodos, motivações e gestão das relações sociais expressos nessas condições.

Palavras-chave: juventude, modernidade, ONG, Moçambique

Introduction

In recent years I have come to appreciate an approach to modernity suggested by the philosopher Stephen Toulmin in 1990. Toulmin rages against what he calls the *standard account of modernity* (Toulmin, 1990: 13), by which he means the set of ideas about the world and how to retrieve it scientifically that took hold of philosophy and science from the seventeenth century onwards and was most aptly represented by René Descartes. Toulmin criticizes this standard account of modernity for having exaggerated the extent to which it had represented a major departure from Renaissance humanism. Drawing from a convincing reading of such Renaissance humanists as Montaigne, Bacon and Erasmus, Toulmin defines modernity as an attitude to life and to the world which marks horizons of expectation and argues, in this sense, that it was heralded long before Enlightenment scholars fell in love with reason. In fact, Toulmin goes as far as to hold the view that rationalism actually represented a negative departure from modernity as thought and lived by Renaissance humanists.

There is a lot of sense in Toulmin's argument. My concern in this paper will not only be to make a case in support of this argument, but also, pursuing it further, to take the *standard account of modernity* to task for several misunderstandings concerning modernity in African studies and, ultimately, describe the work of a non-governmental organization in Mozambique that deals with youth as a particular instance of the way in which this problematic understanding of modernity plays itself out in real life. In other words, I want to argue that modernity is real and that it shows its reality in the way in which particular social conditions and categories are *done*, i.e. through meanings, methods, motives and the management of the social relationships which they bring forth.

Toulmin identifies four kinds of departure from the kind of modernity represented by Renaissance Humanism (Toulmin, 1990: 30-44), all of which are central not only to an understanding of the problematic nature of the notions of modernity that has structured relations between Africa and Europe, but also to an understanding of why scholars within the field of African studies find the notion of modernity highly problematic. These departures, which he calls *practical knowledge* (Toulmin: 30), consist of the transition "from the Oral to the Written", "from the Particular to the Universal", "from the Local to the General" and "from the Timely to the Timeless". The transition from the Oral to the Written refers to the debasement of rhetoric in favour of formal logic. The validity and soundness of an argument cease to rest on context and audience and depend primarily on the internal relations established within statements. The second departure, i.e.

the transition from the Particular to the Universal relegates the contingent and practical in life to a secondary position in relation to what is deemed universal, and therefore, true and right. This is particularly pronounced in the third departure, namely the transition from the Local to the General which diminishes the importance of ethnography, i.e. of diversity in human affairs, and favours abstract axioms that are not bound to any particular and concrete history. Finally, Toulmin also identifies the transition from the Timely to the Timeless, which celebrates the permanent over the transitory.

These departures identified by Toulmin are important for an adequate understanding of African debates over modernity. The modernity experienced by Africans in their relationship with Europe is not the modernity of Renaissance humanists. Rather, it is the modernity of an arrogant Enlightenment which in its search for certainty ended up elevating its project of emancipation into a dogma. Bhikhu Parekh (1996) has an interesting discussion of this issue. He quotes Kant's reply to Herder's discomfort with regard to the mocking distinction made between civilised and uncivilised societies:

> But what if the true end of providence were not this *shadowy image of happiness* which each individual creates for himself, but the ever continuing and growing activity and culture which are thereby set in motion, and whose *highest possible expression* can only be the product of a political constitution based on concepts of human right, and consequently an achievement of human beings themselves? Thus, we read on page 206 that "each human individual has the measure of his happiness within him", and that he does not yield in the enjoyment of this happiness to any of those who come after him; but as far as *the value of their existence itself* is concerned – i.e. the reason why they are there in the first place, as distinct from the conditions in which they exist – it is in this alone that a wise intention might be discernible within the whole. Does the author really mean that, if the happy inhabitants of Tahiti, never visited by more civilised nations, were destined to live in their peaceful indolence for thousands of centuries, it would be possible to give a satisfactory answer to the questions of *why they should exist at all,* and of whether it would not have been *just as good if this island had been occupied by happy sheep and cattle as by happy human beings* who *merely* enjoy themselves? (Parekh, 1996: 125-6).

What Kant is suggesting in the above quote is that certain forms of life are more worthy of human beings than others. Noting that Kant's conclusion was to the effect that Tahitians, because their way of life, failed to live up to his expectations, probably had no right to exist at all, Parekh (Parekh, 1996: 126) concludes: "In less restrained hands Kant's argument could easily lead to murderous consequences". The argument, as the history of colonialism tells us, did fall into less

restrained hands and led to murderous consequences. Africans' discomfort with modernity comes from their experience with this particular interpretation.

The problem of modernity in Africa

Notwithstanding the problematic legacy of a particular conception of modernity in Africa there is a sense in which social phenomena in this continent can only be understood in their full complexity with reference to the notion of modernity. In my own work on local perceptions of disasters and crises in a small village in southern Mozambique and drawing from the work of Anthony Giddens (1995) and Bjorn Wittrock (2000) I became aware of this in the form of what Dieter Neubert and I labelled *products of modernity* (Macamo and Neubert, 2008). We understand *products of modernity* to be material and ideational goods that historically emerged in a European philosophical and scientific institutional context and gradually spread all over the world in the guise of technology, political ideas and institutional arrangements. In trying to understand the nature of external influences acting upon local actors and contexts in the region where I conducted my research, I found it particularly useful to conceptualize them with reference to the notion of *products of modernity*. This helped me to sharpen my heuristics, as I came to understand that the background against which local individuals and communities sought to produce risk was structured by the presence of these artefacts. Questions concerning how reliable these artefacts were in their availability and how predictable in their use and effects gave me valuable insights into the context within which individuals go about structuring their lives and giving meaning to them.

