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Doctor of Philosophy
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Speak My Sister Web Documentary

A contemporary, decolonial, feminist and multi-modal collaborative
response to José Cardoso's Mozambican musical film *Sing My Brother – Help
Me to Sing* (1981).

by
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JUNE 2021

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy from the University of Sussex

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

I hereby also declare that elements of this thesis have been previously published in part in the journal Visual Ethnography, the Routledge Companion to Music and Human Rights and in the Bloomsbury Encyclopaedia of Popular Music of The World, as cited in the bibliography.

Signature

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the women in Northern Mozambique returning to the violence of war. This time round men fight over the rubies, oil and gas held for millennia by the earth and the women once again become collateral damage of war. It is dedicated especially to the unnamed naked woman shot 56 times by men in government army uniform in Northern Mozambique, her death celebrated on video by her murderers. While video can be used to share this kind of atrocity, let this research inspire others to ensure it can also be used to bring men and women together, to build understanding and to celebrate the creative spirit and power of women and men from all corners of Mozambique.

ABSTRACT

This practice-based research project comprises two related components: A web documentary to be found at <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>, and this written thesis.

The web documentary is a multi-modal response to the revolutionary Mozambican film *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* (José Cardoso, 1981). It is a curated collection of twenty short films made collaboratively with young Mozambican students of film and cultural studies in response to the 2018 National Festival of Culture theme: ‘Culture, promoting women, identity and sustainable development’. The multi-modal, musical, interactive and non-linear format of the web documentary is a creative and critical response to the calls for intersectional decolonisation and inclusion in Mozambican film production, audio-visual research and knowledge construction. During the production, post-production, and multi-modal exhibition of the films both physical and on-line, this practice-led research engaged with questions of polyphony, dialogue, inclusivity and diversity in film production.

The written component of this multi-modal thesis also embraces decolonial principles of multi-modality and non-linearity in its exploration of the research themes of the role of women’s song, dance and film in knowledge construction in Mozambique. The seven chapters combine critical reflective analysis of the *Speak My Sister* research project and the resulting web documentary from historical, local, global and personal perspectives. Seven musical portraits from Cardoso’s revolutionary film *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* serve as conceptual and thematic springboards through which to explore three core themes: collaboration and authorship in audio-visual production, the role of music and dance in knowledge construction and exchange and the place of African feminism, decolonisation and cultural activism in Mozambique’s audiovisual research and production in the future. The portraits are reimagined as written scripts, illustrated with screenshots taken from the original film to form cinematic pauses, or ‘interludes’, between each of the chapters.

The text below is divided into three parts that follow the Aristotelian progression of narrative and logical argument: introduction, development and conclusion. The first three chapters that make up Part 1 introduce the theoretical principles and personal and historical context behind the research (Diawara 1992, Convents, 2011, Gray 2020). Part 2 is made up of three chapters each of which uses the practice as a starting point to explore theories around collaboration and authorship in Chapter 4 (Rangan 2017, Bishop 2012, MacDougall 1998, 2006, 2020, Rose 2017), local musicking and nego-feminism in Chapter 5 (Reiley and Brucker 2020, Nnaemeka, 2004) and body knowledge, gender and power in Chapter 6 (Cowan 1990, Conquergood 2002, Jackson 2012, Meintjes 2017, Impey 2020). In Part 3, the concluding seventh chapter takes these ideas to assess the contribution of this research towards constructing more inclusive representation in Mozambique in the future and the role of polyphonic and dialogic thinking in collaborative and authored audio-visual content (Aston and Odorico 2018).

At a time where national and international governments are being asked to redress historic and institutional racial, geographical and gender inequalities, this critical creative practice combines lessons from visual anthropology, ethnomusicology, African film studies and media practice to approach the theme of decolonisation from a creative, personal, national, and international perspective, and so to explore the relationship between personal, local and global change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the generous support of the Doctoral Training partnership CHASE (Consortium of Humanities and Arts of the South East) and the team of dedicated CHASE staff based at the University of Sussex whose commitment to the value of doctoral research and the need for ongoing training, networking opportunities and professional support enriched my doctoral journey over these years. My thanks extend to all those in the schools of Media, Arts and Humanities and Global studies, who have made the University of Sussex such a rich training ground for me as a researcher. My sincere gratitude especially goes to my academic supervisors, Professor Alisa Lebow from the Department of Media Practice and Emeritus Professor Jane Cowan from the Department of Anthropology. You have guided me over these years with wisdom and patience, keeping me on track, sharpening my critical thinking and my appreciation of the power of the written word. It has been a pleasure and an honour to work alongside you both as you guided me on this journey into life as an academic researcher. Thanks too to my first supervisor Professor Andrea Cornwall, who set me off on this journey and who instilled the confidence in me to take this research in the direction reflected in the pages below.

I am especially grateful to my Mozambican research partners at ISArC. Filimone Meigos (Director), Isaú Meneses (Deputy Director), Angélica Novela (Department of Film and Audiovisual) and Gabriel Mondlane, Director of the Mozambican Filmmakers' Association AMOCINE. The films in the web documentary and the lessons explored in this written component would never have seen the light of day without their enthusiasm and support. Also thanks to the thirty young 'Isarcian' students for your tireless and enthusiastic participation in the research and the co-creation of the Speak My Sister film series. You went above and beyond my wildest expectations in your commitment and sacrifice to ensure the stories were told and shared across Mozambique. Thank you too to those who gave me comfort, solace and friendship while conducting the research; Daniel Huillet, Isabel Emerson, Gita Cerveira, Licínio Azevedo, Pedro Pimenta, Sol de Carvalho, and especially Brigitte Bagnol, who has been guiding, supporting and encouraging me from the very beginning. My thanks also go out to those who supported me develop the earlier research partnerships. Narciso Mahumana, Bert Sonnenschien, Feliciano dos Santos, Pedro Escovão, Babo Jaime, Carlos Socrates, Luis Neves, Polly Gaster, Esmeralda Mariano, Miguel Prista, Diana Manhiça, Humberto Notíço. Thank you all for making that extra effort to turn my ideas into reality. The ideas and practice we explored didn't evolve into my eventual doctoral research, but I hope we can pick them up where we left off and run with them in the future. Also thank you to the Aloí, Fernandes and Givandás nephews, cousins, brothers, sisters and especially to my mother-in-law Cacilda Aloí. You were there to support me in all my practical and emotional needs on each of my research trips to Mozambique and I am blessed to have you as my family.

Thanks too to all my all my wise and inspiring friends who entered academia long before me and whose encouragement and guidance gave me the impetus to follow you down the road of study and the momentum to keep going over the years that followed. James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, you were the first to introduce me to anthropology twenty years earlier, and the first to sow the seeds of the idea of basing myself at Sussex. Over my years of commuting to Falmer, you offered a second home, always with love, laughter and generosity and a delicious balance between food and family gossip and intellectual stimulation. Other key figures on this journey are Mary Oliver, Ray Lee, and Tony Dowmunt, old friends who I worked alongside in my life as an artist and filmmaker

and who are now an inspiration to me as Professors of art and film. They helped me write my applications, decide on the direction of my research and most importantly reminded me it was possible to find a balance between creative practice and theory. In my first job after returning to the UK, Glen Bowman and Mike Poltorak helped me recognise the synergy between the discipline of visual anthropology and the reflective and collaborative practices I had been developing as a filmmaker in Mozambique. Thank you both for your enthusiasm and encouragement to take the plunge into student life again, a life it has been a privilege to re-experience when I was old enough to fully appreciate it.

At SOAS studying Music in Development, I could not have wished for a better guide and friend than my masters supervisor Angela Impey. Thank you, Angela for helping me to connect the theoretical and practical applications of anthropology, ethnomusicology and development studies with my passion and belief in the crucial and transformative role of music in society, and for being there for me ever since. Thanks too to Lucy Durán, Martin Stokes and Steven Hughes for their unforgettable guidance, provocation, inspiration and encouragement.

Two enriching and formative work placements gave me a taste of the life I aspire to as a researcher. Firstly, my thanks go to all those based at LISA, the extraordinary Sound and Image Laboratory in the anthropology department of the University of São Paulo. Rose Hajiko Satiki, my kind, vibrant, intelligent and tireless supervisor, to Ricardo Dionisio, my patient, talented editor, Paula Morgado Dias Lopes, who ran everything so smoothly and the rest of the LISA team, especially Jasper Chalcroft, Mihai Leaha, Paula Bessa Braz, Alice Villela and Hidalgo Romero for your insights into the professional applications for visual anthropology and audiovisual ethnomusicology, for your friendship and inspiring conversations. Long may they continue. Thank you Suzel Reily, for welcoming me to your home, your department at UNICAMP and to the Local Musicking research team. You helped me gain confidence as a researcher and to find and trust my voice. Thanks too to my second placement supervisors Mandy Rose and Judith Aston and the i-docs team at the Digital Cultures Research Centre at the University of West England. Although our time together was short due to the upheavals of the Covid pandemic, your work and your passion for it was a profound inspiration and helped me find the missing link in my research.

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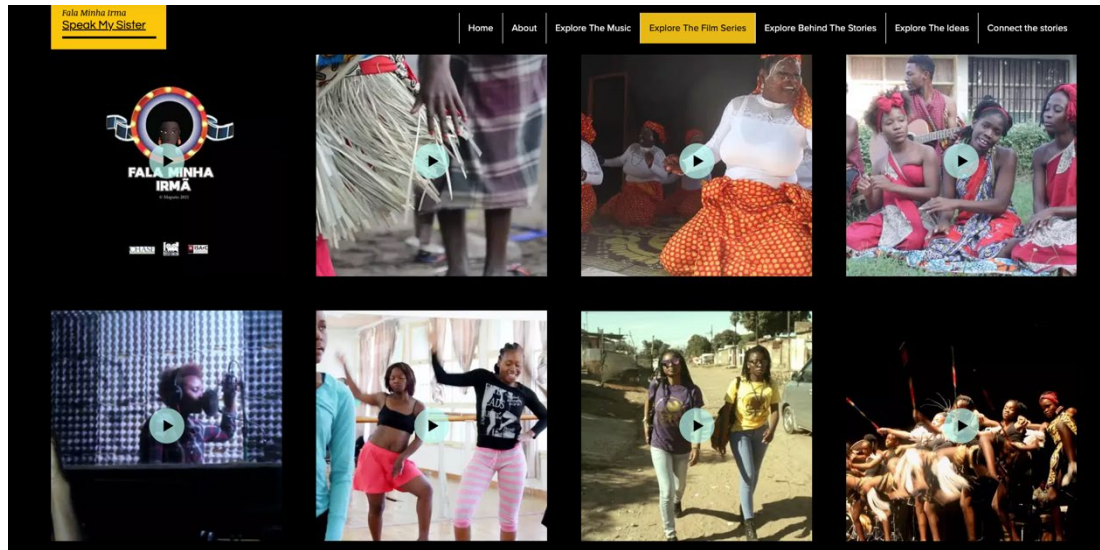
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ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

Speak My Sister Web Documentary



Link to webdoc: <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>

NOTE:

This is an English language version of the web documentary completed for the purposes of the PhD examination. A bilingual version has also been created. It is constantly evolving in response to user need and can be found on:

www.falaminhairma.org

It is hoped the ideas of interactivity and dialogue between the films explored in this first prototype, constructed using an ‘off-the-shelf’ template can be developed further in the future and developed in partnership with a web designer in partnership with the *Fala Minha Irmã* team in Mozambique who continue to promote the work this research initiated.

