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8 Echoes of the Past: The Social Impact of the Returned Labor Migrants from East Germany on the City of Maputo

Introduction¹

On an intensely hot afternoon in the city of Maputo in 2011, I was traveling by public transport towards the city center. When we arrived at the crossroads formed by *Avenida 24 de Julho* and *Avenida Guerra Popular*, our journey was interrupted by a crowd of people singing and dancing in the middle of the road. They carried with them banners, flags, and homemade posters. Singing and dancing at the junction of the two avenues, they obstructed traffic in both directions. In our bus, the passengers were exhausted by the delay and started to complain. One of the passengers said it was the fault of the “*Madjermanes*” and explained that they were a group of Mozambicans who had been in East Germany from 1979 to 1990. I came to learn that from 1980 to 1992, they formed a kind of neighborhood elite especially in the suburban districts of Maputo, such as the one in which I grew up. These returnees used to wear stylish clothes, so everyone in their districts wanted to hang out with them. I listened intently to the passenger and my curiosity was aroused. I later found out that during my childhood, my parents had owned a television set bought from a returnee from East Germany. As a result, on many evenings our house would fill up with neighbors who came to be entertained by our television set. I resolved to discover more about this group of people who once sold my parents the television set. Their legacies are still visible as they walk through the streets brandishing placards and demonstrating against the government and as they continue to occupy the public park *Jardim 28 de Maio*, better known as the “Garden of the Madjermanes.” What follows is the story of the return of these former labor migrants.

The name *Madjerman* became widespread in Mozambique when returnees from East Germany created a black market of what was perceived to be luxury

¹ This text was translated from Portuguese to English by Mark Beresford. I would also like to thank Marcia C. Schenck for allowing me to use her interviews with Mozambican workers to the GDR and for her guidance during the writing process. Many thanks to her and Immanuel R. Harisch for their editorial support.

products, called Red Star. It was named after a school in its proximity in the Alto Maé district of Maputo, a location about which I will speak later on. Here all sorts of used goods could be obtained at competitive prices ranging from television sets to fridges and kitchenware. This market helped to supply residents of the capital city with goods which until then had been scarce or even completely unavailable in Maputo.²

The young migrants that were to become known as Madjermanes had gone to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a consequence of bilateral cooperation agreements aimed at giving them qualifications across various industries, after which they would return to their home country to deploy their knowledge in Mozambique. Franziska Rantzsch in this volume elaborates on the contract that governed the labor migration from Mozambique to East Germany. This migration served as a refuge for many young Mozambicans who did not want to be recruited by the Armed Forces at a time when the country was suffering from civil war. Many young migrants further wanted to escape the hunger that had been caused by the nationwide drought in the 1980s and the ensuing food supply shortages. Europe further exercised a strong pull over the imaginations of the young Mozambicans.³

It is important to highlight that these young people left their country to gain work experience in what was known as a “brother nation” in the socialist world, and in the process were to disconnect from colonial labor values and to be transformed into socialist workers, the “*Homem Novo*.”⁴ It is my argument that they returned indeed as new men and women but not so much in the socialist sense; they returned as women and men of some modest wealth, who, much like the gayisa—Mozambican men who work in the South African mining industry—had accumulated material possessions abroad.⁵ Their moment of glory was, however, short-lived as many had to part with their goods in order to finance

2 Alice Samuel Sengo, “Processos de enriquecimento do léxico do português de Moçambique” (MA diss., Universidade do Porto, 2010).

3 For an analysis of the various reasons for the young Mozambicans employed migrating to East Germany, see Marcia C. Schenck, “From Luanda and Maputo to Berlin: Uncovering Angolan and Mozambican Migrants’ Motives to Move to the German Democratic Republic (1979–1990),” *African Economic History* 44 (2016), accessed October 20, 2019, doi:10.1353/ae.2016.0008.

4 The main characteristics of the *Homem Novo* that emerged in FRELIMO discourse were to be “free forever from ignorance, obscurantism, superstition and [...] conscious of the obligations of solidarity”. The new man was to serve a crucial role in the construction of a communal socialist Mozambique. The role of the FRELIMO party was paramount. See Tanja R. Müller, *Legacies of Socialist Solidarity: East Germany in Mozambique* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2014), 2–3.

5 Franziska Rantzsch (in this volume) goes into detail on the parallels between labor migration from Mozambique to South Africa and to East Germany.

their survival after their return. Many labor migrants thus fell back into lives at the margins of Mozambican society. Their story is one of socialist entanglements and socialist encounters as well as post-socialist disentanglements and isolation.

In the GDR, the young Mozambicans were allocated job positions in which they had frequent contact with people of other nationalities, meaning they were continuously navigating diverse socialist encounters. In the process of labor assimilation and socialization with East German culture, they not only acquired socialist values but also experiences and ideas closely linked to notions of autonomy and adulthood and “the good life,” notions that came to define their behavior post-return.⁶ Mozambican migrants were also faced with adverse circumstances: racist expressions and open conflicts involving Mozambicans were common, mainly in places of leisure and entertainment such as bars and discos.

The migration program ended after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, a caesura in the lives of many of the Mozambican workers who returned home in the changing circumstances within East Germany and as the bilateral agreement was dissolved in 1990.⁷ Many foreigners who were in the country at the time, such as the Mozambicans, went back to their own countries after their work contracts were cancelled, uncertain which procedures they had to follow to remain in East Germany and also concerned by the wave of xenophobic violence that affected many German cities after the fall of the wall.⁸

While most existing studies on the Madjermanes focus on their experiences in the GDR, my contribution interrogates their impact upon return. It transpires that not only does the story of their return mirror that of the male Mozambican workers in the South African mining industry, but they also returned as new men and women, albeit not in a socialist sense.⁹ Many Madjermanes had left their homes as ordinary youth and returned to become figures of admiration who had a modest transformative impact on their communities. These young workers

6 See Marcia C. Schenck and Ibraimo Alberto in this volume for a depiction of the life of a Mozambican worker in the GDR.

7 Almuth Berger, “Vertragsarbeiter: Arbeiter Der Freundschaft? Die Verhandlungen in Maputo 1990,” in *Wir haben Spuren hinterlassen!: Die DDR in Mosambik: Erlebnisse, Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse aus drei Jahrzehnten*, ed. Matthias Voss (Münster: Lit, 2005).