I take modernity to be an analytical concept that social scientists, quite independently of the normative use to which it has been put, can use to describe the conditions of possibility of social phenomena. Ethnomethodology uses the notion of *doing* to draw attention to the fact that social action is not the blind and automatic fulfilment of established rules of action, but rather a document of the way in which social situations, actions and institutions are produced (Hester and Eglin, 1997). One *does* going, eating, talking. What structures such *doings* is not competence in the recognition of social rules, but the ability to negotiate how life should be *done*. General sociology tends to oppose structure and agency as if each of them were discrete entities owing little to one another. Ethnomethodology, in contrast, finds it more useful to see each one of them as the outcome of the presence of the other. This ethnomethodological perspective can be put to use in trying to make sense of modernity in Africa. I will draw from ethnomethodology in

my discussion of youth and modernity in Mozambique. I will look into the work of a non-governmental organization for clues into the ways in which modernity is *done*.

The emphasis on local agency is, in a sense, also an attempt at coming to terms with the nature of modernity in Africa. In social theory modernity is a hotly debated concept. Scholars differ widely as to whether it can be defined at all and, if so, how and which features should be considered. The more conservative attempts at a definition see modernity as a specific period in European history, which can hardly be made useful to other parts of the world. It is believed to have ensued from the Enlightenment as the practical fulfilment of the emancipation of reason from the ties of medieval obscurantism and religious fanaticism. The ethnocentric element in this definition consists of the belief that there is something intrinsically European about the development of history connecting the Enlightenment back to the origins of Judeo-Christian and Hellenic culture.

One consequence of this idea of modernity was the insistence upon the view that modernity could only have occurred in Europe. A rather watered down version of this is thought by some to be present in the work of Max Weber, the German sociologist, who is interpreted as locating the logic of capitalist development in Europe. While it might be arguable whether capitalism and modernity can be used interchangeably, the way Weber characterizes capitalism, which has often been understood and for which he has sometimes been unfairly criticized[1], is consistent with the way in which modernity has tended to be described. Such features as a legal bureaucratic state, progressive entrepreneurship, belief in science as opposed to magic and religion, among others are both as typical of capitalism as they are of modernity. It is indeed easy to read Weber, at any rate, in this vein, especially when one bears in mind that at times he seems to have believed to be describing the process through which men were constructing their own subjection. He described modernity as an *iron cage*. Adorno's *Dialectics of the Enlightenment* (1972, with Max Horkheimer) echoes some of these fears, particularly the introductory chapter equating the evolution of human history with Odysseus's travels.

In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens (1990) makes a useful distinction between modernity and capitalism that, however, does not go far enough in differentiating the one from the other. In fact, what he sees as the aftermath of modernity, namely the use of symbolic tokens, for instance, to express new social relationships and practices across time and space is precisely what most would describe as the main features of capitalism. Still, the distinction is useful because

[1] See e.g. Appiah, 1992: 232-8.

it takes us away from sterile discussion about the origins of modernity, and rather draws our attention to how different societies come to terms with the passing of traditional society, or at any rate, how different societies deal with the world as it is now.

More recent debates on modernity seem to be structured around these issues. They define modernity in terms of how different societies and cultures change as they come into contact with one another[2], the spirit of capitalism and an ever-encroaching scientific rationality. In a special issue of the journal of the American Academy of Sciences *Daedalus* (2000) there are several articles which come to the conclusion that it is more appropriate to think in terms of multiple modernities than a single, Western and all-conquering singular Modernity. Here modernity is understood as an immanent phenomenon that can be, and indeed is shaped differently in specific contexts. In a way, then, what is important about modernity is not what it looks like, or should look like, but rather how it is differently experienced and the implications thereof for social theory.

In the same *Daedalus* issue there is an approach to modernity by Bjorn Wittrock (2000), which offers useful insights into ways of accounting for its experience. Wittrock finds it less interesting to establish whether there is any European society that in its institutional patterns can be adequately described as modern (Wittrock, 2000:36) and rather more interesting to track down the basic cultural and institutional impulses that led to the formation of modernity. In his analytical quest he suggests that such impulses posited modernity as a series of promissory notes that challenged individuals and communities to reach out for culturally and historically elaborated goals. In other words, Wittrock appears to assume that modernity can be understood as an immanent condition that structures social action in manners that are significantly different from previous ages.

In his discussion of the notion of promissory notes Wittrock identifies a number of conditions which must be met for the institutional projects of modernity – for example, a democratic nation-state, a liberal market economy or a research-oriented university (Wittrock, 2000:36) – to be realised. It is beyond the scope of our discussion to present these conditions here. Suffice it to say that they refer to the implications which new assumptions about human beings, their rights and agency have upon social action and how new affiliations, identities and institutional realities are thereby constituted (Wittrock, 2000: 37). As Wittrock puts it,

> … [M]odernity may be understood as culturally constituted and institutionally entrenched. Promissory notes may serve as generalized reference points in debates

[2] See Lepenies, 2003 for a useful introduction.

> and political confrontations. However, these generalized reference points not only become focal points in ideational confrontations; they also provide structuring principles behind the formation of new institutions (Wittrock, 2000: 38).

I have argued elsewhere (Macamo, 1999) that Africa is a modern construct. This claim is based on the premise that the awareness of an African cultural identity that can lay claim to a single political and economic destiny was the result of a discursive and practical confrontation with existential conditions brought to the continent by its forced integration into European historicity. In other words, it was in the process of coming to terms with slavery and colonialism that a specific kind of African identity was constituted. This identity drew from the experience of slavery and colonialism to argue for the unity of race[3], the common cultural roots that had brought about the suffering and the community of fate that followed from the realisation of a common African destiny. Returned slaves from America were very instrumental in this just as, later, Pan-Africanist activists, nationalists and philosophers became as they wrestled with their own existential condition.