It is also hoped *Speak My Sister* develops into an international audiovisual music research training, production and distribution project based on the model explored in this thesis. When developed, this will be promoted on the website:

www.speakmysister.org

List of Short films in the *Speak My Sister* web documentary
<https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>

| THE MUSIC | |
|-----------|--|
| V1.1 | <p>Stela Alberto on Stage (9'35'')</p> <p>The Zambezian singer Stela Alberto performs on stage at the Gilberto Mendes Theatre in downtown Maputo at the Gala launch of the <i>Speak My Sister</i> film series in August 2018.</p> |
| V1.2 | <p>Horizonte Azul on Stage (7'07'')</p> <p>Members of the Socio-Cultural Association <i>Horizonte Azul</i> (Blue Horizon) perform on stage during the Gala launch of the <i>Speak My Sister</i> film series. Their appropriation of the male warrior dance <i>Xigubu</i>, that they bring to this stage in downtown Maputo, is explored in the short film 'Warrior Dancers', one of the musical portraits in the <i>Speak My Sister</i> film series.</p> |
| V1.3 | <p>Tufo Da Mafalala on Stage (12'45'')</p> <p>The maputo-based Tufo group <i>Tufo da Mafalala</i> perform at the Gala launch of the <i>Sing My Sister</i> film series. The musical portrait 'Tambourines of Mafalala', made by students of the film and audiovisual department of the Higher Institute of Art and Culture (ISArC), was screened immediately after their performance.</p> |
| V1.4 | <p>Revolução Feminina on Stage (5'04'')</p> <p>The all-women hip hop group <i>Revolução Feminina</i> perform on stage during the Gala launch of the <i>Speak My Sister</i> film series. Their lyrics are a call to young Mozambican women to stand up and make sure their voices are heard.</p> |
| V1.5 | <p>Grupo Xingomana de Nwajohane perform at home (6'03'')</p> <p>In Gaza Province the Nwajohane Xingomana Group perform for the community and the film crew of André Bahule's film for the "Speak My Sister" film series, "Xingomana - Dance of Generations" (2018). The performances of both songs are taken from the film "Nhenha" (Bahule, 2018), a longer 26 min director's cut of the film.</p> |
| V1.6 | <p>Tufo da Mafalala perform at home (18'08'')</p> <p>The women's song and dance group <i>Tufo Da Mafalala</i> offer a fitting climax to the walking tour of Maputo's historic neighbourhood of Mafalala. This performance, recorded by students at Maputo's Higher Institute of Art and Culture offers a warm and intimate glimpse of the adaptations made to the Tufo tradition by Mafalala's migrant residents from Nampula, bringing in much needed income for the group and an unforgettable experience for the visitors.</p> |

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| | |
| THE FILM SERIES | |
| V2.1 | <p>Speak My Sister Compilation Showreel (12'58")</p> <p>This 13 minute compilation introduces the viewer to the <i>Speak My Sister</i> series, the themes addressed, the diverse musical genres explored and the women portrayed allowing the viewer to delve into women's worlds in Mozambique through their music and dance. Women from across the country 'speak' through the music and dance. The genres range from traditional male warrior dance <i>xigubu</i> to contemporary feminist hip hop. Extracts from the seven musical portraits produced out of the partnership between myself and the first-time filmmakers studying at ISArC (The Higher Institute of Art and Culture) are presented in this showreel as they share their stories and their songs. The series was produced by the author.</p> |
| V2.2 | <p>Xingomana - A Dance of Generations (13'27")</p> <p>A portrait of three generations of women living in southern Mozambique who dance <i>Xingomana</i>. Originally a women's seduction dance, <i>Xingomana</i> has undergone a series of transformations along with the country. "We work the land and we dance. That's what we know how to do" Maria explains in this short film by André Bahule. She danced <i>Xingomana</i> since her early childhood and now twists and stamps her feet in the sand alongside her daughters and granddaughters. Through stories, song and dance, this film weaves a portrait of women's lives over half a century and celebrates the strength and spirit reflected in their dance. A film produced and directed by André Bahule, who also recorded the sound, photographed by Isard Pindula and Emídio Jozine and co-researched and co-produced by Angélica Novela.</p> |
| V2.3 | <p>Tambourines of Mafalala (12'11")</p> <p>Tufo is from the coastal region of northern Mozambique, yet in the ramshackled narrow streets of Maputo's historical migrant neighbourhood of Mafalala, the sounds of the Tufo frame drums and sweet melodies fill the air. The Tufo group portrayed here brought their women's song and dance tradition from Nampula in the north in colonial times. Their songs change with those who sing them and as they adapt, they continue to play an important role in the community. As their songs change over their years so too has their tradition. A film produced and directed by César Vitorino, photographed and edited by Clemente Horácio, sound recorded by Alice Cunha and researched by Felizarda José Taímo</p> |

| | |
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| V2.4 | <p>Stella (11'56'')</p> <p>Stela Alberto learned to sing in the fields where she chased the birds with her 'golden voice'. In this musical portrait made by her colleagues, students of Maputo's University of Creative Arts (ISArC), Stela Alberto celebrates her journey from the fields of Zambezia to the classrooms of Maputo where she continues to work for an understanding and recognition of the traditional music where she found her voice and knows others find theirs. Produced by Francisco Valia (Raka), Directed and shot by Samo Mula, audio recorded by Pércia da Neldia Machuza, edited by Maltonato dos Santos and Lucia Ngalilo.</p> |
| V2.5 | <p>Crossing Paths (8'35'')</p> <p>A portrait of a creative partnership where a young man and woman unite in their creativity. F.t (Celia Madime), and her husband Black Cross (Geraldo General) live on the outskirts of Maputo. Their relationship, their life and their dreams are all connected to the hip hop world of their city. They work in the day and spend all their free time in the studio to compose and record their music. They sing of the discrimination of rural migrants by the young elite of Maputo and want their music to foster understanding and respect between young people from poor rural background and their urban counterparts. Produced and Directed by Castigo Sive, Shot by Stephan André, Sound and editing by Narciso Lufagir (Anakanga).</p> |
| V2.6 | <p>Victorious Dancer (8'36'')</p> <p>Cristina's life has been marked by sexual violence since childhood. In this film, made by 5 of her friends, also artists, Cristina tells her story. When there are no words, she uses the physical language of dance and song to share her story, celebrating the power of creative expression that has helped Cristina refuse to give up on the beauty of life. Produced by Melva Ungwana, directed by Alzira Guetza, shot by Lizette Mulungo, with audio recording by Lourdes Rubaine and editing by Lizette Minossa.</p> |
| V2.7 | <p>Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life (10'19'')</p> <p>In Mozambique's capital, Maputo, four young Mozambican women use hip hop to encourage more young women to see a different future for themselves. They see a future where Mozambican women can be engineers, electricians and musicians and violence against women is no longer normalised and tolerated. "From the start, I deserved the right to express my opinions" raps poet and hiphop artist Ênia Lipanga. "Am I really condemned to accept this life the moment I was born a girl?" Produced by Alexandre Pita Directed and edited by Lutegardo Lampião, with sound and lighting Gabriel Pita.</p> |
| V2.8 | <p>Warrior Dancers (15'58'')</p> <p>Can dance speak the unspoken? Can it embody knowledge? Can tradition change? Can girls be warriors? Filmed in collaboration with members of the socio-cultural association Blue Horizon, young girls talk about the power of the male warrior dance Xigubu and how they reclaim their rights to safe streets, safe schools and safe homes through its appropriation. Produced and Directed by Karen Boswall, Shot by Samo Mula and Emídio Jozine, Edited by Cecila Engels and Karen Boswall.</p> |

| BEHIND THE STORIES | |
|--------------------|---|
| V3.1 | <p>Behind <i>Tambourines of Mafalala</i> (9'33'')</p> <p>Can people from all backgrounds, men and women, rich and poor, all have the tools to research and produce their own films? What does an interdisciplinary approach to teaching film research and production in higher education add to the films produced by the next generation of Mozambican filmmakers? Take a look behind the scenes of the film <i>Tambourines of Mafalala</i> to see how Cesar Vitorino, Alice Cuna and Felizarda Taimo are responding to these questions. Directed by André Bahule, Photography by Isard Pindula, Samo Mula and Emídio Jozine, Edited by Karen Boswall</p> |
| V3.2 | <p>Behind <i>Victorious Dancer</i> (8'49'')</p> <p>What happens when women get behind the cameras and tell stories of women? What are some of the obstacles to attracting and retaining more women in film and video production in Mozambique? This short film asks those questions of the filmmakers behind the film <i>Victorious Dancer</i> - from the series <i>Speak My Sister</i>, made by an all women crew of final year film students from ISArC (the Higher Institute of Art and Culture), in Maputo, Mozambique. Directed and edited by Karen Boswall, Photography by Samo Mula and Emídio Jozine</p> |
| V3.3 | <p>Behind <i>Stella</i> (10'34'')</p> <p>What is the value of art in society and can higher education in the arts make a difference? Is there regional diversity in representation, musical research and performance and film production? A look behind the scenes of the film <i>Stella</i> – made by and about artists from Zambezia in central Mozambique as part of the film series <i>Speak My Sister</i>. Directed, shot and edited by Karen Boswall, with Emídio Jozine director of photography of live stage performance, filmed and recorded by trainee technicians of Gungu TV.</p> |
| V3.4 | <p>Behind <i>Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life</i> (5'46'')</p> <p>What happens when young male students from a rural and religious background are thrown into the urban world of feminist hip hop? This behind the scenes look at the musical portrait <i>Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life</i> offers the young men behind the camera a chance to share their motivations and the impact of making the film with the band Female Revolution. Directed and edited by Karen Boswall, shot by Samo Mula with Emídio Jozine director of photography of live stage performance, filmed and recorded by trainee technicians of Gungu TV.</p> |
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| | |
|------|---|
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List of Interludes

At the end of each chapter, I have re-imagined a scene from the reference film *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* that addresses the themes of the chapter as an illustrated film script.¹ They are designed to integrate the multi-modal approach of the portfolio into this critical written component and take the form of cinematic pauses in the text that I call ‘interludes’.

1.

To the musicians of our country who sing the sounds of the land

Cardoso Portrait 1 - Velho Mandinga - Malelane - Maputo Province

2. *A country is born*

Cardoso Portrait 2 - Mozambican Musicians and those who hear them play - Machava - Maputo City

3.

Tell the group about this film we are making

Cardoso Portrait 3 - Velho Mahamba - Zavala - Inhambane Province

4.

To play and I must first learn to play alone. Later I learn to play with others and dance at the same time

Cardoso Portrait 3 - Nyanga Panpipe Group - Bairro Sansão Mutemba - Tete Province

5.

I'm not afraid of making a mistake

Cardoso Portrait 4 - A Luta Continua Tufo Group - Ilha de Moçambique. Nampula Province

6

The passing of knowledge

Cardoso Portrait 5 - Rajabo Ibrahim and his wife - Aldeia Mandimba - Cabo Delgado

7.

Your gesture will be here in the future brother (and sister)

Cardoso Portrait 6 – Valley Horns of Cesar, Tete Province

¹ The use of the courier typeface and the layout of the text in these interludes, follow the long-accepted formula of printed film scripts. Using the monospaced font of courier within the given margins and layout assists all those reading a script to visualise a scene. In general they follow what has become known as the ‘one page one minute rule’ where a page of text roughly approximates one minute of screen time. I have added screenshots to my film script interludes however, breaking this rule, while maintaining the typeface and margins to assist those used to reading film scripts in their visualisation of the scene.

List of Acronyms

| | |
|---------|---|
| AMOCINE | <i>Associação Moçambicana de Cineastas</i> Mozambican Filmmakers Association |
| ARPAC | Arquivo do Património Cultural The Cultural Heritage Archive, (better known as <i>ARPAC Instituto de Invesigação Sócio-Cultural</i> The Institute of Socio-cultural investigation) |
| FRELIMO | <i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i> The Mozambican Liberation Front |
| INC | <i>Instituto de Comunicação Social</i> Institute of Social Communication |
| INEFP | <i>Instituto Nacional do Emprego e Formação Profissional</i> The National Institute of Work and Professional Training |
| ISArC | <i>Instituto Superior de Arte e Cultura</i> The Higher Institute of Art and Culture |
| MIR | <i>Música de Intervenção Rápida</i> Rapid Intervention Music |
| TVE | <i>Televisão Experimental</i> Experimental TV |

Part 1.

INTRODUCTION



Interlude 1.

*To the musicians of our country who sing the sounds
of the land*

Cardoso Portrait 1

Velho Mandinga
Malelane

Maputo Province

EXT. DAY. A TREE NEAR THE VILLAGE OF MALELANE²

We hear the sounds of a saw on wood, first in darkness, then to accompany text as it appears on the screen:

Aos artistas,
aos músicos do nosso país,
que cantam
os sons da terra
que trabalham
e nos ensinam a cantar

*To the artists,
to the musicians of our country
who sing
the sounds of the land
who work
and teach us to sing*

EXT. DAY. A TREE NEAR THE VILLAGE OF MALELANE

An old man, VELHO MANDINGA, is sawing a fat branch off a tree so wide and gnarled he melts into its trunk.