8 Aníbal Fernando Lucas, “Mão de obra Moçambicana na ex-República Democrática Alemã, 1979–1990” (Graduate thesis, UEM, 2002).

9 For a classic scholarship on Mozambican workers in South Africa, see Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c.1860–1910* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994); Dunbar T. Moodie and Vivienne Ndatshe, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Ruth First, *Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian and Peasant* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

were not the only group to return to Mozambique from the GDR. As discussed by Marcia C. Schenck and Francisca Raposo (Chapter 9 in this volume) and Tanja Müller, school students for instance were only allocated pocket money and were thus not able to assemble goods in the same way as the workers. Most school students had to serve military service upon their return and while some later managed to become part of Mozambique's middle class, others fell back into the poverty from which they emerged.¹⁰ Mozambican university students who studied in the GDR were in the long run among the economically most successful returnees as many became part of the middle and upper classes in Mozambique, from which quite a few originated.¹¹ Upon the return of these groups, the country as a whole was undergoing profound economic transformations in connection with the end of the socialist period and the Economic Rehabilitation Program.¹²

Based on 10 cited interviews with Madjermanes and with people close to them who witnessed their return, and on song lyrics, this text explores the social impact of the return of the Mozambican migrants from East Germany.¹³ It examines the social dynamics that developed after the return of the Madjermanes at a time when Mozambique was undergoing the upheavals caused by civil war and by the transition from a centralized economy to a political and economic system based on a free market. I explain how the products that the Madjermanes brought with them led their families into relatively privileged positions, at a time of great changes in Mozambique, and highlight how the feelings of pride

10 Tanja Müller, *“Legacies of Socialist Solidarity: East Germany in Mozambique”* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2014).

11 A systematic study of Mozambican university students to East Germany remains a desideratum.

12 The Economic Rehabilitation Program (PRE) emerged in 1987, after talks between Mozambique and the Bretton Woods institutions and led to profound political, economic, and social transformations in the country. See João Mosca, *A Experiência “socialista” em Moçambique (1975–1986)* (Lisbon: Instituto Piaget, 1999), 163–174; João Mosca, *Economia de Moçambique século XX* (Lisbon: Instituto Piaget, 2005), 309–400.

13 Interviewing people who had been in East Germany and returned after reunification posed a significant challenge. Most of them were not interested in sharing their experiences and some even replied aggressively, triggered by the money that Mozambican authorities allegedly still owe them. Nevertheless, the information I could obtain from the Madjermanes and from people who witnessed their return has been invaluable. I cite here only 10 interviews but I have read about 200 interviews (of which I have transcribed many) conducted by Marcia C. Schenck for her PhD dissertation “Socialist solidarities and their afterlives: Histories and memories of Angolan and Mozambican migrants in the German Democratic Republic, 1975–2015” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2017) and therefore can confidently state that what I cite here is representative for a wider pool of interviews.

derived from their stay in Germany and from having returned with fancy clothes, vehicles, and even European girlfriends or wives distinguished the Madjermanes and their families in their communities. I argue that these young people, returning from a developed European country, were first treated with high levels of respect and admiration. For their communities they indeed returned as New Men, however, not as initially idealized by the party and the state but rather as icons of fashion and bringers of essential and “luxury” goods. They initially were seen as an example for other family members and neighbors to follow until they failed to obtain stable work and had to sell their possessions. Importantly, I maintain that we should not forget, despite the narrative of social decline that is present in the current literature on this topic, that the return of the Madjermanes served to inject new life into peripheral districts, especially in the capital city.¹⁴ In some cases, the Madjermanes even helped support training and job creation by setting up small businesses after they returned to their country.

This contribution is divided into two main sections. The first examines the circumstances of the Mozambican labor migration to the GDR and the memories that former migrants express about this migration today. In the second part, I then move on to elaborate in four subsections the social and economic impacts of the mass return of many former worker-trainees to Maputo by tracing the rise and fall of the Madjerman as social groups within their Maputo communities.

Labor Migration Agreements: From Mozambique to East Germany

During the socialist period from 1975 to 1990, Mozambique signed agreements with various countries of similar political orientation. One such cooperation agreement was signed with the German Democratic Republic (GDR), one of Mozambique’s most important partners. Of all the accords signed with East Germany, the one with the highest public profile was the agreement to send young people to work on contracts with companies in Germany.¹⁵ In February 1979, Erich Honecker, then General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, visited

¹⁴ For an analysis of the decline in living standards on the returnees’ psyches see for instance Marcia C. Schenck, “A Chronology of Nostalgia: Memories of Former Angolan and Mozambican Worker Trainees to East Germany,” *Labor History* 59 (2018), accessed April 4, 2019, doi:10.1080/0023656X.2018.1429187.

¹⁵ Franziska Rantzsch (in this volume) studies the agreements between the governments of the GDR and Mozambique. She affirms that economic motives were crucial for the GDR’s recruitment of contract workers, as were the Cold War era political-ideological motives.

Maputo to sign a friendship agreement and a series of commercial deals. The relevant agreement was signed on February 24, 1979 by representatives from the parties of both countries.¹⁶ The Bilateral Commissions, which met alternately in Maputo and Berlin, then developed the details of the cooperation between the two states.¹⁷

Mozambique was experiencing an almost total paralysis of its administrative and economic system, as a result of the shortage of personnel qualified to hold the positions vacated by the Portuguese. Furthermore, most of the young people found in migration a way of escaping recruitment for the armed forces and for the front line in the civil war. Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman state that between 1974 and 1977, the Portuguese community fell from 250,000 to approximately 20,000. This exodus resulted in a severe shortage of technicians and professionals, as the Portuguese were the only group to enjoy access to higher education in the colonial period, as a result of their privileged racial and class position. Consequently, there were no engineers, mechanics, accountants or agronomists left in the country who had administered Mozambique during the colonial period but also limited qualified textile workers, harbor managers, and coal miners.¹⁸ The country's manufacturing industry faced a series of critical problems which forced the state to intervene immediately.¹⁹ At the same time,

16 The agreement was signed by Marcelino dos Santos, the then Minister of Planning for Mozambique, and by Günter Mittag, Secretary for Economics of the Committee of the Unified Socialist Party of Germany. See Agreement on temporary employment of Mozambican workers in the GDR, 1979, in Aníbal. F. Lucas, "Mão de obra Moçambicana na ex-República Democrática Alemã, 1979–1990" (Graduate thesis, UEM, 2002).