The argument was originally meant to counter some trends in African critiques of the European influence on the continent. These critiques appeared self-defeating in their outcomes. While they rightly pointed to the overbearing presence of Europe in the conditions of possibility of both an African reality and a critique of European presence, they took their outrage too far by stripping Africans of any agency in the whole process. V.Y. Mudimbe's deservedly celebrated *The Invention of Africa* (1988) provides a good illustration of this. Much in line with Edward Said's deconstruction of the *Orient*, Mudimbe argued that the European power of representation had led to the construction of a notion of Africa which did not necessarily represent reality on the ground. In fact, what individuals came to do and think actually perverted that reality, as African social reality became a function of the European will for power. I understood Mudimbe to be suggesting that our idea of Africa was false because it was a European representation and, even more importantly, to be claiming that given the nature of power relations it might be difficult to recover genuinely African discourses about Africa. As he pointed out in an earlier work paraphrasing Michel Foucault's discussion of Hegel,

> [P]our l'Afrique, échapper réellement à l'Occident suppose d'apprécier exactement ce qu'il en coûte de se détacher de lui; cela suppose de savoir jusqu'où l'Occident, insidieusement peut-être, s'est approché de nous; cela suppose de savoir, dans ce qui nous permet de penser contre l'Occident, ce qui est encore occidental; et de

[3] See Appiah, 1992 for a critique of the use of this notion in the relevant discourses.

> mesurer en quoi notre recours contre lui est encore peut-être une ruse qu'il nous oppose et au terme de laquelle il nous attend, immobile et ailleurs (...) L'Occident qui nous étreint ainsi pourrait nous étouffer. Aussi devons-nous, en Afrique, mettre à jour non seulement une comprehénsion rigoureuse des modalités actuelles de notre intégration dans les mythes de l'Occident, mais aussi des questions explicites qui nous permettraint d'être sincérement critiques face à ces corpus (Mudimbe, 1982: 12-3).

A commitment to history as the setting within which social reality is constituted stands in the way of an uncritical acceptance of Mudimbe's claims. To agree with him on this score would mean, in effect, denying Africans any original role in the constitution of their own social reality and, perhaps more crucially, promoting an essentialist view of reality. It appeared to me more useful to assume that *real* Africa was the very outcome of what people, both *African*[4] and non-African, did within the endless flux of history. The argument to the effect that Africa is a modern construct was based on the study of the philosophical debate around the issue whether there was an African philosophy. The study found that the debate could only be understood within the framework of attempts by individuals to negotiate their way into a world made strange by the presence of strangers. To put it differently, the sociology of knowledge of the debate on the existence of an African philosophy suggested that the central issue therein was the definition of an African space and identity. This was done in dialogue – a dialogue at times violent – with colonialism, which had brought to Africa the promissory notes that Björn Wittrock identifies with the immanence of modernity.

In this sense, the debate owed as much to colonialism as to how Africans reacted to it. Starting with the returning slaves, who interpreted their predicament as God's *providence* meant to make them the harbingers of the emancipation of their *promised land*, continuing with the Pan-Africanist demand for self-determination all the way through to *Négritude*'s and *ethnophilosophy*'s elaboration of an African essence, Africans were responding to the challenge of colonialism by reaching out to the promises that colonial practice denied them: human dignity, emancipation and progress.

The African experience of modernity is ambivalent precisely in this sense. Colonialism was the historical form through which modernity became a real social project on the African continent. Colonialism, however, was premised on the

[4] I realise how problematic this adjective might be in the absence of a clarification of what is meant by the noun. In fact, I reserve it for intellectuals from the continent who through their work and reflection participate in the definition of a local space that they label *African*. An extreme version of this understanding of Africanness is constructivist in its elaboration and goes as far as to suggest that no one is born an African, as they become aware of belonging to a community of destiny.

denial of that same modernity to Africans. Since the onset of colonialism, African social experience has been structured by the ambivalence of promise and denial that was so constitutive of colonialism and, indeed, as we move into what some call a global era, of globalisation. My claim is that for social theory to be relevant to Africa it must be able to offer concepts that can adequately describe and analyse this ambivalence. The description and analysis of Patrice Lumumba communal village against the background of modernity and its effects offers a sound opportunity to meet this challenge.

It is not, of course, as if there has never been any attempt at engaging colonialism from an analytical perspective that views it as a practical manifestation of modernity. There have been many attempts by Africanist scholars to come to terms with colonialism and how it has shaped African social reality, the most recent of which was that of the historian Frederick Cooper (2002). These attempts can be situated on both sides of the concept of ambivalence. Indeed, while some have seen these attempts as a rejection of the modernity implied by colonialism, others have instead emphasised Africans' eagerness to join the promise of modernity entailed therein. The latter group of approaches falls under the general category of modernisation theories. These were particularly current in the period running from the early waves of independence in Africa in the late fifties and early sixties all the way up to the seventies. The former, in contrast, include a wide range of perspectives on the continent which stress Africans' ability to negotiate modernity in their own terms.

To be sure, modernisation theories were generally upbeat about Africa's development. Much like Karl Marx's optimistic assessment of British colonialism in India (1978)[5], modernisation theorists saw colonialism as a necessary stage in Africa's historical evolution. Their analytical framework gave pride of place to the tension between tradition and modernity. As far as the framework went, the challenge facing African societies consisted of overcoming tradition in order to gain access to the benefits of modernity. Colonialism had introduced into Africa the value of wage labour, entrepreneurship, individualism and empathy (see Lerner, 1964 for an early defence of this position). The absence of these values on the continent, in the view of modernisation theorists, accounted for Africa's *backwardness*.

There are instances of colonial policy that represent this attitude very well. One such instance was described by Frederick Cooper, the American Africa historian, who in his book on decolonization analyses, among other things, the colonial preoccupation with the *detribalized African* (1996: 168-70). As with almost

[5] These are two articles published in *The New York Daily Tribune* in its issues of June 25th and August 8th, 1853.

everything else in colonial policy, this concern was caught up in the contradictory nature of colonial intervention in African society. On the one hand, both French and British colonial establishments were in need of sufficiently mobile, independent and autonomous African labour to integrate into the world of capitalist labour markets. Yet, they were weary of allowing Africans to lean too far out of the windows of their traditional society, not only because they would place demands on the system to treat them as citizens – and not as *subjects*, as Mamdani convincingly argued (1996) – but also because the idea of a primordial African society was functional to the reproduction needs of the colonial economic system.