VELHO MANDINGA sings as he saws. An invisible chorus of women respond as he sings to the rhythm of his saw.

EXT. DAY. KAYA MANDINGA (MANDINGA'S HOME) MALELANE

Back in the village, VELHO MANDINGA marks a circle on the now separated piece of the tree. Women and children watch on as the old man's axe rhythmically hollows out what we can now see as a drum. A young boy helps him stretch a goat skin and peg it in place. In the same slow rhythm of the sawing, pegging and stretching, Mandinga picks up two sticks and begins to play.

² All the interludes in this text describe scenes from the reference film *Canta Meu Irmão – Ajuda-Me Cantar* (Carsoso, 1981). The layout uses the standardised format of written film scripts. EXT.DAY is an abbreviation of EXTERIOR DAYLIGHT. Film scripts are always written in 12 point courier typeface, with the same size margins and line spacing, but are not normally illustrated as these scenes are. All the interlude titles are citations from the scene described in the text. All illustrations included in these interludes are screenshots from the reference film *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* and will not be credited individually in the text. All image, text and clips from the film in this thesis are with kind permission of Cardoso's estate.



A yellow title appears over the singing man: *CANTA MEU IRMÃO ajuda-me a cantar* (*SING MY BROTHER - Help Me to Sing*)



Prologue

The chorus of the unofficial anthem of Mozambique's remote northern province of Niassa is carried on the air as the sun falls from the sky behind the large baobab tree. Shifting between Portuguese, *Ciyowa*, *Makhuwa* and *Cinianja*,³ the four main languages spoken in this part of the country, the familiar melody reaches the bar where, beer in hand, young men stand transfixed by the images of sexy young Brazilians on the small TV screen.

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>“Eu canto uatu,</i> | “I sing to you |
| <i>Meu nome é Niassa,</i> | My name is Niassa |
| <i>Não tenho nem vergonha</i> | I’m not at all ashamed |
| <i>De seres assim tão pobre</i> | Of being so poor |
| <i>Não tenho nem receio</i> | I’m not at all afraid |
| <i>De seres assim tão frágil</i> | Of being so fragile |
| <i>Niassa wo wo, Niassa</i> | Niassa, wo wo, Niassa |
| <i>Niassa lé lé lé mama wó hó”</i> | Niassa lá lá lá mama wó hó” |

Extract from *Niassa* (Massukos 2006)⁴
Authors’ translation

A voice interrupts the music, speaking in Portuguese. Only when repeated in *Cinianja* do most of those ending their day in this lakeside town learn that they are about to be treated to a film show.

“Hello people of Metangula. *Mulibwanji, Mulibwanji Mulibwanji*.⁵ The Tenth National Festival of Culture has arrived. ‘Culture promoting women, identity and sustainable development’ its motto. We bring you culture, we bring you women, we bring you our Mozambican identity. We’re here from Maputo, Inhambane, Beira, Quelimane and Lichinga and we want to tell you our stories. Come and watch six new musical

³ The spelling of the languages spoken in Mozambique has not been standardised in any one language. Spoken across colonial and regional borders, they have spellings in different European and African languages, for example *Ciyowa*, *Xiyau*, or *Yawa*; *Makhuwa*, *Macua* or *Ximacua* and *Cinyanja*, *Nyanja* or in Malawi *Chewa* or *Chichewa*.

⁴ All song translations from Portuguese are by the author unless otherwise stated. To hear a version of this song performed live by Massukos in the Festival stadium and sung by the tens of thousands of Niassa residents in the audience, see the final scene in the Illustrated Radio round table discussion ‘Speak Mozambique’ in ‘The Ideas’ section of the *Speak My Sister* web documentary.

⁵ *Mulibwanji*: a greeting in *Cinyanja*, used across the region with the usual response, ‘*Maloguesa bwanje*’

films from around Mozambique, films by Mozambicans for Mozambicans. Come and listen to the songs of the fair ladies of our land. Speak My Sister, Speak My Sister, Dance My Sister. The first film is about to start”

Narciso Lufagir (Anakanga) Presenting the film series *Speak My Sister*. Metangula, Niassa, Mozambique. July 2018⁶

Jazzy rhythms from Mozambique’s urban south are now carried across the sweet-smelling smoke of the charcoal barbecues, past children pushing wire cars through the dirt, to the women at their sewing machines finishing the last order in the fading light. The crowd moves towards the large screen where they see a young girl walking between the trees in school uniform to a light syncopated rhythm and a woman’s soft singing. While those gathered to watch the first film of the night do not speak the *Tsonga*⁷ language of the girl on screen, the music and images convey its meaning.

“My name is Amélia Siteo. I dance Xingomana. The songs we sing teach us that a woman is responsible for everything in the home and as young girls we must not stop going to school. One day we’ll get something better. We must go to school to improve our future.”

Amelia Siteo, from *Xigomana – Dance of Generations* (Bahule, 2018)⁸

⁶ All quotations from the research, provided in English in this thesis, are translations from filmed and audio recordings made in Portuguese. The translations are by the author, unless otherwise stated.

⁷ Tsonga is a group of Bantu languages spoken in the south of Mozambique, the dialect spoken in Gaza is often also referred to as *changana* or *Xichangana*, (pronounced shangana).

⁸ The film Xingomana - Dance of Generations is a shortened version of the directors 26 minute cut of his film *Nhenha* (2018); the film screened during the festival. The opening sequence with the girl (Amélia) walking in her school uniform was not included in the 13 minute version shortened for the Speak My Sister series. See to watch *Nhenha*. See: <https://vimeo.com/292466166> (Password Gaza)

Chapter 1. Introduction.

Introducing the research, the films, the filmmakers, the researcher and the theoretical rationale behind this practice-led research

1.1 Introducing the research

Following Mozambique's independence from Portugal in 1975, the first generation of Mozambican filmmakers produced and distributed films throughout the country to contribute to the construction of the new national identity. In the years that followed, the first generation of Mozambican filmmakers found that music was an effective cinematic language for reaching a populace with 43 different languages and high levels of non-literacy. Films based on images and music could transcend the cultural and linguistic barriers of the colonially divided nation. One film that exemplifies music's importance in early Mozambican audiovisual production is the musical odyssey *Canta Meu Irmão — Ajuda-me Cantar* [Sing My Brother — Help Me to Sing] (Cardoso, 1981).⁹ This ethnographic and reflexive film was a creative response to the first Mozambican Festival of Song and Traditional Music held in the country's capital city, Maputo, at the end of 1980. It explores the diverse wealth of post-revolutionary Mozambican culture through its songs and dances, taking the viewer on a musical journey through the plains, valleys and mountains of the vast and newly independent nation. It is a poetic call for national unity, providing a sensitive and celebratory portrait of ten very different cultural traditions, intended to inspire the support and involvement of all its people in the construction of the new nation.

The young republic needed to generate a new national self-confidence and pride in the task ahead if it was to bring about the new government's dream of a thriving, fair and prosperous socialist country, free of colonial interference and exploitation. In a series of poetically crafted scenes, images of men and women going about their daily

⁹ The title of this film, and all film titles originally in Portuguese, will be translated once and subsequently referred to by their English translation in the remainder of the text. As the film *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* is cited regularly in this thesis, where used more than once in a section, it will be referred to by the shorter title of *Sing My Brother*.

lives are intercut with musical performances, interviews and narration. Sometimes, songs or interviews are translated into perfect Portuguese delivered in a woman's spoken voice. Sometimes a male narrator speaks directly to the audience in the name of 'We the men of cinema'.¹⁰ Mostly, however, the audience are treated to full renditions of virtuoso musical performances of some of the country's most celebrated traditional genres of music and dance, from *Timbila* Orchestras in the south, to masked *Mapiko* dancers in the north.¹¹ In beginning the huge task of what the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o famously described as 'decolonising the mind' (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, 1986), the first independent Mozambican filmmakers and distributors did not depend on the spoken word to communicate with their audience. Instead, the somatic language of dance and sonic language of rhythm and song were considered the most affective and universal.

Sing My Brother — Help Me to Sing was the second entirely Mozambican long-form documentary, produced and distributed independently out of the National Film Institute as part of their post-colonial efforts for Mozambicans to tell stories of Mozambique to Mozambicans.¹² The first, *Mueda, Memory and Massacre* (Guerra, 1979) was also made with the participation of its subjects and relied little on the spoken word to transmit its message. It is also notable that this community re-enactment of the massacre carried out by the Portuguese in 1962 in the northern province of Cabo Delgado that signalled the start of the armed revolution in Mozambique, although filmed by an all-Mozambican crew, was directed by Ruy Guerra, a pioneer of Cinema Novo and the new director of the INC. All productions out of the INC before this time were co-produced with international filmmakers and were not directed by Mozambicans. Although Ruy Guerra, made his name in Portugal and Brazil, he was born in Mozambique and the first film he directed when he returned to lead the INC was the first production produced independently out of the institute. Like *Sing My Brother — Help Me to Sing*, it was collaborative and ethnographic in nature.

¹⁰ Taken from the opening narration of *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* (Cardoso, 1981).

¹¹ See Interlude 1 for transcribed imagined script of the opening of the film. For an edited selection of scenes from the film, including this opening scene, with English sub-titles, go to 'The ideas' section of web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>. To watch the entire film in Portuguese, go to the Facebook page of Mozambique's Association of Cultural Patrimony (ARPAC) where it can be viewed in two parts. Part 1: <https://fb.watch/67giGrn28t/> and Part 2: <https://fb.watch/67g93D6fbp/>

¹² The motto of the National Film Institute was to 'deliver to the people an image of the people' (Gray 2020, 8).

Not many years after the production of this film, a violent civil war and shifting political priorities brought film production in Mozambique to a relative stand-still. Only now, as peace and economic growth have brought relative stability to the country, are the next generation of Mozambican filmmakers exploring how they can continue their country's cinematic legacy. They too were drawn to the language of music to inform, provoke and protest.

Less than half a century has passed since Mozambique gained its independence from Portugal, and many of the ideals of the socialist revolution can seem a distant utopian dream. One such dream was the new government's exciting revolutionary ideal of women's equality. Mozambique's record in its efforts towards gender equality remains poor.¹³ Perhaps in recognition of this, the committee of the National Festival of Culture of 2018 selected a motto that, for the first time since the festival began nearly 45 years before, put women and their contribution to art, dance and culture into the foreground.¹⁴ The designated motto of the festival, included in all posters, t-shirts and promotional material was the phrase 'Culture Promoting Women, Identity and Sustainable Development'.¹⁵

The *Speak My Sister* web documentary is a polyphonic, contemporary, collaborative audiovisual response to this festival motto.¹⁶ This relatively new form of non-linear, interactive non-fiction is known by many terms, 'transmedia

¹³ Despite years of persistent national and international efforts to reduce the trend, Mozambique continues to slip down the list of the bottom 20 countries on the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index, a composite measure reflecting inequality between women and men in three different dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation. In 2015 Mozambique was 135th out of 155 countries, and in 2019 it dropped to 139th (see UN Women 2019).

¹⁴ In 2018 the National Festival of Culture was held in Niassa, the most remote and underdeveloped province of Mozambique. Due to the long war in Mozambique (1976-1992), this was only the tenth national festival to take place since independence in 1975.

¹⁵ I translate the motto using the plural word 'women', where in the portuguese the singular 'woman' is used (*A Cultura Promovendo a Mulher, a Identidade e o Desenvolvimento Sustentável*). This motto is discussed in *Speak Mozambique*, a round table discussion recorded during the festival and broadcast on Radio Mozambique on July 28th 2018. Over the one hour program, the journalists Sergio Guissamulu and Nelia Nicua use the theme of the festival to provoke a discussion between four women involved in the arts in Mozambique: music pedagogue, Melita Matsinhe, art curator Otilia Akino, fashion designer Isas Baga and myself. A half hour edit of this program *Speak Mozambique – Illustrated Radio* has been translated and illustrated with images shot during the festival and can be found in 'The Ideas' section of the website <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

¹⁶ See recent work by Judith Aston and Stefano Odorico (2018), on the use of the Bakhtian concepts of dialogue, heteroglossia, and polyphony (Bakhtin 1981, 1984) to explore the 'multivocality' of interactive web-based forms of documentary (Aston & Odorico 2018, p74). Similar ideas around multivocality are beginning to be explored globally, for example in Brazil (Leaha, 2019), and in interdisciplinary art work for example by Salome Asega (see <https://immerse.news/multi-vocality-creativity-and-the-value-of-dissensus-c2919fd2445f>). However, this is a burgeoning field of research and requires further research to explore the decolonial applications of these ideas and practices.

documentaries’, ‘cross-platform docs’, and ‘i-docs’ (Aston et al, 2017).¹⁷ I choose the literal description of ‘web documentary’ to describe the *Speak My Sister* website that accompanies this text. Some of the voices in this multi-vocal piece of work are those of the Mozambican women who share their song and dance, some are those of the young generation of Mozambican filmmakers, and some are those of people like myself, who study and learn from them.