17 Marcia C. Schenck, "Socialist Solidarities and Their Afterlives: Histories and Memories of Angolan and Mozambican Migrants in the German Democratic Republic, 1975–2015" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2017).

18 Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1983), 145.

19 After the Lusaka Accord of 1974 and the implementation of a post-independence transition government, the Mozambican industry, which had been highly dependent on serving the Portuguese economy and the few Portuguese citizens in the country, entered into crisis for a number of reasons: firstly, because former Portuguese owners abandoned and sabotaged their companies; secondly, there was a shortage of qualified technicians to replace the foreigners who had left the country; thirdly, the agricultural distribution network, which had also been under colonial management, collapsed; and fourthly, the physical condition of equipment deteriorated and maintenance proved very difficult, leading to the almost complete collapse of industrial infrastructure. As a result, there was a 35% drop in industrial production from 1974 to 1976, forcing the state to intervene to rescue an industry in decline. See Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco, "Problemas estruturais de Industrialização," in *Moçambique: Perspetivas Económicas*, ed. Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco (Maputo: UEM, 1994), 96.

East Germany was suffering from the loss of some of its young people to the Federal Republic of Germany, the more populous capitalist part of Germany which was outperforming the GDR economically and technologically.²⁰

For Mozambique, as well as encouraging migration for work, the agreement enabled the technical and professional training of young Mozambicans who in the future would return and deploy their skills in businesses and factories across the country. There are similarities to note between the recruitment of Mozambicans for East German companies and the recruitment for South African mines (see Rantzsch in this volume). However, one of the major differences between the two migrations was the existence of a system for training the young migrants on the job so that many returned with a certificate that marked them as skilled laborers, which did not occur with those Mozambicans who migrated to the mines of South Africa.²¹ This fact is featured centrally in former migrants' memories to which I turn now.

Migrants' Memories of their Reasons to Migrate²²

Many young Mozambicans who wanted to receive professional training went to East Germany. They came mostly from families with humble backgrounds and low income, with no chance of continuing their studies. Migration to East Germany was a dream for many young citizens of Mozambique, because of the political and military situation of their own country and because of the chance to discover a western country. Abílio Forquilha talks of his feeling of privilege on being chosen to go to (East) Germany, both because of the professional experience and the chance to continue his studies:

²⁰ Lucas, "Mão-de-obra Moçambicana."

²¹ Schenck, "Socialist Solidarities." Héctor H. Guerra makes a comparison between recruitment and migration for South Africa and recruitment for East Germany, noting the similarities and differences between both processes. Apart from the deferred payment systems established by both agreements, the author points to social and political factors as the driving forces for migration. While a desire to escape the forced labor system resulted in the massive migration to the Rand mines in the colonial period, in contrast it was the post-independence civil conflict and a desire to escape the draft that were the main reasons for migration to East Germany. Héctor Hernández Guerra, "Do Rand à RDA? Modernização Compulsória e Práticas Sociais e Estratégias de Mobilidade Social," *Revista d'antropologia i investigació social* 3 (2009): 61–83.

²² Alexandra Piepiorka and Eduardo Buanaissa (Chapter 14 in this volume) write about memory-scapes that exist between Mozambique and (East) Germany and consist of various memories from travelers of both countries about their lives in the other country. They also engage with Mozambican workers' memories about the GDR.

Being selected to go to Germany was not easy and was a challenge for students with scholarships and for workers. Everybody wanted to go to Germany, plus there was a war in Mozambique at that time and Germany was a relatively calm country with an impressive level of development and a decent lifestyle. Every young person wanted to go. So, when we left we felt that it was a time of good fortune for us. We were the lucky ones. In many cases the work and the training were successful, and we also had all the basics that a person needs to live. It was very good.²³

Inocência Honwana, a resident of Manhiça in Maputo province, remembers the following general feeling:

Armed conflict in Mozambique had erupted and death was getting closer all the time. At night, death took youngsters, pregnant women, children, the sick. It was tough to live in Manhiça and to wake up to see people mourning for a victim who the day before had been a companion. It was also sad to think about fleeing from Maluana, which had become a real slaughterhouse. I was obsessed by the desire to leave for a distant land [...]. It was more exciting than dreaming of making love to a nymphomaniac.²⁴

In the 1980s Mozambique was afflicted by natural disasters, in particular by a famine which had left many families in hunger and deprived the shops and co-operatives of food. In a collection of memories, Moisés Alberto writes:

At that time there were shortages of everything except tea leaves. Youngsters were growing up with an uncertain future, with very few vacancies for education or employment. The only solution was the army, but all young people were afraid and wanted to escape from certain death.²⁵

Faced by these difficulties, many young people chose to migrate to neighboring countries or even distant lands and specially to take up work contracts in East Germany. The idea of escaping hunger and war, obtaining a job, and discovering a developed European country was fascinating to young people, who signed up at registration posts all over the country eager to temporarily moor in a new region of the socialist world.

23 Abílio Forquilha, March 5, 2014, Maputo, interview with Marcia C. Schenck.

24 Inocência Domingos Honwana, "Berlim: Um paraíso Suspenso na Memória," in *Moçambique – Alemanha, Ida E Volta: Vivências Dos Moçambicanos Antes, Durante E Depois De Estadia Na Alemanha*, ed. Ulf Dieter Klemm (Maputo: ICMA, 2005), 89.

25 Moisés João M. Alberto, "Untitled," in *Moçambique – Alemanha, Ida E Volta: Vivências Dos Moçambicanos Antes, Durante E Depois De Estadia Na Alemanha*, ed. Ulf Dieter Klemm (Maputo: ICMA, 2005), 191.