Critiques of the kind of modernity purveyed by colonialism have tended to stress both African resistance to, as well as selective appropriation of modernity. Jean and Joan Comaroff, for instance, have shown in their work that the seemingly irrational pattern of African social action over the past decades can be understood as a subtle critique of capitalism. In becoming deliberately unintelligible to the standard discourse of the social sciences, Africans have been resisting the conditions and terms of their integration into the world (Comaroff, 1993; see also White, 1993, 1995). A slightly different approach is taken by Jean-François Bayart (2000), who puts forward the idea that the encounter between Africans and Europeans has produced a specific logic within African social action. This logic is marked by a kind of instrumental action by Africans, which consists of seeking to take advantage of the chances and opportunities opened up by the continent's contacts with the rest of the world. He calls this *extraversion*, a concept which echoes some of the ideas suggested by the much older notion of *rentier capitalism* as used by Marxist scholars in the past.

There is, therefore, an ambivalent moment in Africa's experience of modernity and colonialism. While in and by itself this finding does not present a radically new insight into Africa's constitution over the past decades, it does suggest an analytically useful angle from which to approach the continent from a social science perspective. Indeed, this ambivalence can be understood as a framework within which Africans negotiate their way into a world of their own making. In other words, Africans produce their own social reality in dialogue with modernity as they move from colonialism into a world defined by them and by what they do in their everyday life.

While colonialism provides a larger canvas against which the terms under which modernity is brought to Africans become visible, it is modernity disguised as social change that Africans confront headlong. Better still, Africans are confronted with the perverse form of modernity that replaced the older conception favoured by Renaissance humanists. In this sense, therefore, it becomes extreme-

ly important to define the intimations of this modernity and the extent to which it plays a central role in the constitution of African social reality. Modernity deserves attention because its constitutive features are central to the structural conditions underlying everyday life in most of Africa. My argument is that features of modernity enable us to sharpen our perspective of social action in African, thereby, bringing into bold relief the tension that makes the application of theoretical and analytical approaches in the social sciences such an uphill undertaking as far as the description of Africa is concerned. The notion of modernity is not one that can be alluded to light-heartedly. In African studies, in particular, there is a general discomfort with it which stems largely from the normative and even political use to which it was put in the past, especially in the context of modernisation theories. Indeed, modernity tended in the past to be used as shorthand for accounting for differences between Europe and Africa. Africa's perceived traditional nature became functional to colonial rule, to the grounding of certain intellectual pursuits and, in our own days, to the legitimation of development intervention. This has led some scholars to reject the usefulness of the concept altogether, the most recent examples of which being James Ferguson (1999) and Frederick Cooper (1996). While the former takes the failure of modernisation in Zambia to mean the real extent of what modernity can achieve in Africa, the latter questions its analytical claims and argues that modernity has only a discursive value. These are strong reservations, which I hope to address in this monograph.

One aspect of modernity on which I wish to concentrate in particular, especially as it inheres in the structure of everyday life, is what I have called elsewhere its *ambivalent nature* (Macamo, 2005). Indeed, the experience of modernity in Africa has been a highly ambiguous one, premised as it has been on the twin opposing forces of promise and denial. In an earlier analysis of the regulation of native labour in the Portuguese colony of Mozambique (Macamo, 2003), I was struck by the profoundly ambivalent nature of official colonial discourse and practice. While, on the one hand, the declared aim of regulation of native labour was to free the African from the bondage of his primitive life and frame of mind, thereby presenting itself as a promise, the colonial state's intervention into African social life by way of tutelage over the African meant in effect, on the other hand, that the very same liberating moment, i.e. labour, was premised on the denial of individual fulfilment and emancipation. Indeed, regulation itself made necessary an idea of *African society* that made it next to impossible for Africans to enjoy the fruits of emancipation expected to come from labour[6]. As I hope to show in the

[6] Frederick Cooper explores the contradictions of colonial regulation of labour in British and French colonies in considerable detail (Cooper, 1996).

following section these are elements that are present in current forms of intervention in society. The work of a youth organization brings these issues to the fore.

Youth and modernity in Mozambique – a case study

What follows is an interpretation of material found on the Internet about the work of a non-governmental organization, Pathfinder International, in Mozambique. The point of this interpretation is neither to describe the actual work of the organization nor to judge it. Its main purpose is to identify aspects of the way in which the organization defines youth and youth work in Mozambique as particular instances of the way in which modernity influences our understandings of youth in general and youth in Mozambique, in particular. Value judgements in my interpretation will intimate themselves in the veiled critique which I will be making of the perverse form of modernity that came to shape the relationship between Africa and Europe and which is at the centre of the uncomfortable feelings of many scholars of Africa towards the whole notion of modernity. In fact, my interpretation will draw from a description of aspects of the organization's work that are consistent with the four departures identified by Toulmin (as discussed in the previous section). The youth of the non-governmental organization is the youth of a kind of practical knowledge which is written, universal, general and timeless, i.e. a youth that is an artefact of intervention, especially in the sense of development policy.

This is, in itself, is not a surprising finding. Whereas the Enlightenment in its more generous mood placed emphasis on, as Kant put it, the audacity of knowledge and, in this way, contributed in a decisive way towards the definition of youth as a relevant life stage, it also paved the way for external intervention, especially that of the state, in moulding youth to the desired image of autonomy and reason. From a sociological point of view, what is interesting about the way in which youth became a relevant social category is the extent to which the attributes associated with it became a mandate for the state to create the conditions for these representations of the youth to gain fruition. Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau with his deeply humanist philosophy could not avoid define youth – for example as the age of innocence requiring protection from the ills of civilization – in ways which made state intervention necessary.