Separated by nearly forty years, both Mozambican festivals of culture and their audiovisual responses reflect the importance of song, dance and other forms of cultural expression towards realising Mozambique’s revolutionary vision of social equality and national unity. However, despite its stylistic and methodological strengths, for example the brave move into ethnographic and ethnomusicological audiovisual representation and the on-screen reflexivity that demonstrates a commitment to collaborative representation, *Sing My Brother* was a product of a generation still rooted in colonialism and patriarchy. The male perspective of those in front of and behind the camera in Cardoso’s film, and the predominance of masculine musical traditions in the 1980 national festival, rendered the female majority of the country’s population speechless, their voices heard instead in song. Women’s limited presence in *Sing My Brother*, and, after forty years, their recognition in the 2018 festival theme, offered the creative and thematic starting point for this doctoral research and served as a provocation for the film series *Speak My Sister*. Whereas *Sing My Brother* addressed questions of culture promoting Mozambican identity largely through the male creative voice, *Speak My Sister* is a contemporary feminist response to Cardoso’s iconic film, positioning Mozambican women’s voices firmly in front of and behind the camera.¹⁸

¹⁷ The concept of ‘i-docs’ was developed out of a research strand within the Digital Cultures Research Centre at the University of West England (UWE) in Bristol, UK (see www.i-docs.org). The concept was explored at a series of symposia in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018, and a 2017 publication was edited by three of the i-docs founders (Aston, Gaudenzi & Rose, 2017). Within the i-docs conversation, alternative terms have also been proposed for this form of documentary, including ‘Open Space New Media Documentary’, (Zimmermann and De Michiel, 2017), ‘docmedia’ (Winston, 2017), computational nonfiction (Miles, 2017) networked/networking media (Wiehl, 2018).

¹⁸ In using the term ‘feminist’ in this text, I am drawing on a large body of work, most notably on the writing of early black American feminist theorists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who identified and named the intersection between race and sex, bell hooks (1982), who subsequently took these ideas into the global and decolonial discourse, and also to their contemporary poets and thinkers such as Audre Lorde (1984, 2007), and activists such as Angela Davies (2001). Over the decades, it has also been recognized that there is no one ‘feminist’ ideology to suit the contexts of women throughout the world, and that it would be more accurate to refer to feminisms in the plural. In relation to African feminisms, I draw on the work of Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997, 2000) and a collection of papers on African Gender Scholarship published by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), which place papers by African Feminist thinkers such as

José Cardoso grew up in colonial Mozambique, and, like many white intellectuals at the time, was committed to the end of Portugal's fascist Second Republic or *Estado Novo* and the creation of an independent nation. He was part of an elite movement of predominantly male intellectuals exploring this expensive and rarely profitable 'seventh art'.¹⁹ His film *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* (1981) demonstrates an engagement with the European and Latin American revolutionary discourse around moving image production often referred to as 'Third Cinema' (Getino and Solanas, 1970), where cinema was seen as an effective tool, or even a 'weapon' for social change (Diawara 1992, 35-50). The discourse centred around fighting social inequalities through moving image production and exhibition in what the Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha called 'the aesthetics of hunger' (Rocha, 1965, 2014) and the Cuban filmmaker Julio Garcia Espinosa called 'imperfect cinema' (Espinosa, 1969). The belief in the power of film to unify and strengthen the masses in their struggle against colonial, international and national injustices is apparent in Cardoso's film. However, important concurrent feminist ideas around women's representation circulating at the same time are less apparent.

Producing the *Speak My Sister* series is my response to the need for more inclusive representation and authorship of Mozambican films. By embracing the opportunities offered through improved access to digital audiovisual technology, there could not only be more opportunities for women to be placed behind and in front of the camera, but men and women from different educational and geographic backgrounds who continue to be represented by the largely male urban elite can also develop the skills and opportunities to represent themselves. Where *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* was shot on 16mm, *Speak My Sister* makes use of the now affordable professional moving image technology that filmmakers of the 1970's could only dream of. Where Cardoso and his revolutionary intellectual peers were working out of Maputo, the young filmmakers behind the *Speak My Sister* series were recruited from all over the country. Where Cardoso was part of a national state-subsidised film training

Oyewumi, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, and Signe Arnfred in dialogue with one another (Arnfred et al, 2004). The work of the Nigerian academic Obioma Nnaemeka and especially her exploration of a concept she calls 'nego-feminism' was also particularly useful in the theoretical framing of my research.

¹⁹ It is also worth noting that there were no black Mozambican film directors adding their voice to the nation's revolutionary cinematic contribution. Gabriel Mondlane, the now President of the Filmmakers Association of Mozambique (AMOCINE) for example, who worked alongside the revolutionary directors, directed his first film in 2001 in a South African co-production *The Miner's Tale* (Mondlane, Hoffmeyer, 2001).

programme run out of the National Film Institute, the 2018 directors of the *Speak My Sister* films are part of a new national state-subsidised film training programme at the Higher Institute of Art and Culture, ISArC. Where *Sing My Brother — Help Me to Sing* is one unified and authored vision by a young Mozambican revolutionary (white) man, the musical portraits of *Speak My Sister* are collaboratively authored by young women and men from different (black) backgrounds from eight of the ten provinces of Mozambique²⁰.

By using cheaper technology and keeping production costs down, the *Speak My Sister* film series and web documentary could be produced economically, remaining independent of the expensive finance models of global moving image production. This mirrors similar choices of decolonial autonomy made by the National Film Institute nearly half a century before. Then, many of the films were shot on 16mm black and white stock, which could be processed and mastered in house.²¹ Yet, the paradigms of expensive moving image production demanded by the globalised distribution networks continue to persist and need to change if the decolonial autonomy the National Film Institute worked towards in Mozambique after Independence is ever to be realised. This research contributes to the ongoing search for methods towards this necessary paradigm-shift by challenging established models of production and hierarchies of representation. It provided an opportunity for the next generation of audiovisual storytellers and knowledge makers to pick up where José Cardoso left off and build their own cinematic legacy.

The revolutionary narrative of Mozambique is one where efforts to reduce gender inequality and include women in all aspects of the country's social fabric is celebrated internationally. However, there is still much to do to embed these revolutionary feminist values in the still predominantly patriarchal mainstream of society.²² With the developments of the past fifty years, this research asks, what will the new generation do with the legacy they inherited? Will they be able to take the revolutionary ideals of

²⁰ One film in the series, *Warrior Dancers*, is of my own authorship, co-created in collaboration with the girls being portrayed and the young Mozambican crew. This film was shot along with the other films in the series. However, due to time limitations, it was only edited in the following year and so not screened alongside the other films in the series in 2018.

²¹ The question of the format of Mozambique's audiovisual output was heatedly discussed over the first decades of film production and is the subject of much analysis, including Diawara (1992), Andrade Watkins (1999), Convents (2011) and Gray (2020).

²² For more on the contradictions between the government's stated intentions around redressing gender inequality and their actions see Urdang (1989), Arnfred (2004), Casimiro (2004, 2015 p83) Amélia et al, (2011)

the ‘old guard’ such as decolonisation, gender equality and Mozambican audiovisual self-representation, and — using film and music for social change — begin to achieve what those before them could not? The new generation of Mozambican filmmakers was born into an independent nation, under a government known for its recognition of the rights of women and celebration of women’s contribution to the country’s development. Can this new generation break some of the patriarchal norms of the generation before them and include more women’s voices, women’s music and dance and women’s stories as part of the country’s continued efforts towards national unity?²³

1.2 Introducing the films and the filmmakers



Figure 1.1 *Xingomana* Dancers from Grupo *Xingomana de Nwajohane*, Gaza
Screenshot from the film *Xingomana – Dance of Generations* (Bahule, 2018).

The first film shown in the lakeside screening introduced in the prologue was made by four young Mozambicans who grew up in the southern province of Gaza, where they researched and shot the film, *Xingomana – Dance of Generations* (Bahule,

²³ While ‘national unity’ is certainly a rhetorical goal of the Mozambican government and remains prevalent in national ideology, in practice it is messy and unequal. Over the past decade, the global extraction industries have been investing in northern Mozambique, fuelling a return to fears of a north-south divide. The political elite, still largely from the south of the country, have continued to develop increasing wealth and power, despite public revelations of ongoing corruption and a \$2bn secret debt. Yet, at the 10th National Festival of Culture the goal of national unity continued to be high on the agenda, as can be seen in the festival scenes of the illustrated radio discussion ‘Speak Mozambique’ in ‘The Ideas’ section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

2018).²⁴ Here, most adult men work in the underpaid migrant labour markets of South Africa. The film is a portrait of the three generations of women they leave behind. They sing and dance a local dance called *Xingomana* and share their relationships with the land, with men and with the dance.

Each of the films that follow celebrate the creative voice of women from different corners of the country and portray either an individual, a couple or a group of women, for whom music and dance is an important part of their lives. The song and dance forms portrayed range from traditional dances such as *Tufo* and *Xingomana*, celebrated women's dance from the coastal north and rural south of the country,²⁵ to contemporary gospel music and traditional pop fusion from the centre and hip hop from the capital in the south.²⁶ The music—and the protagonist's relationship to it—leads the viewer into the worlds of the strong, resilient, resourceful and inspirational women portrayed. The films address themes that range from the role of dance in overcoming the trauma of childhood sexual abuse to living as a female musician in Mozambique and the impact this has on the marital relationship.

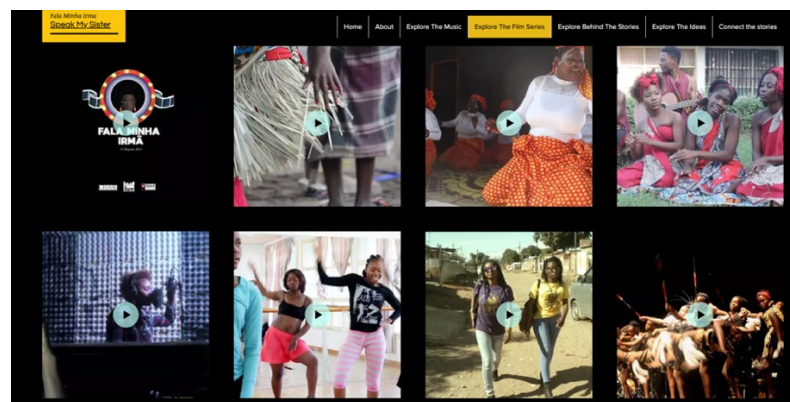


Figure 1.2 Screenshot of film series page from the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>

²⁴ The original film *Nhenha* (Bahule, 2018) although screened in Niassa at full length, was longer than the commissioned duration of the films in the series, that run between 8 and 18mins. At my request, the shorter '*Xingomana: A Dance of Generations*' was edited for subsequent screenings of the series, and is the film included in the falaminhairma.org website. *Nhenha* however is the director's choice, and has been widely distributed nationally and internationally, including at international film festivals in the UK, Brazil, Portugal and Lusophone Africa.

²⁵ For more on *Tufo*, an Islamic musical tradition appropriated by women in the north of Mozambique, see Boswall (2018) Arnfred (2011) Hebden (2020). for more on the place of *Xingomana* in Mozambican women's musical journey towards gender equality see Boswall & Cowan (2022).

²⁶ For more on Mozambican Hip Hop, the recognised voice of much of Mozambique's young population and the one place where open criticism of the government and its corrupt relationship with the world of business are tolerated, see Manhiça et al (2020), Boswall (2019a), and Sitõe (2013).