Memories of Former Labor Migrants in East Germany

The memories migrants share of their stay in East Germany are often quite positive, to the surprise of many German analysts, to whom the living and working conditions of most foreign workers in the GDR seem unattractive. Mozambican listeners on the contrary expect tales of adventure and riches to confirm their positive associations of Europe as the land of milk and honey. The exception to the nostalgic memories, which Marcia C. Schenck has termed “eastalgic” memories, are memories of racist incidents which ranged from verbal expressions to physical violence and even murder.²⁶

Regarding the working environment that labor migrants encountered in East Germany, experiences were mixed but most interviews record being satisfied overall with their work. Abdenego Levi Matsinhe, who went to Germany in the late 1980s, recalls:

I worked for a paper company called “*Zellstoff- und Papierfabrik*” in a small location near the city of Dresden. We worked in shifts [and groups] made up of Mozambicans, Germans, Angolans and Vietnamese [...]. We got on well with each other and there was not a lot of racism in the workplace because the laws were harsh.²⁷

And Rogério Cumbane concurs that, during official business, there was no space for racist expressions:

At the company where I worked there were no problems with racism, only some people from outside, mainly in bars, did not like us, especially because German girls preferred to go out with us rather than with them.²⁸

As the two testimonies above and other conversations with returnees show, racism was curtailed in the official domain of the anti-racist state but broke out in unpoliced spaces.²⁹ This is not to suggest that all private spaces were marred by racism. As Marcia C. Schenck observes, intercultural relationships were spaces for intercultural learning. In East Germany there were loving relationships between Angolan and Mozambican men and German women, or the other way

²⁶ Schenck, “A Chronology of Nostalgia.”

²⁷ Abdenego Levi Matsinhe, February 24, 2014, Maputo, interview with Marcia C. Schenck and Fernando Machava.

²⁸ Rogério Cumbane, February 17, 2014, Maputo, interview with Marcia C. Schenck and Fernando Machava.

²⁹ Quinn Slobodian, ed., *Comrades of Color: East Germany in the Cold War World* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015).

around. This served to support the integration of the migrants in a foreign world.³⁰

During their time in the GDR, young migrants could also buy goods for personal use in their homes during their free time. Because many young Mozambicans did not like German cuisine and preferred to make their own meals, many of them bought freezers to conserve food in their homes. In the interview, Marcos, who moved in with his East German partner, states:

It was difficult for me to get used to German cooking (...) so I prepared my own meals when I was at home, as this was not forbidden. In my room I had a small fridge where I left food, I had bought to make meals. When I moved into my girlfriend's house, I took the fridge with me, along with the television set, the HiFi [High Fidelity] and other things that I had bought over there.³¹

Statements such as these show the complex nature of relations between Mozambicans and East Germans. These relations varied from affectionate and private relationships to professional relationships and ranged from love affairs and marriage to hatred and xenophobia.

The same cannot be said when the immigrants were in entertainment venues such as bars and discotheques. Many interviewees say they suffered threats or even aggression, mainly because the Mozambicans would interact with the German women in these places. Ilda Melembe remembers shocking experiences with violent racism from the last months of her time in Germany:

In Berlin we had a lot of problems with young men. We had to move out of our accommodation and go to Potsdam because there was so much racism. Before leaving the company dormitory we were assaulted by some young [German] men. I was one of the victims. I was hit by a stone when our building was invaded. After that we moved to another boarding house where we spent almost two months before returning to Mozambique but it was not easy. We suffered a lot. I did not know that in Germany we would suffer so much in the last days. We lived on apples, milk, boiled eggs and bread for the time that we were in the new boarding institution.³²

Rogério Cumbane concurs and speaks about his experience of xenophobia in East Germany:

30 Schenck, "Socialist Solidarities."

31 Marcos Rungo, July 21, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

32 Ilda Melembe, Rosita Lucas, Beatriz Simão et al., August 31, 2011, interview with Marcia C. Schenck.

After the fall of the Wall I remember that there were xenophobic leaflets around and that the Germans did not want to see any foreigners anymore. They only wanted to live among other Germans. From that time on, no black person could leave their accommodation without permission, because they could be beaten up or killed in the street.³³

This sort of intolerance from a part of German society led many young Mozambicans to fear for their safety and to start avoiding public spaces. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany the vast majority of migrants came home.

The Labor Migrants' Return to Mozambique

The political scenario in Germany in 1989 was dominated by a series of demonstrations, culminating in November with the fall of the Berlin Wall.³⁴ As a result of the breakdown of the GDR, the commissioner for foreigners Almuth Berger and her team negotiated the early termination of the agreements in Mozambique and thousands of Mozambicans who had come to Germany to work under the agreements returned.³⁵ The last agreement signed between the governments of the GDR and Mozambique in May 1990 established that, in the event of dismissals, workers had the right to three months of 70% of the gross salary previously earned, to stay at the company's home, and to a return ticket to Mozambique. In addition, dismissed workers and those who were willing to leave the GDR had right to an indemnity payment of DM 3000.³⁶ Many workers received these payments at a time when products from West Germany were already introduced, quickly replacing East German products in their popularity and lowering the prices of local products. It was then that many migrants bought the products to support their whole families and their own construction of a new family.

The mass return of workers led to a lack of coordination between the German government and Mozambican authorities when it came to scheduling the return flights back to Mozambique. An example of this can be found in a news report in *Tempo* magazine on October 14, 1990, which discusses an "unex-

³³ Rogério Cumbane, February 17, 2014, Maputo, interview with Marcia Schenck and Fernando Machava.

³⁴ Lucas, "Mão-de-obra Moçambicana."

³⁵ Berger, "Vertragsarbeiter: Arbeiter Der Freundschaft? Die Verhandlungen in Maputo 1990."

³⁶ See Jochen Oppenheimer, "Mozambican Worker Migration to the Former German Democratic Republic: Serving Socialism and Struggling under Democracy," *Portuguese Studies Review* 12 (2004): 163–187; Lucas, "Mão-de-obra Moçambicana."

pected return,” referring to the return of about 16,000 Mozambicans from the newly unified country of Germany. The repatriation of the young Mozambicans was disorderly and often “unplanned,” as the events of September 17, 1990 demonstrates:

A group of youngsters coming back from former East Germany was arriving at Maputo on an unscheduled flight, without the authorities at the International Airport of Maputo or the relevant Mozambican authorities being aware. The airport did not authorize the landing of the airplane, which had to go on to South Africa. From there, however, the Mozambicans were sent back to Europe, even though their luggage had been taken off the airplane in South Africa [...].³⁷

In Maputo, returning workers, especially those who did not have a fixed abode or any family in the city, were received at a provisional housing facility for outgoing and returning workers in the neighborhood of Machava close to the airport and the lodges of the Mozambican railway company. However, because of the high number of people these sites became too small to cope with so many returnees at once, which meant that they had to find alternative accommodation. Some of the returnees soon bought land on the outskirts of the city of Maputo and began to build their makeshift or even stone houses there.³⁸