My *empirical* material consists of an interview with a leader of the non-governmental organization and descriptions of four youth projects in Mozambique. I used MAXQDA software to code and systematically register excerpts fitting into my analytical framework. This consisted of two basic codes, firstly, what I call the

truth of modernity and, secondly, *invention and origin*. Drawing from ethnomethodology, as indicated in the previous section, I was interested in finding instances of modernity in the organization's discourse. In other words, modernity manifests itself in social phenomena in ways that are accessible to social scientists. The *truth of modernity* refers to the manner in which social categories are defined in accordance with the worldview underlying modernity. In the case of the work of the non-governmental organization I wish to reveal this *truth* along four dimensions, namely (a) objects, (b) notions, (c) techniques and (d) subjects. These dimensions look for variation in the way youth as a social category is identified as the object of the organization's work, the kinds of notions that are associated with it, the practices that are deployed in connection with it and, finally, what the category is believed to think about itself. As far as *invention and origin* are concerned, variation will be sought along two dimensions, (a) power and (b) knowledge. Underlying these dimensions is the assumption that there is a political economy of work with youth that is not simply about pursuing certain development goals, but also disciplining individuals and communities. In searching for instances of power and knowledge I hope to bring this political economy to the surface.

The truth of modernity

Modernity documents itself in the discourse of this particular organization through four dimensions, i.e. techniques, notions, subjects and objects. In describing these dimensions I hope to show the way in which the social category *youth* is a function of the claims to truth of a particular organization. My analysis will not be as detailed as the data would allow for because of space constraints. My more modest aim is to offer useful hints that may hopefully provide a solid background against which hypotheses concerning the relationship of youth and modernity in Africa can be formulated.

a) Techniques (table 1)

The first dimension refers to techniques which in my analytical framework should be understood as a set of practices deployed by the organization to produce youth as a social category. Three elements are central to these practices. The first one is their purpose. This is a kind of job description for the organization which, in the process, provides the grounds for legitimacy for the organization in general. I describe the work of an organization that addresses the particular problems of a specifiable group within a society. This description is articulated with a sense of a problem that needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency. Interview excerpts document this. As can be seen in the corresponding table youth is iden-

tified as the specifiable group which is confronted with certain urgent problems (especially HIV-AIDS) and requires the intervention of the organization which will *improve*, *prevent*, *provide*, *respond*, *build*, *counsel* and *train*. In other words, youth as a social category is made visible through the organization's job description, which, in turn, lends legitimacy to the organization.

The second element is straightforward and has to do with the actual activities carried out by this organization. It basically provides more detail on what is entailed in the job description in actual practice confirming, on the one hand, the existence of the social category of youth and, on the other, giving visibility to the organization. To put it differently, there is a political economy to the activities, as they not only provide the minutiae of the work that is related to the social category of *youth*, but also make the organization undertaking such work socially relevant. Activities, therefore, do more than just describe in more detail the work done. They also lend visibility to the organization that does the work. The third element consists of the technologies that the organization uses to deploy its practices. These are diverse, ranging from actual institutions such as clinics and associations, to forms of intervention such as approaches and procedures. A crucial aspect of the technologies is that they focus on youth. Clinics and associations, for example, are conceptualised against the background of what could be constructed as youth needs. By the same token, approaches and procedures are those that are relevant to youth. In this way, the social category of *youth* is thought of as a very specific category within the larger context of society.

Table 1: The Truth of Modernity – Techniques

Purpose	• Improve the capacity of youth-friendly clinics to provide voluntary counselling and testing services to young people • Prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV among HIV-positive young women • Train youth and adolescents to provide community home-based care to people living with HIV/AIDS • Provide access to reproductive health information and services, combat childhood diseases, and provide children and families with access to adequate nutrition, better sanitation and clean water • This programme was an attempt to respond to the needs of adolescents and youth in Mozambique • Respond to those needs in an integrated manner • Build capacity among young people • Counselling skills - for example, what youth counselling is, what it takes, how to be a good counsellor, how to counsel on contraceptive options, the best methods available for young people, and what it takes to provide them • This programme has always been seen as a government programme, but with the input of youth and largely implemented by young people

Activities	• Geração Biz, Portuguese for *busy generation*, was named by Mozambican youth to reflect their vision of a future where young people will be active, involved and empowered • HIV/AIDS support • HIV counselling, testing and treatment services, including antiretroviral therapy, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and home care assistance • Pathfinder was providing technical assistance • Hired as Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) to provide the needed technical assistance • In-school intervention to educate boys and girls on sexuality, RH issues and HIV, coordinated by the Ministry of Education • Community outreach targeting out-of-school youth coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports • Training comprised theory and practice • Provide counselling and information, and distribute condoms
Technologies	• Youth-friendly health clinics • School-based interventions • Community-based interventions • Peer education • Youth-friendly clinical services • Attended by a provider trained in the youth-friendly approach • Peer educators • Youth association • Schoolgoers • Certificate as a parent of a peer educator of the Geração Biz programme • External evaluation

b) Notions (table 2)

The truth of modernity is produced through a very specific vocabulary that consists of two elements. The first is the reference to reality. In other words, the organization has ways of speaking about the social category of *youth* that conjures up the image of a self-contained world. It is a world peopled by *young people living with HIV/AIDS*, with programmes that can be *vertical*, with individuals who can be *peer educators*, with *local NGOs*, etc. Put simply, the notions used in the organization's discourse suggest a world that is real and retrievable through a set of categories.

The second element expands on the reality suggested by the notions with reference to the kinds of actions that are relevant within the world evoked by the social category of *youth*. These are, in effect, procedures that describe the operational side of the reality implied by the notions. Examples of this are the require-

ment to train *trainers* who will then become *peer educators* or to develop *counselling skills* which are central to the specific world of young people with problems of a certain kind.