All the portraits make extensive use of musical sequences and minimal use of the spoken word. All productions began with an element of ethnographic and ethnomusicological research into the musical genres and dances being portrayed and the lives of the women who sing and dance them.

All six films were made with a view to being screened to diverse audiences during the 10th National Festival of Culture to take place in Niassa in July 2018. Seven of the filmmakers eventually made the 2000- mile journey from Maputo to Niassa by road in order to present their films at this celebrated national festival. They travelled the province in their van decorated with hand painted *Speak My Sister* banners, hosting pop-up screenings as part of the festival community outreach. This was the important culmination of the students' experience of practice-led research, as the filmmakers could assess the reception of their films in different contexts. They had been used to studying the theory of film production. Here they could learn not only from their reflections on their discoveries during the production and post-production, they could feel the atmosphere their films generated, hear the sighs and the cries from the crowds and talk to their audiences following the screenings.



Figure 1.3 *Speak My Sister* road-trip on the banks of lake Niassa Photo by author

At the end of the lakeside screening described in the prologue, each member of the team was encouraged to present themselves. They were inspired by the enthusiastic response from the audience and the lively discussion that ensued and moved into the light of the projector to tell the crowd a little about themselves. Alzira, a former dancer and actress, Maphilua, a DJ, Samo, a photographer and Angelica, their young enthusiastic Department Head at the University, were from the capital Maputo. Other team members were from Nampula, Sofala, and Inhambane, provinces from the

north, centre and south of the country. Most important to the local crowd, however, were Anakanga, a furniture maker from Niassa's interior, and Lourdes, a radio presenter from the provincial capital. The fact that these young people were from Niassa, had grown up facing similar hardships and yet, had made the films presented that day, was clearly an inspiration to those present, especially as they spoke to them in the local language of Yawa.²⁷ While the common language spoken by the filmmakers and some of their audience—especially the men—was Portuguese, the filmmakers spoke fifteen of the nation's 43 languages between them.

Portuguese was introduced to Mozambique over five hundred years ago and adopted as the country's official national language after independence in 1975 but is still not spoken outside of urban areas. Much of our discussion after the screening that evening was therefore mediated by local self-appointed translators, reminding the filmmakers of the challenge they had ahead of them in finding a cinematic language that suited their vast nation and its diverse audiences.

1.3 Introducing myself and the multi-modal thesis

When the applause had died down and the crowd had quizzed the young filmmakers about their backgrounds and their language, they directed the attention towards me and began to chant and clap and look in my direction. I was behind a camera, trying to be as invisible as possible. This was, of course, an unrealistic objective considering I was the first white person many of those in the audience had the possibility to get close to and make a connection with. Sometimes when I am behind the camera, I can get so immersed in the action framed within the eyepiece and the sound coming into my headphones, I forget that I am actually present in that world and can be seen by those in front of the camera whose essence I am 'capturing'. This was one such occasion, and it took a hundred expectant faces staring into the lens to pull me out of my 'cine-trance'.²⁸ Samo, the photographer of our team, took the

²⁷ Mozambique is home to a vast array of languages. Spoken across colonial and regional borders, their words and even their names are spelled differently by users of various European and African languages. In Niassa three main languages are spoken: Yawa (Ciyowa, or Xiyau), the language of the Yao people; Ximacua (Makhuwa, or Macua), the language of the Makhuwa or Macua people; and xiNyanja (or Cinyanja), the language of the Nyanja, which is known in Malawi as Chewa or Chichewa because it is also the language of the Chewa people.

²⁸ Jean Rouch coined the term 'cine-trance' to describe the "strange state of transformation that takes place in the filmmaker," walking with the camera, taking it where it is most effective and

camera from me and our projectionist, filmmaker André Bahule, AKA DJ Maphilua, put a microphone in my hand. I had been much more comfortable in the shadows and had stage fright. The crowd helped me out: “What’s your name?” they asked in chorus, passed on by the self-appointed translator. “Where are you from?”, “What are you doing here?”

Who am I? Where am I from? What do I do? These questions should be easy enough, but I have found them difficult to answer ever since I began my adult life and discovered there was no one version of myself. I even have to make choices each time I am introduced to new people as to which name to present. To many of my friends and colleagues, I am Karen Boswall, but my married name is Karen Givandás and in some situations in Mozambique, especially in rural areas where the Brazilian soap operas haven’t made my northern European first name of Karen more familiar, I offer my middle name, Joanna, which is a common name throughout Mozambique. I have another name too—Boz--bringing out another version of myself when I am with friends from my early adulthood. As for what I do, in some circumstances I am a musician, a filmmaker in others, and now in others, an academic. Sometimes I’m English, sometimes Mozambican, or Anglo-Mozambican. Where do I come from? I travelled from my current home in the UK to Maputo, Mozambique, my home of 17 years, to conduct my research for this doctoral thesis. Both are home. The familiar process of racing through the complex choices of self-presentation takes only a moment. My married name, Givandás, places me as the wife of a descendant of the Indian traders of the Zambezi delta in central Mozambique, and this crowd will probably find Joanna easier to pronounce than Karen. I take a deep breath, smile as I look at the welcoming and excited faces and say into the microphone *O meu nome é Karen Joana Givandás*;²⁹ “My name is Karen Joana Givandás”. So far, so good. Now, where am I from? I answered in a short story: “To reach here I have travelled across the world from London to Maputo, across the country from Maputo to Lichinga and then across Niassa from Lichinga to Metangula. I am so happy to be with you here today”. After the cheers, my colleagues helped me out with the last answer. “Karen is our teacher, our colleague and our friend. She helped us make these films you saw

improvising another type of ballet with it...” analogously to possession phenomena” (Rouch & Feld, 2003: 39).

²⁹ I communicate in Portuguese in Mozambique. For the rest of this text I will be translating all Portuguese communication into English without providing the Portuguese original.

here today and she made sure we could bring them to Niassa and show them to you (more cheers). She's also making a film about us, and you. This is her husband, Sidónio, he's helping us out and making sure everything runs smoothly."

Sidónio and I used to run a production company together in Maputo in the 2000's. I had spent months planning a *Speak My Sister* cultural caravan to screen the films across northern Mozambique from east to west, as part of the National Festival build-up³⁰. However, as has happened to me more times than I care to remember in Mozambique, an essential part of the financing fell through a week before we were due to leave. Sidónio offered to help out at the last minute, and together, we drew on all our years of film production together to ensure that at least the screenings in Niassa went ahead. Having him there not only helped me focus on the training, research and the filming, it also validated me in the eyes of strangers.

During my doctoral research in Mozambique, I took note of the information offered during these initial introductions. A common one was "This is Mãe Karen (Mother Karen). She used to be in Ghorwane". Ghorwane is a much-loved Mozambican band that has been going since the early 1980's. In 1993, there was national mourning after the popular front man and saxophonist Zeca Alage was found murdered. The band's choice to replace him with a white woman surprised their fans at first, but I was quickly accepted and by the time I left the band in 1997, I had become quite well-known. When introduced to those old enough to remember those years, and the white woman on the saxophone, one approach would simply be "This is Karen from Ghorwane". Some introductions included how long we have known one another, often offering up a shared memory, as if to validate my credentials as a white woman with a long history in Mozambique. In the lakeside screening in Metangula, as so often had happened in the past, this introduction produced a tangible shift in the connection between myself and the strangers whose lives we had dropped in on.

I have been engaging with questions of race since adolescence and was used to being the only white crew or band member long before I went to Mozambique. As a young adult in the 1980s, one of the first professional bands I joined was with black jazz musicians in exile from South Africa. The first film collective I was a member of

³⁰ It was due to begin in the land of *Tufo*, a women's song and dance tradition popular along the north eastern coast of Mozambique, and end at the banks of Lake Niassa on the western border with Malawi, and the home of the 2018 Festival. This is the land of *Tote June*, a term used in *Yawa* to describe the act of singing lessons into someone's body during the ritualised life school of *unhago*, (for more on this, see Boswall and Cowan, 2022).

was a black filmmakers collective down the road from my house in East London. My first feature film credit as a sound-recordist was on a Bollywood-style musical set in East London, where I was the guest in an otherwise all-Indian crew. I have also been arguing for the equal rights of women for as long as I remember. As a four-year-old feminist, I apparently argued for gender equality on my first day of nursery school insisting the girls should be allowed to help the boys put the chairs away. When I arrived in Maputo during the war, I felt at home in the artistic community I joined in the centre of the capital city. It was a cosmopolitan collection of art and music lovers from across the globe, drawn to Mozambique to show solidarity with the poorest country in the world as it tried to deliver its socialist dream while floundering in the grips of war, famine and economic collapse. In the centre of town where we lived, a few soldiers protected us from the war around us, keeping us in and the ‘enemy’ out. Their battles were close enough for the sounds of gunfire and flashes of tracer bullets to fill the silence were we to allow it. Music was our medicine and film our weapon against the forces bringing the country to its knees. Never knowing what tomorrow would bring, we lived in the moment, with stories filling our days and music our nights. The vibrant night life, like that of many a port city, provided welcome relief from the horrors of the war raging around us. Here, the colonial Latin culture merged with the indigenous African culture drawing on the dance and musical traditions of both.

In those early months in Maputo in 1990, I was given a crash course in Portuguese colonisation by most Mozambicans I met. The Portuguese relationship to race, I would be told, is not like that of the English. The Portuguese would educate and ‘assimilate’ members of the host nation. As Mozambican musician António Marcos explained in my film *Marrabentando: The Stories My Guitar Sings* “An *assimilado* must dress well, have a radio, and take on the name of a white man, and have an identity card to show that I’m white” (Marcos cited in Boswall, 2005). Once you had that identity card, you had access to education, employment and even sometimes, power. Often the word *mulungu* is translated as white man, but in fact it is used for all ‘assimilated’ Mozambicans, or for any outsider to arrive in a community dressed and behaving like a white man (for they were mostly men). Likewise, you could have white skin, like me, and not be considered white, if you shared the lifestyle and attitudes of black people. At the time I arrived, much of the white population worked for international aid organisations. Unlike in the neighbouring British colonies

of Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi, Swaziland and Zambia, racial assumptions about a white person like me would more likely place them as well-meaning yet naïve *cooperantes* (international ‘co-operators’) coming to offer food, medicine or well-intentioned but often flawed advice on how to improve your life, than to be there to dictate and rule as the previous white population of the country had. But I was not a *cooperante*. I was not associated with any international organisation. My professional and social life was among black Mozambicans. I was ‘free-lance,’ and although this word was not familiar, the concept of generating an income from *biscatos*, or piece-meal ‘gigs’ was familiar to much of the Mozambican population. My *biscatos* may not have been in the fields of others, or in markets pushing carts or in the building trade, but it was similarly precarious and insecure. Until I established my own production company a decade after my arrival, I worked on the films of others, I made radio programmes and I played the saxophone.

What defined me in those artistic, cosmopolitan environments of Maputo as much, if not more than my race, however, was my gender. I had to work hard to be accepted as a woman in the still very male world of film and music I had entered. I arrived as a woman used to making her own decisions, speaking her mind, doing what she wanted. I reported for the BBC and people still talk of that white woman they saw running around at public events with a microphone, and out in the evenings, unaccompanied, often on stage. This was not the usual behaviour of a woman. Once I had learned to negotiate the barriers and boundaries of gender, largely by asserting less of myself, my whiteness felt much less of an obstacle to acceptance and engagement.³¹

In the early days of my doctoral journey, I spent some months in Niassa. As in much of the north of Mozambique, the children’s lineage is passed through the women, albeit moderated through strong patriarchal authority. In Niassa, seeing a woman speak her mind was not unusual. However, here the population experienced some of the most extreme racist atrocities under the Portuguese. Here, it was my whiteness and not my female body that generated the barriers to communication that I would have to work hard to overcome. Even for the younger members of the audience, my white skin reminded them of the stories of life living under the rule of the white man, still shared

³¹ For more on how racial privilege is structured see for example Dyer (1997), Frankenberg (1993), hooks (1982, 2014) and Ahmed (1998, 2000) whose explorations of race look beyond skin colour to the way the powerful discursive apparatus in the west can structure privilege and power.

by their elders. At the lakeside screening back in Niassa, I felt this mistrust in the averted gazes, knowing some of the older members of the audience will have clear memories of the country's brutal colonial past. In this case, it was helpful to have other black people who knew me. Presented by them as a white person who could be trusted, I felt that unmistakable sparkle of human recognition. This is always a precious moment when arriving in unfamiliar places: that moment of acceptance. Now I could joke with these strangers, ask them questions, look into their eyes and be seen. As an ethnographic filmmaker, one of my roles is to facilitate that sparkle of recognition between people across racial, cultural and gendered divides. By learning and sharing something of the lives, thoughts and personalities of those who may otherwise seem 'other', the preconceptions can be replaced by familiarity. Those who may otherwise make assumptions about one another, based on what they think they already know, are offered an opportunity to look again.