Another cause that led many returnees to stay in the capital city was the reception of their goods, which were usually chartered by sea and, therefore, arrived later – if at all. Many tell stories about the late arrival of their products that were only released after paying customs. Due to having to raise the money to be able to receive the goods, many prolonged their stays. Moreover, the costs of air tickets to the provinces, especially those of the center and north of the country, were high but it was very difficult and dangerous to travel by land because of the civil war. Thus paying for the costs of customs clearance and the transport of their goods in many cases exhausted funds to pay for onward travel to their home regions.³⁹

Francisco Macaringue remembers the following:

I was actually very anxious to return to the land where I was born (the province of Sofala), but we had to wait for a long time for the goods which were all supposed to arrive here in Maputo. When they arrived, I had to pay a large sum of money for customs clearance and then I also had to pay to transport them to my province, which was very expensive and

37 António Elias, “Moçambicanos na RDA: O Regresso Inesperado,” *Tempo Magazine*, October 14, 1990, 22–25.

38 Ibid.

39 Lucas, “Mão-de-obra Moçambicana.”

which I could not afford. I went to visit my family, taking with me only the products I had bought for my family, while the other items stayed behind in Maputo at a family house because I could not take them all home.⁴⁰

Although the government erected a temporary camp for returnees in Machava, the returning Mozambicans encountered problems in receiving their payments, and, when they finally received them, found that the calculation had not taken inflation into account. These and other factors resulted in most of the returning Mozambicans who were from the provinces setting up homes in Maputo, with a major impact on the city. Although living conditions did not approach the level of German cities, it was the location in Mozambique where they felt most comfortable and safe from the impacts of the civil war. Furthermore, the Mozambican Labor Ministry, which was in charge of the affairs of former workers in East Germany, was located in Maputo and hence easy for them to reach if required.

In response to demands uttered across the country, in September 2001 the government carried out the first nationwide census of former workers in East Germany, using criteria such as the presentation of documents which confirmed their residence and employment in Germany, including passports and employment cards with the company name. This first census registered 11,252 former workers with the right to receive social security repayments. Of this number, it is important to note that around 6,000 people had set up their residences in Maputo City.⁴¹

Social Impact of the Madjermanes across Maputo

Originally, the workers were sent to East Germany in a revolutionary context with the objective of educating the “Homem Novo.” However, in East Germany the migrants were exposed to new forms of socialization, not all of which were in line with the SED and FRELIMO politics. Labor migrants returned as New Men, although not in the socialist context as previously envisioned by their representatives. Instead, they returned as an embryonic class in ascension, accumulating a material and even monetary wealth that to a certain degree impacted the lives of the people around them, before it disappeared again. Thus, the cycle closed, and many returned to the lives they unmoored from to migrate to East Germany. What migrants had in their baggage, apart from material goods, were practices such as

⁴⁰ Francisco Macaringue, July 21, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

⁴¹ Lucas Xavier Canjale, “O Fórum dos ex-trabalhadores da ex-RDA na Cidade de Maputo (1996–2006)” (Graduate thesis, UEM, 2007).

protests and invoking notions of self-esteem and social inclusion.⁴² Notions of autonomy and adulthood had a long tradition in transnational Mozambican labor migrations but were not part of the socialist goals of solidarity and the collective. Where governments expected political and technical education along a real socialist exegesis as practiced in East Germany at the time, quite a few labor migrants began to practice indiscipline, alcoholism, and violations of dormitory rules in an attempt to ensure personal freedoms so abhorred by both governments.

The Madjermanes who returned and established themselves in Maputo stimulated the curiosity of numerous residents of the city. Many people were keen to get to know these men (and some women) who were returning from a western country with a vast range of experiences. Returnee Adevaldo Banze recalls that “People were amazed. They all wanted to see the Madjermanes, as we were affectionately known. We were men who commanded economic respect from anyone who showed up.”⁴³ Carlos Cossa, a resident of the Ferroviário neighborhood in Maputo, remembers:

When the young people from East Germany returned, the neighborhood became very exciting. Their houses were nearly always full of people, family members as well as neighbors. Every young person wanted to hang out with them because they had money and there was nearly always a party in their homes. Their houses were full of quality things, whether food and drink or things to watch. People wanted to be close to them. They were always dressed very differently. I remember that one of them who brought back a motorbike would make a lot of noise when he left home and all the kids would run to watch him go by.⁴⁴

Another kind of transformation resulting from the return of the Madjermanes took place in their residences. Some of the youngsters returned and invested their money in improving the living conditions of their families, especially in building houses of brick and stone. These houses were equipped with electrical appliances from East Germany which were very hard to find in the suburbs and even in the most expensive parts of the city. Adevaldo Banze states that on his return one of his priorities was to build a decent home for his family and to fur-

⁴² See Eric Allina, “From ‘New Man’ to Superman: The Politics of Work and Socialism, from Maputo to Karl-Marx-Stadt, c. 1982,” (WISER: Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2016).

⁴³ Adevaldo Banze, “Berlim: um Paraíso Suspenso na Memória,” in *Moçambique – Alemanha, Ida e Volta: Vivências dos Moçambicanos antes, durante e depois de estadia na Alemanha*, ed. Ulf Dieter Klemm (Maputo: ICMA, 2005), 37–39.

⁴⁴ Alfredo Mandlate and Carlos Cossa, July 18, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

nish it with “television sets, fridges, radios, videos and many more, plus the famous MZ motorbike,⁴⁵ which was the flag of Germany in Mozambique.”⁴⁶

At this time, it was seen as a major privilege to have traveled to East Germany. When migrants returned, they were seen as individuals with valuable life experience. João Raimundo, a resident of the Ferroviário neighborhood in Maputo, states:

When the youngsters who were in East Germany returned home, many young people wanted to be close to them. They thought that they had more experience of life because of their time in Europe, where things were more dynamic [...]. For example, they wanted to know what sort of clothes went well together or how to get with a girl. They also wanted to be close to them to increase their popularity and even to be seen with them by a woman in whom they were interested. Some people would borrow their clothes or even their motorbikes to make an impression.⁴⁷

Some of the returnees also impressed by bringing with them their European girlfriends,⁴⁸ partners or wives, something which—as a relic of colonial times—was seen as an honor for the neighborhoods where they lived. This was not simply an affinity for the foreign read as exotic and exciting, but it mattered that these women were white, the color of power.