Table 2: The Truth of Modernity – Notions	
Reality	• PAC Consortium's Technical Guidance on Youth-Friendly Post-abortion Care • Multi-sector integration • Pilot phase • Local NGOs • Young people living with HIV/AIDS • Provider training • Female peer educators • Out-of-school activities • Phase 3 • Vertical programmes • This multi-sector programme • Multidimensional
Procedures	• Expand access to youth-friendly HIV/AIDS clinical services, including treatment of opportunistic infections and administration of antiretroviral therapy • Gradually the programme has expanded • Some directors would have a more liberal position and would allow peer educators to make condoms available through the school goers. • The exchange with the service provider would be confidential • The programme currently covers all 11 provinces in Mozambique • Counselling skills • Training-of the trainers (TOT) programme

c) Subjects (table 3)

The social category of *youth* consists of individuals. The truth of modernity provides a definition of these individuals as subjects of their own lives. This subjecthood, however, is not without constraints. Indeed, individuals become subjects in the context of the production of the social category of *youth* with respect to two elements, namely discipline and attributes. The element of discipline refers to the normative content that goes into the definition of youth. Therefore, it is not enough to be young. One has to "develop and maintain healthy lifestyles", "protect [oneself] from STI/HIV infection" and "participate", among others. In other words, the definition of the social category of *youth* entails external expectations formulated by the organization with regard to certain individuals in

society which operate as normative constraints on individuals. These normative constraints produce captive subjectivities, i.e. identities, which can only claim legitimacy within externally, defined normative frameworks.

A further element of the definition of youth as subjects of their lives has to do with the attributes that mark this social category as distinct from the rest. This distinction can work in the sense of a normative projection such as the suggestion that young people "become advocates for change in their communities…". It can also work in the sense discussed by Goffman in his work on *Stigma* (Goffman, 1990), i.e. a physical, social or psychological characteristic possessed by certain individuals and which informs the way in which other members of society deal with them. In this particular case such characteristics could be "lack of power of adolescents" or their need for "confidentiality".

Table 3: The Truth of Modernity – Subjects

Discipline	• Protect themselves from STI/HIV infection • Develop and maintain healthy lifestyles • Student peer educators • Out-of-school peer educators • Young people were participating • Capacity building among young people
Attributes	• Become advocates for change in their communities, capable of impacting the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of their generation • Adolescents experienced a lack of power to negotiate use of condoms and gender bias in communication between boys and girls • Adolescent-only clinics • The exchange with the service provider would be confidential • Young people's level of awareness about being the protagonist of a programme that works for their benefit

d) Objects (table 4)

The final dimension of the truth of modernity documented in the assembled material focuses on the social category of *youth* as an object of the organization's attention. This has two elements. The first perceives youth as a target, i.e. as a group of individuals that can be legitimately addressed by the organization. In order to do so, the group is described against the background of problems that are specific and require the kind of expertise possessed by the organization. *Unsafe abortion among adolescent women* is an example of one such problem;

early-pregnancy, non-use of contraceptives in first sexual intercourse, vulnerability to HIV infection, and getting pregnant and having to drop out of school also catalogue the problems that make this group a legitimate target of the organization.

The second element is closely related to the first and specifies the identity of this object. In other words, what is at stake in the identity element is the idea that what makes youth an object is not only the set of problems which define it and make intervention necessary, but also the fact that youth can be thought of as a *sui generis* category. Identity therefore emphasises age, the specific needs of adolescents and the autonomy of youth as such.

Table 4: The Truth of Modernity – Objects

Target	• Unsafe abortions among adolescent women • Focus on providing reproductive health information, teaching life skills, developing needed links to health services and income generating programmes. A particular emphasis was placed on building the capacity to implement community-based organizations and youth associations to develop and maintain their own sustainable programmes and to advocate for more favourable local and national policies and programmes for youth-oriented services • What adolescents were dealing with in Mozambique, like many other countries, was early pregnancy, non-use of contraceptives in first sexual intercourse, vulnerability to HIV infection, and getting pregnant and having to drop out of school • Adolescent-only clinics • The midterm evaluation indicated that while some action could be taken to further strengthen the out-of-school component, the programme was on the right track for substantial accomplishments and important lessons learned about the benefits and challenges of integrated programmes
Identity	• Needs of adolescents and youth in Mozambique • At the IPCD conference adolescents began to be regarded as a group with specific needs that differed from adults and children and required specific intervention to address those needs • Capability of young people to really look for services • We had to kindly ask the government to refer such nurses to other services and get more youth-oriented nurses

This brief analysis of the truth of modernity offers us a picture of a social category, i.e. youth, which is not essential, but rather a function of the manner in which a particular organization claims to be speaking truthfully about social phenomenon. These claims are based on a set of practices that describe the purpose of the organization as well as the activities and particular technologies that

make up this purpose. Moreover, the claims are made with reference to notions that purport to describe the reality of the world of youth and the procedures that are consistent with such reality. Further, the claims are based on the nature of subjectivity that the organization ascribes to youth. This ascription occurs on two levels. The first level defines youth in a normative way setting the limits of what can be legitimately accepted as such and the second lists the attributes that go with the norm. Finally, the claims to truth rest on the definition of youth as a legitimate object of intervention by the organization. This definition establishes youth as a target of this organization's work while at the same time presenting it as a *sui generis* category. The social category of *youth* emerges, in this connection, as an artefact of the organization's intervention. This point will become more obvious in the next section.

Invention and origin

There are further analytical insights that can be made in connection with how modernity documents itself in the organization's work. These insights relate to the extent to which the social category of *youth* is made visible within the context of claims to power that are staked by the organization. In other words, youth as a social category is made socially relevant in the context of specifiable power relations that confer on some the prerogative of speaking authoritatively about others and, in that way, lending legitimacy to actions designed to make individuals conform to the truth of whatever is said by those who have the authority to speak. We are dealing here with the invention of a social category in the sense discussed by V.Y. Mudimbe (1988) drawing from the work of Michel Foucault, i.e. in the sense of the power of representation and how it creates a reality amenable to the intervention of those who produce representations of reality.

e) Power (table 5)

A central dimension of the invention and origin of youth as a social category is that of power. Its operational elements are (i) naming, (ii) institutions and (iii) strategies. The element of naming refers to the prerogative that the organization claims to classify. This classification entails, for example, the typification of youth along normative scales of agency such as "… lack of power to negotiate use of condoms…" or the assessment of professionals along a skills' continuum that separates the good from the bad such as in the requirement that "nurses who are not youth-oriented" should be referred to other services.