Music, too, helps light that spark of human recognition by going beyond the spoken word, to the affective personality of the performer, as expressed through song and dance. I have connected with people through music and dance participation all over the world—in the open plains of Lapland, the poor rural villages of Turkey, the devastated cities of Iraq, the abandoned Jesuit missions of Angola or in the war-torn city of Maputo. In each of these different social environments, I have trusted in the connection made with strangers through music and dance. When I sing, dance or play the saxophone, I reflect aspects of my personality that go beyond the verbal, enabling me to 'speak' to those around me without words, and for them to hear me, and see me. The *Speak My Sister* film series aims to make a similar connection with strangers through the multi-sensory and affective medium of cinema.³² In these films, the music and dance of the protagonists lights the spark of recognition between the women in the films and the people watching them. Experiencing this at the lakeside screening in the dusty streets of Metangula was not only a reaffirmation to me of the premise behind my research methodology, that night was cited by all the young filmmakers present as a defining moment in their *Speak My Sister* journey.

³² The language around moving image was first defined by the medium used: film or video. In this thesis I will sometimes use these terms as short-cuts, even when the format was neither film nor video. I will also use a language that suits the context. In the case of a group watching moving image as a community with a large screen and amplified sound, I define this experience as 'cinema'.

In the writings that follow, I will reflect on this journey and the lessons learned. I will assess the role of music and dance in the audiovisual representation of Mozambicans for Mozambicans. I will analyse this based on the historical and contemporary context in which this series was made, the different approaches to participation and collaboration used, and the intersectional and interdisciplinary methodologies employed in their research, production and distribution. Throughout, I will also explore my own journey and the deepening understanding I gained through the experience. In the final section, I will reflect on the contribution of this practice-led research to the eventual decolonisation of contemporary audiovisual production and distribution in Mozambique and the role of women in this, both behind and in front of the camera. The films produced can be found in the *Speak My Sister* web documentary alongside complete performances by the groups portrayed in the series and audiovisual reflections on the research, production, and exhibition of the portraits. The text below complements and builds on this, informing the reader of the personal, historical and cultural context in which this research took place and analysis of methodologies employed. The style of the written element of this thesis attempts to go beyond the linear and the logical of the Greek ancestors of the academy, despite the contradiction this implies for a doctoral thesis. I have included personal reflections, poetic description and scripted scenes from the reference film *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*, in addition to the more conventional critical analysis. The episodic and non-linear form of the web documentary too, poses a decolonial alternative to logical argument and narrative. The multi-modal, multi-vocal, ‘polyphonic’ audiovisual ‘languages’ used in the web documentary also reflect the decolonial argument being made within the text below. Crossing the academic disciplines of media practice, African film studies, ethnographic film and ethnomusicology, I make no presumptions about the reader’s knowledge of the vocabulary common within each discourse. Instead, I choose a written language that, although at times less succinct, is accessible to readers across disciplines, and for whom the English language may be a second, third or fourth language. The still images that illustrate the text, the text itself, the short films and the filmed performances are presented in a polyphonic dialogue of many voices, ideas, sounds and images; in conversation with one another and with you, the reader and viewer.³³ While the web documentary is designed as a stand-alone resource,

³³ The Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of *polyphony*, (1984) has recently been explored

the text below is not. Instead, there will be suggestions as to when to refer to the web documentary and links to the relevant page in the accompanied footnotes. I hope it is not only an enriching academic experience but also an enjoyable one.

1.4 Introducing the reference film and the literature this research engages with

Two films were released after the first National Festival of Song and Dance held in Maputo in 1980-81. One, *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* (Cardoso, 1981), made by still relatively inexperienced first generation of Mozambican filmmakers from the National Film Institute and another, *Música Moçambique*, that had been commissioned by the National Director of Culture, Paulo Soares. He had sought finance from the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Portuguese Institute and days before the festival began had a crew flown in from Portugal to make a film of the festival amidst some consternation from the Mozambican team at the National Film Institute, also planning to make a film about the festival.³⁴

The Portuguese film *Música Moçambique* (Fonseca e Costa, 1981) was clearly inspired by the internationalist concert film *The Pan-African Festival of Algiers*, made in Algeria in 1969.³⁵ Attributed to the North American filmmaker William Klein, this film was a collective creation of cinematic internationalism. Both films are structured as concerts, where the performances of the national and international acts on-stage are intercut with contributions from academics and international celebrities. The South African singer and Pan-African activist Miriam Makeba is featured in both films. While *Music Mozambique* was made for international distribution, with similar Pan-African objectives as the Klein film from Algiers, the second film produced out of the festival, *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* was clearly a national effort made principally for a national audience. The director José Cardoso will have known the

by Aston and Odorico to 'reflect on the theoretical and practical contribution of a dialogic approach to the field of i-docs' (2018, 74). In it, although writing of literature, and in particular the works of Dostoyevsky, he talks of 'a process of cocreation, coreflection and cointervention' (Bakhtin, 1984, 59), terms now commonly used when discussing representation in documentary.

³⁴ Portuguese Director of Photography Pedro Massano, and his Assistant Juka Vicente, Sound Recordist Carlos Pinto, and his Assistant Joao Cardoso flew in from Lisbon and were joined by one of the few women at the INC at the time, the Irish / Mozambican Moira Forjaz as Assistant Director. The film was edited in Lisbon by Alves Pereira who struggled for two months, seven days a week to synchronise the material and find the film from the 8 hours of footage shot in 10-minute bursts over the eight days of the festival. For a detailed account of this production see do Carmo Piçarra, (2018, 132-145)

³⁵ See *The Pan-African Festival of Algiers* (Klein 1969).

Angolan-born director of *Music Mozambique* José Fonseca e Costa, now based in Portugal and would have been following the *New Wave* film movement in Paris which included other Angolan revolutionary filmmakers such as Mario Pinto de Andrade and his wife, Sarah Maldoror, both active in the international movement of revolutionary filmmakers.³⁶

The director of Mozambique's National Film Institute, Ruy Guerra, however, who had been active in the internationalist film movement in Europe and South America and had worked alongside some of these filmmakers on another collective production *Loin de Vietnam* (1967), had moved away from collective filmmaking and internationalism towards the smaller scale, local and collaborative practices of *Engaged Cinema*.³⁷ He and his Brazilian colleagues termed their approach *Cinema Novo* (New Cinema), where moving image plays a role in social transformation by working with and for local communities. The difference in Cardoso's creative response to Maputo's National Festival of Culture and that of the Portuguese director Fonseca e Costa can be seen in the light of these converging and diverging international cinematic movements of the time.

Although several INC crews filmed performances on the numerous stages that had been erected in the sports stadiums and community centres across Maputo, of the hours and hours of material gathered, little more than four minutes was used in their final film. Instead, director José Cardoso and scriptwriter/assistant director/editor Henrique Caldeira decided to condense these five days into a short four-minute montage sequence capturing the scale and popularity of the festival in the capital and the diversity of the culture showcased at it. The rest of the film marks the beginning of a conceptual and stylistic shift in Mozambican cinema. It demonstrates the revolutionary filmmakers' commitment to exploring the relationship between themselves, their subjects and their audiences with an emphasis on a reflection on their

³⁶ Sarah Maldoror is celebrated as one of Africa's great female directors. She was in fact born in France to emigrants from Guadeloupe but after working on *The Battle of Algiers* (Pontecorvo, 1966) and working as assistant to the Algerian director Ahmed Lalle, Maldoror moved to Angola with Mário Pinto de Andrade, who she had studied with in Moscow. Her first feature *Sambizanga* (Maldoror, 1972) was made in Angola, the country she subsequently called her home. She died in France in 2020, aged 90. (See obituary in British Film Institute (BFI) journal 'Sight and Sound' by Sukhdev Sandhu, Dec 2020 <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/features/sarah-maldoror-trailblazer-anti-colonial-cinema>)

³⁷ See Tindó Secco et al (2019, 148-163) for an interview with Brazilian born Mozambican filmmaker Licínio Azevedo exploring the idea of the application of 'engaged cinema' in Mozambique.

own positionality within this. It is an intimate form of non-fiction, more ethnographic in its approach. The community song and dance groups relocated from across the country to the bustling capital, are first seen on lit stages in sports stadiums and theatres. We see the musicians performing to large crowds, navigating the challenges of microphones and distorted amplification in an intense and evocative sequence that serves as a springboard into the quieter, calmer remainder of the film: a more poetic ethnographic portrait of the musicians back in their home environment.

Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing is presented from the perspective of the urban Mozambican filmmaker wanting to make a connection with their ‘brothers’ across the country. The style of this film is a taster of a Mozambican cinematic language that had started to evolve.³⁸ It is the inspiration for the language of the films in *Speak My Sister*, and is reflected in the title and the film’s opening, both of which encapsulate the intention behind this new post-colonial relationship

1.5 Introducing the theoretical rationale behind this practice-led research

At the heart of my personal objective for what became *Speak My Sister* is the recognition that despite increased access to the means of production, through smart phones, digital cameras, laptops and the internet, the long established and sometimes seemingly insurmountable power paradigms of class, race and gender remain. There has finally been an acceptance within those in North America and Europe who still dominate international audiovisual representation, that they must work harder to ensure more women, black people and others from outside of the established global hegemonies are behind and in front of the camera. After decades of advocacy and activism, those on the periphery of global self-representation and knowledge creation—including most women and people of colour even in the countries that dominate global media—are becoming more visible in mainstream media. It is also

³⁸ This film comes close on the heels of Ruy Guerra’s first film as director of the INC, *Mueda, Memória e Massacre* - Mueda, Memory and Massacre (Guerra, 1979). This film could also be described as ethnographic portrait of a community shown through the annual reenactment of the massacre thought to have sparked hailed the formation of FRELIMO and the beginning of armed resistance in Mozambique. The crew, a larger fiction crew in this case, worked collaboratively with the community in recording this event. Subsequent Mozambican films by Licínio Azevedo (1986, 1991, 1994) and Sol de Carvalho (1996, 1997) follow in this ethnographic, performative approach to self-representation. The intimate style of early Mozambican non-fiction film production leaves us only to imagine the films that might have followed on, had the more artistic and experimental vision of the National Film Institute been able to continue over the following decades.

now possible to find films by the previously ‘peripheral’ producers of Australia, Korea, South Africa, and even the indigenous cinema of first nations people of Canada and New Zealand, amongst the films promoted by the large international distributors.³⁹ But what of the representation of people in countries like Mozambique on the periphery of the periphery? For a while after independence, Mozambique was beginning to find ways to create autonomous forms of self-representation, and yet nearly fifty years on, the old hegemonies of representation remain in full force. Can that revolutionary legacy of the pioneers of self-representation serve the next generation? Can they pick up where their elders left off?

This research aims to contribute to the continued development of sustainable, decolonial and gendered approaches to audiovisual production that had been initiated after independence. It returns to the methods and approaches discovered during the creation of Mozambique’s independent film culture and reassesses their viability today, now that many of the technological obstacles have been eliminated. It applies new methodologies to address the predominantly patriarchal and class-based hierarchies of the colonisers that remained in the attitudes and output of the first generation of Mozambican audiovisual storytellers and knowledge makers. It brings a feminist perspective to the question of peripheral self-representation, arguing that it is essential to address the inequalities still present in the representation of women, if the film practice and audiovisual research of the next generation is to be truly intersectional, inclusive and effective. It applies the ethnographic, participatory, creative and musical methodologies of early Mozambican cinema to provide a theoretical and methodological framework for this research. In essence it is continuing the revolutionary search for sustainable, decolonial approaches to audiovisual production in Mozambique using the technology now available to democratise this process. There are several theoretical discourses that inform the theory behind the research, production and distribution of *Speak My Sister*. Many of these continue to exist independently of one another. This research thus works across these discourses offering an interdisciplinary, creative response to the well-recognised challenges of autonomous media representation, at every stage, allowing this response to be led by the practice.