In his song “*Miboba*” (2000), José Guimarães describes the joy of the Mozambicans who went to (East) Germany and their delight in seeing the beauty of German cities. The same music talks of the return in triumph of some of the Madjermanes, who came home with German girlfriends or motorbikes, to the amazement and admiration of the locals, singing “*A Loko aho ku tivha Nwana mamany, a uta Tsaka, a Skambalene*”⁴⁹ [...] *Vhanwany Vhafana, vha*

⁴⁵ The MZ refers to an East German brand of motorbikes produced by IFA (Industrieverband Fahrzeugbau), which many of the young Mozambicans acquired in the GDR second hand. This was one of the most visible assets upon the return of the Madjermanes, leading to the expression “German flag in Mozambique.” It was characteristic in the whole city to see young people on these motorbikes for years until they disappeared one by one as they broke down and could not be repaired for lack of spare parts.

⁴⁶ Banze, “Berlim: Um paraíso Suspenso na Memória,” 37–39.

⁴⁷ João Raimundo, July 29, 2019, interview with Fernando Machava.

⁴⁸ According to several interviewees, some young East German women accompanied their partners to Mozambique. However, given the differences in climate, living standard, and culture, most did not last long before they eventually returned, in some cases with their partners, in others alone. At present no East German woman still in Mozambique was identified either by the author or Marcia C. Schenck during her dissertation research in 2014.

⁴⁹ Unfortunately, the composer of this song has died and it was not possible to ask him about the meaning of this word. Based on the story told by the song, the word refers to a city in East

vhuhny ni swithuthuthu, niswy linguana, a Skambalene [...].⁵⁰ In this music, the artist sings of the beauty of German cities, for which many returnees felt strong nostalgia when they had to return to Mozambique after the end of the socialist regime in East Germany.⁵¹ The song also mentions the labor migrants who returned from East Germany not only with goods (motorbikes) but also with “white girls” (East German women), to the widespread admiration of their families and local community.⁵² At that time it was not common for a young Mozambican man, especially one from a suburban neighborhood, to go out with a white woman or to have a white wife. A colonial legacy, white women were still considered to be members of the elite, so these young people enjoyed a privileged position in their neighborhood by virtue of an assumption about the economic and social position of their East German partners. Regardless of the East German background the white women actually came from, their skin color privileged them in the Maputo of the early 1990s.

We should also note that the returning men were highly attractive to some local women, again based on an assumption about material wealth but also fascinating as somebody who had seen Europe personally and could tell interesting stories. Many new relationships between Maputo’s women and returning migrants were formed immediately after their return, sometimes culminating in marriage and family creation. The country was still feeling the devastating effects of the civil war and its economy was extremely weak. This had an impact above all on families in poor suburbs across the country. Some Mozambican women were keen to have relationships with young men returning from their work experience in East Germany, who apparently had goods and money. Samuel Manjate, a resident near the temporary camp in Machava, which was established on an old farm to process male returnees, says:

Germany. Many returnees whom I was able to interview could not say exactly what it refers to, but everything suggests that the word denotes a real or fictitious city. The song discusses the beauty of European cities and the joy that young people who had been in Europe felt when remembering the place.

50 This translates to “If you met my brother you would be happy in Skambalene [...] Other kids came back with motorbikes, with white girls from Germany [...]”, José Guimarães. *Miboba*. Rádio Moçambique, 2000.

51 See for instance Schenck, “Socialist Solidarities.”

52 Marcia Schenck describes the reverse process in East Germany, where black husbands and boyfriends were often not approved of in East German families and communities; see Schenck, “Socialist Solidarities.”

The area near that place used to be full of women who had relationships with the Madjermanes, thinking that they could get on in life that way. These people had come from Europe and the women thought they had a lot of money which wouldn't run out soon.⁵³

Before the money ran out, many Madjermanes were role models to the young people in their neighborhoods but life changed for everybody, young and old, for better or for worse. Alfredo Mandlate and Carlos Cossa, both residents of Ferrovário, saw how some of the young returnees from Germany moved close to their homes and remember:

A lot of things changed here when they arrived. Everyone would go to one of their houses to watch TV, which only they had. They were basically the first people with stereos and they played very loud music which was totally different to what we were used to. (...) There were always people with them and sometimes we could not sleep because of the noise they made when they had a party.⁵⁴

The return of the Madjermanes led to changes in the habits and customs of the neighborhoods, as thousands of youngsters arrived bringing their experiences of Germany with them and influencing other residents. The returnees were similar in many ways, but also different from the migrants who had been to the South African mines. They had emigrated to Europe in a state-organized program targeted at job training while the miners had emigrated within the region and often for personal reasons such as marriage, improved living conditions, or traditions in the family or community. Both, however, made an impact in their communities, not least through the goods they brought.⁵⁵

Improvement in Living Conditions Thanks to New Products

One of the most significant legacies of the cooperation between Mozambique and East Germany was constituted by the material goods brought back by thousands of Mozambicans. Thousands of containers full of products arrived, includ-

53 Samuel Manjate, July 15, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

54 Alfredo Mandlate and Carlos Cossa, July 18, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

55 Consumption is also a theme familiar from southern African labor history; see Emmanuel Kreike, *Recreating Eden: Land Use, Environment, and Society in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia*, *Social History of Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004), Chapter 5; Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c.1860–1910* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994).

ing electrical appliances, clothes, vehicles, and other items, which were unloaded in the port of Maputo after being shipped from East Germany.

Most of the youngsters had enjoyed good living conditions in East Germany, with subsidized food, accommodation, and leisure activities resulting in an economically stable, if not prosperous, life. The migrants bought two kinds of goods: goods for immediate consumption and use and goods for their return to Mozambique. In Germany, many bought food and a fridge to be able to cook their own Mozambican food, but also a television set, radio and HiFi for their entertainment. For their return, migrants bought everything they considered useful for their families or that could be sold to substantiate their meager income. But many also prioritized their own creation of a future household.

The material items that the returnees brought with them, for instance appliances such as television sets, sound systems, motorbikes and even vehicles, which until then had been scarce or non-existent in the suburban communities of Maputo, converted the Madjermanes into a local elite. Their style and clothes inspired a new way of dressing and a new look and they made a major impression with their haircuts and ripped jeans. These items also led to major changes in their families and the surrounding communities, for example by increasing the capacity to preserve food in freezers and fridges and also by increasing access to information and entertainment from radio and television, with informal cinemas in the community known as “videos.” Many of the new appliances were still reliant on local electricity and thus their use was not possible at all times or in all places.