The second element, i.e. institutions, simply makes an inventory of institutions and individuals upon whom legitimacy is conferred to structure the world

of the youth. These are "local NGOs", "donor agencies" or even the personnel of ministries who have benefited from "technical assistance and capacity building" provided by the organization.

Finally, the dimension of power is materialized in a set of strategies that both describe the work of the organization and also establish its legitimacy vis-à-vis the representation of the social category of *youth*. "Multi-sector integration" of the work of the organization or its "expansion to all 11 provinces in Mozambique" indicates not only how work with youth should be carried out, but also the need for it to reproduce itself and become part of the way things are done.

Table 5: Invention and Origin — Power

Naming	• National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health/HIV/AIDS programme in Mozambique entitled *Geração Biz*, which was featured as the *Best Practice Model* in the World Bank Resource Book. • Adolescents experienced a lack of power to negotiate use of condoms, and gender bias in communication among boys and girls • This programme has always been seen as a government programme, but with the input of youth and largely implemented by young people • The parents of the peer educators were invited to come for the training. They participated in the first day of training where we explained to them what it takes to be a peer educator and the role of a peer educator. • They helped parents understand the need for their children to protect themselves from HIV and unwanted pregnancy. • We had some obstacles with nurses who were not youth-oriented and even after training continued to be an obstacle • We had to kindly ask the government to refer such nurses to other services and get more youth-oriented nurses
Institutions	• We would also work with a youth association in the given community to ensure that peer educators would be referring young people that were not in school to these services • The peer educators from the school goers would make referrals • UNFPA as the donor agency • Pathfinder as the technical assistance provider • Local NGOs • Coordination mechanisms • Technical assistance and capacity building were provided on site to all three ministries on a continuous basis

Strategies	• It was integrated from several perspectives. It was integrated not only in the context of sexual and reproductive health and HIV, but also multi-sectorally. Interventions mainly comprised three components: Youth-friendly clinical services, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, in-school intervention to educate boys and girls on sexuality and RH issues as well as HIV, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, and community outreach targeting out-of-school youth coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. When we talk about integration, this programme was multidimensional. It went beyond integration within the clinical component. • The programme currently covers all 11 provinces in Mozambique. • The provider was also trained to provide integrated services. So if the adolescents' needs were in the area of contraception, they would receive those services in this integrated clinic. If they were in need of treatment for an STI, they would also be treated over there. If they were in need of counselling for HIV prevention or pregnancy prevention or for any other issue related to reproductive health, they would be receiving all of these services at the same facility. Of course we had a referral system for more complicated cases, but in all of our training, from the beginning, it was integrated training. STIs, contraception, gender awareness, post-abortion care, all of those subjects were part of the training • The training lasted two weeks. It comprised theory and practice in a way that allowed peer educators to learn a concept and immediately apply the concept. This programme has developed a good set of tools and systems, and that is why we are expanding year by year. • Train some parents to help especially with the out-of-school programme • Provider training • Manage integrated programmes

f) Knowledge (table 6)

The second dimension of the invention and origin of the social category of *youth* is provided by knowledge. This, in turn, consists of two central elements, namely (i) authority and (ii) facts. The element of authority refers to the kinds of claims made by the organization to represent its descriptions and opinions on youth as truthful and trustworthy. In this sense, then, authority can be claimed with reference to reports by authoritative institutions such as in "results of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994". It can also be claimed on the grounds of special know-how possessed by the organization to address the particular problems of youth as in "train some parents to help especially with the out-of-school programme" or "provider training [consisting] of the youth-friendly approach…" The claims are geared not only towards establishing the organization as knowledgeable about the subject of youth, but also

towards establishing its knowledge as the sole legitimate representation of the social category of *youth*.

The element of facts speaks for itself. It refers to the kinds of facts that are judged relevant to account for the particular condition of the social category of *youth*. These facts establish, on the one hand, the presence of the social category in the first place. Statements such as "Mozambique had a very large young population" serve that purpose. Furthermore, the facts establish, on the other hand, the particular problems that define the social category. This purpose is served by statements such as "the profile of the epidemic in Mozambique is such that young people are the ones that are hit the hardest" or "… young people are at exceptionally high risk, and people aged 15-24 account for approximately half of the new HIV infections".

Table 6: Invention and Origin – Knowledge

Authority	• Results of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 • Attended by a provider trained in the youth-friendly approach • Conducted an initial assessment to determine priority districts and targets, how many providers were needed, how many centres should be established, and where to begin. There was a need to determine how many youth-friendly service centres to establish, how many schools could be included, how many communities should be involved, how many providers needed to be trained, how many peer educators needed to be trained and what monitoring and capacity building systems needed to be in place. How many technical advisors should we have? Was there a need to have technical advisors in each sector? What monitoring systems would be developed? How about capacity building strategies? How would it be implemented? It was a very participatory process • The parents of the peer educators were invited to come for the training. They participated in the first day of training where we explained to them what it takes to be a peer educator and the role of a peer educator • Train some parents to help especially with the out-of-school programme • The content includes adolescent development, feelings and body changes, dating, gender, contraception, STI and HIV as well as communication and negotiation skills • The provider training consisted of a youth-friendly approach and informed providers why adolescents need specific orientation, the challenges and issues of working with adolescents, and how to address them • Technical assistance and capacity building were provided on site to all three ministries on a continuous basis

Facts	• With a prevalence of 16.1 percent, Mozambique is one of the countries hardest hit by HIV/AIDS in the world. Fuelled by the legacy of a 15-year civil war, unequal distribution of power between men and women, low literacy, and social stigma, the epidemic has affected the lives of millions of men, women, children and adolescents. Young people are at exceptionally high risk, and people aged 15-24 accounts for approximately half of new HIV infections. Girls and women are especially vulnerable and are being infected at a ratio of three to one over men • The goal of the YF PAC initiative is to increase access to post-abortion care services that are responsive to adolescent needs, thereby decreasing abortion-related morbidity and mortality and decreasing future unintended pregnancies and repeat abortions among adolescent women • In a country where more than half of all youth are out of school and young people aged 15-24 account for half of new HIV infections • The project works with approximately one million in- and out-of-school young people each year to increase awareness of sexual and reproductive health issues and to encourage the adoption of safe, responsible and gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive behaviour. Gender issues are important in a country where girls and women remain particularly vulnerable, being infected with HIV at a rate of three to one over men • Mozambique had a very large young population • What adolescents were dealing with in Mozambique, like many other countries, was early pregnancy, non-use of contraceptives in first sexual intercourse, vulnerability of HIV infection and getting pregnant and having to drop out of school • The profile of the epidemic in Mozambique is such that the young people are the ones that are hit the hardest.