³⁹See Iordanova, Martin Jones and Vida’s collection of essays on Cinema at the Periphery (2010) for an analysis of some initiatives and approaches to entering into the existing economic production and distribution models of cinematic representation.

Having worked for many years in the overlapping worlds of African non-fiction filmmaking and ethnographic film, I have been surprised by the relative absence of academic activity in the communication synapses between the two historically siloed academic discourses. The practice of ethnography was born out of the writings of the colonial missionaries and traders of the late 19th century (Thornton, 1983). African film was born out of the anti-colonial revolution and political activism of the mid 20th century (Diawara, 1992). Ethnographic filmmaking by outsiders in Africa has therefore had an understandably tense coexistence with non-fiction filmmaking by Africans. Yet the two are mutually informing and inter-connected, not least by the needs of both to break free from the patriarchal and colonial legacy of the century in which they evolved. In the following description and analysis of the theoretical framing of the *Speak My Sister* practice and research, I will introduce some of the literature, films and individuals that have informed this thesis.

i) African Film, Ethnographic Film and Ethnomusicology

This research sits at the surprisingly rarely visited intersection between visual anthropology, African film and ethnomusicology. Within the latter, much has been written around the relationship between localised music-making activities, or musicking (Small, 1998, Riley and Brucker, 2020), and social change (Turino, 2008, McNeil, 2011, McDonald, 2013), music and the environment and belonging (Hesmondhalgh, 2016, Impey, 2018) and most important for this research, the role of music and dance as part of men's and women's 'body politic' (Cowan, 1990), 'body knowledge' (Daniel 2005), and 'body voice' (Mientjes 2017).

In the context of African Film theory, the pioneering and exemplary successes of Mozambican filmmakers on their path of self-representation have been explored by African, European and Brazilian film theorists, as revolutions of power across Africa have resulted in active and growing cultures of film production in North, South East and West African countries that stretch back to the 1950's (see Diawara, 1992, Harrow, 1999, Sembéne, in Busch and Annas, 2008). Mozambique's film history is celebrated for its autonomy, not just in production, but also post-production and distribution of its own image to its own people (see Gray, 2000, Secco, 2018, Secco et al 2019, Convents 2011, Andrade Watkins, 1999). Over the first decades of independent Mozambican film a unique form of non-fiction has developed. Born out of the initial and ongoing economic limitations, the smaller crew of Mozambican non-

fiction develop a close intimacy with the protagonists. The powerful and vivid stories of ‘real life’ are intuitively and enthusiastically performed by those who lived them, who are often excited to have the chance to enact and perpetuate their own stories.

Mozambican non-fiction filmmakers such as Gabriel Mondlane, Isabel Noronha, Licínio Azevedo or Sol de Carvalho, who honed their craft in the 1970’s and 80’s, are unlikely to use terms such as ‘shared anthropology’, ‘cine-trance’ or ‘ethno-fiction’ to define their approaches to audiovisual (self)-representation in Mozambique. Nonetheless, their methods and approaches could be described using this vocabulary. The writings and films of ethnographic filmmakers and theorists such as David MacDougall (1998, 2006) and Trinh T Minh Ha (1989, 1991), and visual anthropologists such as Jay Ruby (1980, 1991) and Jean Rouch (1974, 2003) have set the terms of the discourse around the representation of others in non-fiction film within the discipline of anthropology since the 1970’s. Their theories and vocabulary are therefore an effective shorthand in describing and analysing the ethnographic approaches common in Mozambican non-fiction.

ii) Women in film and music

This research also draws on the insights of feminist researchers to apply analysis of embodied knowledge (Cowan 1990, Conquergood 2002, Daniel, 2005), and musical performativity, speech, gender and power (Jackson, 2012, Meintjes, 2017, Parpart & Kabeer, 2010, Taylor, 2003). It asks if more women’s perspectives can be reflected in the continuation of this independent image-making in Mozambique in the future through music and dance. With my own professional and academic life sitting across the disciplines of ethnomusicology, ethnographic and African film, I draw on the literature and films from each to reflect on the methodologies used by myself, my research partners and the young filmmakers of the *Speak My Sister* series.

iii) African Ontology and Epistemology

Two further theoretical approaches essential to the analysis of my practice-led research are the increasingly relevant and contemporary evolutions of decolonial and African feminist theory (Nnaemeka, 2004, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, 1986, Smith, 1999, 2012). This research takes into account the intersectional inequalities within the post-colonial cinematic context of Mozambique, and creates and explores through collaborative practice, new, home-grown models that support inclusiveness and

diversity in the training, research, production and distribution of Mozambican audiovisual production. There are still concerning absences of those being represented and those representing them in Mozambique, and I draw on the contemporary analytical framing of African feminism for my analysis of this.

iv) Collaboration and Participation

I also draw on the work of those exploring the collaborative and participatory relationships and authorship in ethnographic and indigenous film.⁴⁰ Unlike African film, which was born out of negotiation with existing power structures and revolution, indigenous film was born out of localised struggles of oppressed indigenous minorities struggling for their voice to be heard from their colonised margins. The applied media activism within indigenous communities has been developing rapidly over the past three decades, and there are many well-documented collaborative and inclusive relationships between academic researchers, ethnographers and indigenous communities working towards this end together, across the world.⁴¹

Although no Mozambican filmmaker would choose the word ‘indigenous’ as their form of self-identification, the word having taken on pejorative colonial associations, there are similarities in the experience of the under-represented within the colonial context of first nations film production, and the experience of those producing films in Mozambique. Analytical work on their participatory and collaborative methodologies is expansive, current and still evolving and so relevant for my analysis of my own collaborative practices. One thing African filmmakers, Indigenous filmmakers and ethnographic filmmakers all recognise and respond to are the injustices of asymmetric global, national and local power. However, as the discourse

⁴⁰ There is a wealth of academic analysis on collaboration and participation in ethnographic film. The documentary filmmaker MacDougall wrote about participatory cinema in his seminal text book *Transcultural Cinema* (1998), and in December 2020 was still publishing on the matter. Many practice-based researchers have also comprehensively reviewed these writings, for example De Groof, 2013, and applied them to their own work (see Battaglia, 2015). Faye Ginsberg has written a great deal on this in relation to indigenous cinema in Australia and Canada, (Ginsberg 1991, 2002, 2018). It is not within the scope of this thesis to cite much from these works. I do however draw on this discourse in my use of Pooja Rangan’s challenging critique of what she calls ‘Immediations’ and ‘the humanitarian impulse in participatory documentary’ (2017) where she questions notions of audience, authorship and the real intention and benefit of participatory practice.

⁴¹ Anthropologists, visual ethnographers and documentary filmmakers have been working alongside indigenous communities in their audiovisual self-representation for decades. Much comprehensive analysis of the collaborative methods has been published. For an overview of indigenous media in Australia, South Pacific and Canada, see Molnar and Meadows (2001), the longstanding Video in the Villages project in Brazil, Aufderheide, (1995), in Columbia, Rodrigues (2001), and in Chile, Salazar (2004).

around the decolonisation of media and audiovisual representation develops, the very notions of collaboration, participation and co-creation in African film need to be explored.⁴² This thesis advocates for a contemporary intersectional, feminist and decolonial approach to such partnerships and collaborations as common practice within these overlapping disciplines.

The focus of the following written analysis of my practice-led research is on methodology, both my own and that of the young Mozambican filmmakers who made their own films as part of the research. The historical context of Mozambican film production provided in the next chapter is presented from my own personal perspective, based on informal conversations held with those involved since the country's independence in 1975, who have been my colleagues and friends since 1990. I conducted some more formal interviews with some of these individuals and have been in regular contact checking facts on the stories I have continued to be surprised by since I began this doctoral research in 2016.

1.6 Introducing my polyphonic response to *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*



Figure 1.4: Screenshots from *Sing My Brother- Help Me to Sing* (1981) Red line criss-crossing Mozambique tracks the course of the film crew Photographer Jacinto Bai Bai

In *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*, the director José Cardoso hangs eleven musical portraits from across the vast and then unfamiliar and diverse communities across Mozambique upon the structural skeleton of a map. The film leads the viewer across the physical terrain of their large nation to six of the ten provinces through the lines drawn on the map on the production table in Maputo. We return to the map each time we move from province to province.

⁴² A good place to start on African film would be Lindiwe Dovey's Screen Worlds Toolkit on the story of African film - (Dovey, 2020) and all the course material and toolkits available on the SOAS African Screen Worlds website www.screenworlds.org For more on other cinema cultures considered 'peripheral' see Iordanova, et al, (2010).



Figure 1.5 Four cultural traditions in the province of Tete (Left to Right) Pankwe and shakers of Macololo, Nyanga Pipes of the communal village Bairo Sansão Mutembe, Nyao puppets and cow horns of Cesar. Screenshots from *Sing My Brother- Help Me to Sing* (1981)

Photographer Jacinto Bai Bai

Although the whole country is not represented in the Cardoso film, the impression given by the filmmakers is that of a crew from Maputo zig-zagging their way across the country, covering every corner as they visit the artists and musicians of Mozambique with their ‘curiosity’ and ‘will to learn’.⁴³

In the passing decades since the release of this film in 1981, there have been many technological developments in moving image production, distribution and exhibition. The eventual form and structure of the *Speak My Sister* research reflects this. In the place of one linear structure connected through the narrative device of a journey and the visual device of a map, *Speak My Sister* is presented as the form of non-linear map, not a geographical one, but one where a polyphony of voices can be in dialogue with one another.⁴⁴

The text below is also polyphonic and transdisciplinary. It is also at times non-linear, combining a chronological account of the process, with flash backs and flash forwards, cinematic interludes, internal personal reflections and thoughts and reflections from the participants. The contents pages provide a map to the text and the audiovisual content offered in the web documentary. This polyphony of voices in dialogue reinforces the fluid inter-connection between the somatic and musical knowledge shared in this thesis.

⁴³ The four Provinces not represented in the film are Gaza in the south, Manica and Sofala in the centre and Niassa in the north. Two of these, Niassa and Gaza are explored in *Falaa Minha Irmã*. Maputo and Gaza province are the home of the female Xingomana groups, the male Xigubu warrior dancers and the mixed urban choral groups of Makwaela, all of which would have been more familiar forms of cultural expression to the filmmakers from the capital. Perhaps this is why they chose not to include them in this odyssey of the less familiar instruments, dances, rhythms and people of Mozambique.

⁴⁴ See list of all the short films in dialogue with one another in page x1 of this thesis, itself a virtual ‘map’ of the *Speak My Sister* web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.



Interlude 2

A country is born

Cardoso Portrait 2

Mozambican musicians and those who hear them play
Machava

Maputo City

EXT. DAY. MACHAVA STADIUM. MAPUTO.

Crowds arrive at a huge stadium, posters on the wall announce the National Festival of Song and Traditional Music.



NARRATOR

A country is born
5 years later
your music
as old as the people who play,
dance, sing.
powerful music,
with precise functions
and significance.



Expectant faces of young Mozambicans watch on as a marching band lead the procession into the stadium announcing the start of the festival

NARRATOR

Your music,
5 years later
your festival

SCENE 4. INT. NIGHT. PAVILHÃO MAXAQUENE. MAPUTO.

A man in a big feather head-dress (RAJABO IBRAIMO) is on a large stage. He holds a stringed instrument called a *Kanyembe* to his chest and plays it with a bow.



NARRATOR

And you brought
your instruments with you,
your art.

RAJABO IBRAIMO dances as he plays. The speech-like sounds of the *Kanyembe* echo and reverberate around the stadium

NARRATOR

Behind your gesture
we, the film men
we can guess
your true rhythm
made from quiet inquiry,
Sun and rain,
Open spaces,
the stars and the trees
your calendar

Musicians from across the country dance and play to the sound of rapturous applause. The last to perform are the Mahamba *Timbila* orchestra from Zavala, Inhambane.

INT. DAY. NATIONAL FILM INSTITUTE OFFICES.

A clapperboard marked slate 1 lies on a table alongside an ashtray with a smoking cigarette, a set-square and a ruler. Five men lean over a map laid out on a large table



NARRATOR

We, the men of cinema,
,
have decided to visit you,
with our cameras
and our curiosity
and our will to learn.