Most of the migrants to East Germany and their families had experienced scarcity of almost all types of products prior to migrating. When they received their wages abroad, they prioritized buying the goods they deemed useful and prestigious. Workers like Manuel Loureço, who was among the workers who received compensation pay after the early termination of his contract due to the German re-unification, used that money to go on a shopping spree and buy Western and formerly Eastern goods for home:

With the money that I received in Germany when the company I was working for was shut down, I bought some things to use here in Mozambique and for all the family. I knew there was not a lot here so I invested in things that would be useful to me. I already had some items I used over there, such as a fridge, record player, dishes and an MZ motorbike for myself I just bought some more clothes and then a lot of stuff for my family.⁵⁶

56 Manuel Loureço, June 29, 2019, interview with Fernando Machava.

Aware of the difficulties that their families were experiencing, Mozambicans in East Germany tried to cover the full range of a family's needs when buying goods. When they returned home, these items would serve to distinguish the families of Madjermanes, who stood out because of the way they dressed.

Florêncio Obadias mirrors the intention to build his own household with the goods acquired during the migration process:

I bought clothes, a fridge, television set, dishes and other utensils which I could use at home. I was coming back with my girlfriend and she chose most of the things as she said we had to arrive and build our home. I remember there were a lot of dishes and sheets and that we even brought curtains with us.⁵⁷

When they returned, electrical appliances gave these families of the returnees an advantage in life that they had not enjoyed before, such as the ability to conserve food in the freezers and refrigerators brought by the Madjermanes from East Germany. As one interviewee explains:

[...] I brought a fridge which helped a lot at home, especially in the summer when food goes bad quickly. It was not easy in our humble families of farmers to find someone with fridge or a freezer. Many of our neighbors would come to store their things here, mainly fish and meat products, which before they had stuffed with salt [...] so that they did not rot.⁵⁸

These domestic appliances increased a family's capacity to conserve food and hence enhanced their ability to buy perishable food products in large volumes, as they could be preserved without difficulty.

Another benefit from these goods of high prestige was the possibility they provided of increased access to televised information and entertainment. Televised football games and soap operas gave the families and neighbors of the Madjermanes access to more entertainment. Normally, a Madjerman's house would be full of people of all ages looking for some form of content to watch on their televisions. For the communities, these appliances gave more access to entertainment and, even more importantly, more choices when accessing information. Another important opportunity for entertainment came from films on video cassettes, which until then had been very scarce in families in the suburbs of Maputo. The return of the Madjermanes saw video players arrive in these homes, providing families and neighbors with a new form of entertainment. Interviewee Alfredo Mandlate remembers:

⁵⁷ Florêncio Obadias, June 27, 2019, interview with Fernando Machava.

⁵⁸ Alfredo Mandlate, July 18, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

[...] We used to go to the home of our neighbor who had come back from Germany to watch his TV, mainly when there were football matches from Portugal. We sat down and watched the games with people of all ages because television sets were rare around here. On days when there were no matches, we would watch the news, soap operas and some films they had brought from Germany. It was something new that had never been seen before and the house used to fill up. Some people saw that their houses were getting full and started to charge entry. On normal days there was one price, on days when there was a football game there was another price.⁵⁹

As this interview shows, people would flock to the house of a Madjerman to enjoy audiovisual entertainment. With their sound systems and records, the Madjermanes introduced new music which began to captivate and delight the listeners. The Madjermanes thereby introduced to the community western music that was not very well known in Mozambique at the time. As we have seen in this section, the goods of the Madjerman changed the lifestyle of the local Maputo communities into which the returnees integrated in many small ways.

From Prestige Goods to Opportunities for Financial Gains

Some of the returnees also made the most of the training they had received in East Germany and created small businesses to support themselves and their families. They brought with them and acquired materials to help them in their work, such as equipment for metalworking and mechanical work and they set up businesses supplying the local population. Apart from being the economic foundation of their livelihoods, these businesses created employment for young people to acquire trading skills and earn an income, albeit mostly in the informal economy:

When my contract with the [East German] company where I was assigned ended and I knew that I had to come home [to Mozambique], I began to buy materials to come and open a small metalworking shop to produce pieces for people. At the start my idea was not to make the things myself: it was to train people so that they could make the items while I was at work in the company that would be allocated for me when I arrived home. When I saw that things were not working out as had been planned, I assumed personal responsibility for the project. Even today I am still working in the area in which I received training in East Germany.

59 Alfredo Mandlate, July 18, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

With the small company that I opened I managed to support my parents and brothers and then form my own family, all supported by my small business.⁶⁰

With the small enterprises that they established, some of the returnees not only made full use of the knowledge they acquired in East Germany but also trained people, created job positions, and produced or repaired items for neighboring communities.

Another way of raising funds came from the informal cinemas. Conventional cinemas were normally the preserve of well-off people in the city itself. The Madjermanes, however, began to introduce to the suburbs cinemas which were known as “videos.” When finances began to become tighter, these young people would not only sell goods from East Germany but also entertain youngsters with video films they had brought with them from East Germany. These informal cinemas had another impact on society, which was the change in the name of robbers from “*Mabandidos*”, the name they had during the civil war, to “*Ninjas*”, which had become famous thanks to the films shown in the cinemas set up by the Madjermanes. One interviewee states:

There were no Ninjas here. The Madjermanes brought them with their martial arts films. A few years later a martial arts training area was even set up in the Xikhelene zone. Before that there were only “*Bandidos*” or “*Mabandidos*”, but after the Madjermanes came back there started to be people who assaulted and beat up their victims, wearing those hoods that cover the face. The only thing you could see was the eyes and the nose [...].⁶¹

The films from the Madjermanes created the space for a new form of behavior by people who caused trouble and carried out looting in the communities. Thus, some of the aspects of the mixing of cultures had tangible disadvantages.