The analysis in this section adds more elements to the assumption that the social category *youth* is an artefact of the work of an organization. The key analytical element is the notion of representation. It is present in the manner in which the social category of *youth* is deployed by the organization to claim the right to name, to indicate the institutions that can speak authoritatively about it and to claim legitimacy to the kind of strategies that are appropriate to address this social category. It is also present in the manner in which the social category of *youth* can be the subject of descriptions and opinions that claim the status of knowledge. This claim, in turn, is made with reference to the authority to speak truthfully about youth and also to define the nature of facts that are relevant to such discourse.

Conclusion: back to Stephen Toulmin

My concern in this paper has been to show the way in which social scientists can speak to the notion of modernity by forcing it to account for itself. In order to do so I drew from Stephen Toulmin, who, as we saw above, opposes Renaissance humanism to Enlightenment understandings of modernity. His claim is that the latter represented a major departure from an understanding of modernity that was more sensitive to the oral, particular, local and timely. He explains this departure with reference to the need for certainty that seemed to play such an important role in the conditions of production of knowledge in seventeenth century Europe. For our immediate purposes it is important to note that the kind of modernity heralded by the search for certainty structured the encounter between African and Europe in ways which made the latter intolerant of the ways of life found in the former. Europe's superiority became the standard against which truthfulness, goodness and righteousness came to be judged while at the same time conferring upon Europe the prerogative of moulding Africa in its own image.

Racism or arrogance was not the reason why Europe sought to extend its supremacy over Africa. The reason was the prevailing understanding of modernity. In this respect, it is important to note that modernity worked in exactly the same way within European society itself. With modernity, for example, youth became a single, essential category with reference to which states and agencies acting on behalf of it could legitimately intervene normatively in society. In other words, actions such as compulsory schooling, the limitation of the rights of families over their children as well as the very definition of youth as a relevant social category with its own identity, problems, aspirations and claims became legitimate with reference to a particular, local, timely understanding of youth made general, universal and timeless.

The work of the youth organization described in the previous section is consistent with this understanding of modernity. Youth as a social category ceases to be the subject of argumentation which can claim plausibility within particular audiences and against the background of proofs that are intelligible within certain contexts to become an essential category. This essential category is defined with reference to criteria that are universal, glossing over local definitions and understandings. Indeed, the organization operates with a notion of youth that simply ignores local definitions or, what is worse, depicts them as deviations from a norm that grants it legitimacy to speak truthfully about youth in Mozambique. In other words, the way in which the social category of *youth* finds its way into

the discourse and practice of the organization reflects the procedures of the kind of modernity criticised by Toulmin. Youth is turned into a written, universal, general and timeless social category that has little to do with Mozambique except for the fact that the country provides the territorial context within which the essential category is being applied.

This finding raises interesting issues concerning the relationship between modernity and youth in Africa. I will only mention two. The first issue refers to the very nature of the relationship. In other words, what is the sense in which a relationship can be posited between modernity and youth? The analysis offered here suggests that such a relationship is not an innocent one, for the very notion of *youth* is hostage to the notion of modernity in ways that need to be spelt out clearly. In other words, scholars working on modernity and youth need to clarify the sense in which their use of the notion of youth commits them to a social category that responds to local, particular and timely conceptual schemes. The use of the notion of youth without prior clarification of its conceptual status may at best be misleading and at worst unintelligible.

The second issue is methodological in ways that are painfully difficult to sort out. While it is true that modernity has the tendency to enforce social categories in ways which speak to a Nitzschean will to power, it is no less true that underlying social processes within societies may create the framework that provides fertile ground for modernity. The question here becomes one of knowing what these processes are and under what circumstances they elicit the intervention of modernity. Africa is undergoing social change under the influence of so-called processes of globalization. Young people do not only have their immediate lifeworlds as normative references for their self-understanding. They also draw from a diversity of frames of reference which they make their own and, in this way, become relevant to society at large. What is then the sense in which modernity can be used to account for the way youth is, but also in what sense can the very notion of modernity be used to derive analytical categories that can be deployed in the understanding of youth?

These are hard issues that are central to any attempt at establishing the relationship between youth and modernity. Whatever the attempt, however, care should be taken to spell out the exact notion of modernity that underlies the study. While the jury may still be out on the question of whether modernity is a useful analytical concept, its deployment in the study of social phenomena in Africa needs to be sensitive to distinctions that are historically warranted. Modernity may have been unfair to Africa, but it is important to note that it is a particular understanding of modernity that whether we like it or not continues to structure

interventions into societies. There may not be such a thing as *youth* in Africa, but then again there may be. These issues can only be sorted out in analytically useful ways if scholars of Africa take the time to make relevant distinctions in their use of the notion of modernity. A central element in the work of making relevant distinctions pertains to our ability to make modernity accountable.

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Annex: Background Material

HIV/SRH Integration site interview to Ms. Badiani, responsible for designing and implementing the national Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health/HIV/AIDS programme in Mozambique entitled *Geração Biz*:

http://www.hivandsrh.org/Voices/Badiani.php

For more information about Geração Biz in Mozambique, see:

http://www.pathfind.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Programs_Mozambique_Projects_GeracaoBiz. (31st October 2008)