The goods that the Madjermanes brought with them from East Germany initially gave them a considerable privilege. With that came many friends and many expenses. Most of the money they had brought from East Germany was soon spent on parties, drinks, and fun with friends. As their money ran out, and with no income coming from the payment transfers they had made when they were in Germany, they began to sell their goods to survive and support their habits. Adevaldo Banze says in his memoirs:

The days began to darken and day after day became even darker, with no payments or anything. The time had come to find a job, but no jobs appeared. I can still remember the sad

⁶⁰ Marcos Rungo, July 21, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

⁶¹ Samuel Manjate, July 15, 2016, interview with Fernando Machava.

time when I gave up my goods, day after day, piece after piece. I got rid of my television, my radio, even my famous and beloved MZ, because I had to live [...].⁶²

The first sales of products brought from Germany began in the 1990s, when some returnees put their belongings up for sale in the area that today is known as the Red Star Market. When their products ran out, these people then began to sell the products of other Madjermanes who were also in financial difficulties. One of the interviewees says:

The Red Star market became famous for selling products from people who had returned from East Germany. From 1990 to 1997–1998 people would show up to sell the appliances they had bought in Germany. When we came back from Germany and we had not been employed or received the value of the transfers, we had to find other ways to survive. The only way out we found was to sell the items that we had brought from Germany. This became our employment. The business began with one person and after a while there were around 20 Madjermanes selling products from Germany, either their own goods or those of other people who had sold them to us for resale or just to sell for a certain commission.⁶³

As the interviewee confirms, those responsible for selling the products of the Madjermanes were other returnees, who would sell the products of their colleagues for a commission. When the goods of the Madjermanes began to run out, they started to sell other products. To this day, they continue in the same business. This section has shown that while many returnees did not gain a place of employment in Mozambique's formal economy in the industry for which they have been trained, some still used their skills on the informal market to create small businesses, rooted in their local communities.

From the Elite to the Margins: The Social Legacy of the Madjermanes

For a certain period, the Madjermanes constituted an elite in Mozambican society and they seemed firmly moored back home. Many of these youngsters were still enthused by their time in Europe and expected to quickly be assigned a job where they could put into practice the skills they had learned. As a result, with the cash they momentarily possessed and the money they expected to receive, a certain complacency set in.

⁶² Banze, "Berlim: Um paraíso Suspenso na Memória," 37–39.

⁶³ Grupo Mercado Estrela Vermelha, interview with Marcia C. Schenck, April 21, 2014.

Their dreams were destroyed, however, not least by the change in the political and economic systems as socialism unraveled and the armed fighting continued and the abandonment of Mozambique's socialist projects for which thousands of youngsters were sent to third countries to receive professional training. With few formal employment opportunities and no goods left from East Germany to support them, some of the returnees migrated again, this time to the mines of South Africa. Others looked for jobs locally, and yet others started small businesses. Most Madjermanes continued to wait for the money the Mozambican government owed them from the payments made when they were in East Germany, regardless of how they created their income. Before long, the situation of the unemployed returning migrants became desperate, culminating in a demonstration in front of the Ministry of Employment in late December 1990, when the Madjermanes demanded the money that was owed to them. Many of them expressed regret for having returned to the country, maintaining that those who remained in reunified Germany had better opportunities than those who planned to fulfill President Samora Machel's dream of developing Mozambique through a trained vanguard working class.⁶⁴

As well as financial problems and unemployment, the Madjermanes faced the problem of social reintegration, as they were to a degree discriminated against and prevented from accessing employment opportunities because they had a reputation for participating in protest marches. They began to be referred to as "Madjermanes," "ninjas," or even "*molwenes* of the district," and thus their name was tainted with associations of troublemakers and indeed a few Madjermanes slid into a life of crime, though that is by no means representative of the population as a whole.⁶⁵

Time went by and the Madjermanes became older. During the period of their protests and demands, which began shortly after their return and intensified in the decade following the mid 1990s, there were countless confrontations between the returnees and not only governmental authorities but also ordinary citizens, who would sometimes suffer the consequences of the frustrations of the Madjermanes. As a result, their reputation considerably deteriorated over the course of the years.

⁶⁴ Ibraimo Alberto is an example of Mozambican labor migrant who decided to stay in Germany after its reunification. He obtained German nationality, founded a family, retrained and worked in integration and anti-racism work; see Marcia C. Schenck and Ibraimo Alberto, Chapter 10 in this volume.

⁶⁵ Lucas, "Mão-de-obra Moçambicana."

Conclusion

Many Mozambicans, especially the generation born after the 1990s, have little inkling of the history behind the social changes that the Madjermanes experienced and the protests they provoked upon returning to their home country in the early 1990s. Faced overall with a decline of prestige and living standards, expressions of Madjermanes' frustrations continue to be tangible up to the present day in the form of marching through the city with placards and occasionally inciting violence. Nowadays, the Madjermanes as a whole have a reputation of being violent troublemakers and stone throwers, mainly because of the violence that has occasionally broken out at their protests and in the park that they occupy. However, as I have highlighted in this contribution, they have suffered from intense social and economic changes in a short period of time. Moreover, many of the returnees were in their early twenties as they returned to Mozambique and have since grown old with their frustrations and disappointments.

The chance of migrating to a “developed” and above all “peaceful” European country, the dream of being in an industrialized nation, of acquiring goods with which to improve the standard of living, of having contact with other peoples and of opening new horizons—all this inspired many young people to sign up for a working experience in the socialist country GDR.

On the one hand the young men and women had the chance to emigrate to East Germany, to receive training, live in decent accommodations, and enjoy acceptable working conditions. They had the opportunity to acquire goods such as fridges, television sets, and HiFi systems, which were at once useful in their daily lives in East Germany and increased their status in their post-return lives in Mozambique. On the other hand, their work contracts were suddenly canceled, and they had to return en masse to Mozambique where they neither encountered the money that had been subtracted from their wages nor regular jobs in the positions for which they had been trained. When they arrived in their home country, they were initially seen as popular and wise key figures across Maputo, but their reputation began to tumble as their poverty increased.

The Madjermanes exercised an impact on the communities where they settled. For example, their arrival with television sets increased access to information. Their fridges and freezers helped expand people's ability to preserve food. Culturally, they brought new genres of music, a new style, and a new look. Their arrival also inspired acquisitiveness and a new capacity for protest for demands. Yet, as I have illustrated, the socioeconomic status and prestige of the Madjermanes was subject to rapid change. Their disappointment at not being allocated to jobs after their return, their loss of importance in the communities where they

lived, and their increasing criminalization led some of the Madjermanes to become more violent in order to try to convince authorities to settle the demands they had relating to their social security and deferred wage payments. Today, when some of the Madjermanes participate in marches to demand their rights, street traffic builds up rapidly. Car windows are shattered by stones, sticks, and other instruments. Occasionally people are insulted or assaulted by the Madjermanes. Resorting to violence in lieu of wielding political and economic power to claim their payments, the Madjermanes are not as important now as they were once perceived to be. The desperate demonstrations are mere echoes of a past remembered as affluent.

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