A route is plotted with a marker pen on the map from Maputo to Inhambane, the next port north along the Mozambican coast.

NARRATOR

We plan our route
and leave...

Chapter 2. A Contextual Overview

Language, music, film and the long road towards decolonisation in Mozambique

2.1 Colonial beginnings and national division



Figure 2.1. Map of Mozambique and its five neighbours Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Swaziland. Source: Elúcio dos Prazeres Viegas Filipe 2012

Looking at the map of Mozambique I often find myself imagining the conversation between the twenty-odd white men in 1884 as they stood around a map of Africa in Berlin with their pencils and rulers.

Portugal: “We want to keep our ports, we’ve had them for longer than you guys”
(They built their first ports off that stretch of the East African coast at the beginning of the 16th century)

Britain: “OK, but we want the lakes and rivers”

Portugal: “You can’t have both. Let’s share the big lake and if we can have more of the big river, you can have another x miles of river downstream from the lake towards the coast”

And so it was that the British territory extended east from the huge inland lake (now named both Lake Malawi and Lake Niassa), and Portuguese territory extended west to include more of the big Zambezi river.

The irregular shape of Mozambique stands as a reminder of the colonisers’ incomprehensible sense of entitlement and the repercussions of this for the people of Southern Africa. British explorer David Livingstone and his wife Mary had tried to navigate the Zambezi river in a paddle steamer twenty years before the Berlin Conference. Mary died of malaria on the journey and is buried in Mozambique under a tree in the Zambeze delta and the expedition ended in failure and disillusionment (Davidson, 2012). Always looking for the story behind the facts, I look again at the map of Mozambique and the land mass of Tete pushing into the former British colonies of what are now Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Perhaps it was discovering that the river was less navigable than they had hoped that prompted the British to decide this part of Africa had little potential to make them money and so they could let it go to the Portuguese.⁴⁵ The meeting in Berlin lasted over a hundred days. I imagine one of the uniformed men picking up the ruler as the negotiations flag towards the end, and impatiently joining the dots with straight lines between the more strategic territorial divisions. In my mind, this man was British and he wanted to get home to his estate, an ostentatious mansion at the end of a long tree-lined drive, built from the profits of slavery. I even imagine conversations in the household as the master’s return is anticipated. My understanding of the lives of the colonisers in these times is based on the media representation of the time - the oil paintings and Victorian novels and subsequent British costume dramas representing the history of my nation, things that the Mozambican population never experienced.

The discussions on the last days of the Berlin Conference may have unfolded very differently to those in my imagination, but the result for the people of Mozambique,

⁴⁵ The Cabora Bassa Dam was eventually built in the 1960’s and 70’s in that part of Mozambique that seems like it was an add-on, encroaching into what was to become Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and was only opened in the 1990’s, when I was a BBC correspondent. At the time when the country was bankrupt following the long crippling war, it finally came into its own, doubling Mozambique’s GDP.

and for the rest of Africa, is still there on the straight lines drawn across the map of the continent. As I stare at the long coastline that stretches over 3,000 km's between South Africa in the south and Tanzania in the north, and the arbitrary dividing lines between Mozambique and their inland neighbours, I make a mental list of the benefits the famous continental carve-up eventually had on me and my generation in the UK a century later. The resulting economic growth and power of the colonisers led not only to a national confidence and some might say arrogance that contributed to the institutional racism currently being exposed again by the global pandemic in 2020. It also produced an educated population, used to seeing their own image and hearing their own stories reflected back to them. The colonial wealth eventually produced a population able to think critically, to imagine, to hope and believe in their power to effect change. I muse on the irony that those lines drawn on the map and the power structure that went with them indirectly contributed to my own relative autonomy and confidence as a woman. Had European countries such as mine not colonised and controlled the growth of countries such as those on the map in front of me, would I have had the same access to education, healthcare, running water, road networks, and even food and shelter that afforded me the freedom to follow my own creative fascinations? And what might have happened to the women and men I work with in Mozambique? Not only do they navigate the challenges this colonial past still presents to their survival and the survival of their children, they also navigate the linguistic, cultural and political tensions and divisions fuelled by the external creation of this nation and its neighbours over a century ago.

In 1891, only seven years after the historic carve-up of Africa in Berlin, the Portuguese government leased out vast tracts of the centre and north of their long and unwieldy East African territory to be run as private companies by the *Companhia de Niassa* and *Companhia de Moçambique* respectively. This, along with the logistic challenges and cost of building roads and bridges between these separate entities, meant that the long country was effectively divided into three; the north, the centre and the south, with effective east-west transport and trade infrastructures developed to serve the needs of the British colonies inland and little or no north-south infrastructure to strengthen social or economic unity within the country. The north, a matrilineal society with a strong Swahili, Arab and Islamic presence, has fertile land but many rivers and mountains to cross to extract the produce. The centre has a large port that serves many of the land-locked countries of Southern Africa, but only two bridges

across the great Zambezi river to join the central provinces of Tete and Sofala with their northern neighbours. The strong cultural, economic and linguistic links between these central provinces and neighbouring Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi were reinforced during the 16-year war (1976-1992), when these countries hosted over a million refugees fleeing the violence and the hunger in central Mozambique. In the south, equally strong economic links developed with neighbouring South Africa since the discovery of gold there at the end of the 19th century. Generations of men from the south have since worked in those mines, first as indentured labour and then no longer enforced by the laws of the colonisers but sustained by the laws of survival. Christian missionaries were also more prevalent and active closer to the southern colonial capital of Maputo, then called *Lourenço Marques*, and the improved standards of education this offered some of the more fortunate black Mozambicans of the south has continued to impact power structures within the country to this day.

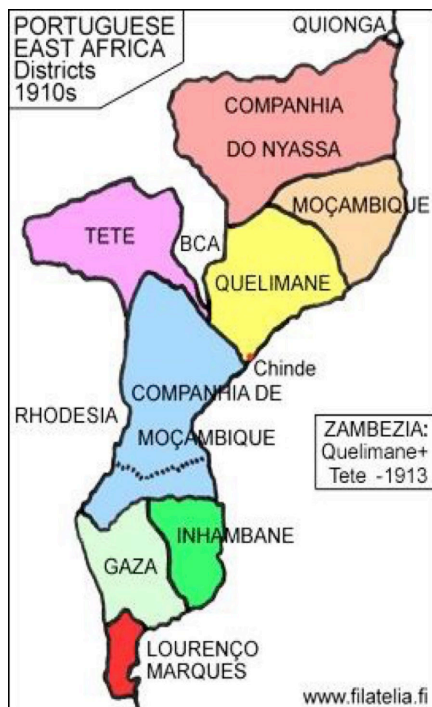


Figure 2.2 Map of the Districts of Portuguese East Africa in the 1910's
Source: G. Kock. World Forgery Catalogue Helsinki 1998



Figure 2.3 Map of Provinces of Mozambique in 2021
Source: Africa and China blogspot

The private lease of northern Mozambique ended in 1929, when *Companhia de Niassa* reverted to Portugal and became the two provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado. It wasn't until as recently as 1942 that the central provinces of Manica and

Sofala were created out of what had been the *Companhia de Moçambique*. The system of indentured labour used to sustain these private companies came to an end even later in 1961. As resistance to colonial rule grew throughout Mozambique in the 1960's, the north had an almost mythical identity amongst those of the south. Soon after their formation in 1962, Mozambique's liberation movement FRELIMO,⁴⁶ established training camps across the northern border in the newly independent Tanzania. Those committed to the movement would head north to join their brothers in the struggle against colonial domination. Parallel liberation movements grew across neighbouring South Africa, Namibia, and Angola and all were welcomed by the celebrated president of the first free nation of the region Julius Nyerere, as they too prepared for revolution. Soon after their formation, FRELIMO began to establish what were known as 'liberated zones' in the northern provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado. As early as 1966, almost a decade before eventual national independence from Portugal, most of northern Mozambique was in the hands of FRELIMO. Over the nearly five centuries of colonial presence in Mozambique, little effort had been made by the Portuguese to bridge the often unrecognised cultural, linguistic, historical and political differences in the country. When they left in 1975, Mozambique was still more of a collection of disparate regions than a united nation.

2.2 The role of song and cinema in building a nation

After independence the new government desperately needed to create a sense of national unity, if they were to encourage collective involvement in the realisation of their utopic socialist vision. With 43 languages spoken⁴⁷ and little access to education under the Portuguese, much of the population, particularly the women, didn't speak the national language of Portuguese, let alone read or write it, so a united language of communication was essential. It is not unusual for a nationalist movement such as the one created by FRELIMO to rely on something 'shared' to help their nation learn to

⁴⁶ FRELIMO is an anagram for the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Moçambique* (National Front for the Liberation of Mozambique), a group of resistance movements from across the nation, who came together in 1962 under the leadership of Eduardo Mondlane to form a united front against colonial rule.

⁴⁷ This most cited figure of 43 languages, is the figure given by the linguistic authority 'ethnologue' (<https://www.ethnologue.com/country/MZ>). There are thought to be many more, with at least ten distinctive language groups of *Swahili*, *Makhuwa*, *Maconde*, *Ciyao* and *Nyanja* in the north, *Shuwabo*, *Sena*, in the centre and *Xitsua*, *Chope*, and *Tsonga* the south.

‘be’ a nation. This is often a shared language or a shared religion, taught through key institutions such as schools and the military. In Mozambique however, FRELIMO chose music, dance and film as their most affective and effective shared ‘languages’ as they could transcend the verbal communication barrier.

Songs had been used as a powerful mobilisation tool during the liberation struggle.⁴⁸ From the time they began their training in Tanzania in the 1960’s and 70’s, the FRELIMO soldiers had been appropriating and adapting the song and dance traditions the soldiers brought with them from home. Samora Machel, the charismatic first president of the independent Republic of Mozambique, often broke into song to motivate the freedom fighters, and later to motivate the nation. Songs were shared and adapted as the liberators travelled from the Rovuma river which separated Niassa and Cabo Delgado from already independent Tanzania, to the capital city, then Lourenço Marques, soon to be renamed Maputo. The songs sung in times of hardship and celebration and passed on from group to group like good stories, formed the soundtrack to the Mozambican revolution.

After independence, choirs and community song and dance groups were established in every neighbourhood and workplace, singing of their glorious nation stretching ‘from Rovuma to Maputo’.⁴⁹ The already existing infrastructure of the national radio station ‘Radio Mozambique’ began to share this music across the country. Some of the most popular black musicians making a living in the colonial jazz clubs, strip joints and dance halls around the famously lively downtown area of the port city of Lourenço Marques were recruited by the radio stations to adapt their lyrics to serve the new post-independence state.⁵⁰ While new revolutionary popular

⁴⁸ Many of the early nationalist songs and films included verbal ‘messaging’ in the Portuguese language which had been adopted as the national language in the absence of a majority indigenous language. However, the songs were often translated into local languages and the filmmakers knew to keep their spoken word to a minimum.

⁴⁹ Many songs and political speeches use the phrase ‘Rovuma to Maputo’ when referring to the united nation of Mozambique, the most common being the country’s national anthem “Povo unido do Rovuma ao Maputo, Colhe os frutos do combate pela paz” (People united from Rovuma to Maputo, Reap the fruits of combat for peace - author’s translation).

⁵⁰ Little is published in English (and only a little more in Portuguese) on the role of music in Mozambique’s road to independence. I have been conducting audiovisual research on this since 2004 and have filmed interviews with many of those involved, including musicians, radio producers and technicians which will eventually be edited into a documentary and published in written form. In the meantime, a database of material collected on this subject has been created by the Portuguese Ethnomusicology Institute (Centre of music and dance studies) entitled Inetmoz - Database of Music in Mozambique (*Banco de Dados de Música em Mozambique*)
See: <http://inetbase.pt/s/timbilamakwayelamarabenta>.

songs were written and recorded for the nation, the songs and dances from across the country, were also recorded and broadcast.

For a week in June 1978 the country held its first cultural festival, the *Festival Nacional de Dança Popular (National Popular Dance Festival)*⁵¹ which culminated in a final performance of 60 dances performed by 600 artists. The 80-page festival program reads as a party manifesto for the importance of culture for the ‘construction of a society free of man’s inhumanity to man, the struggle against imperialism, racism, and the exploitation of women’.⁵²

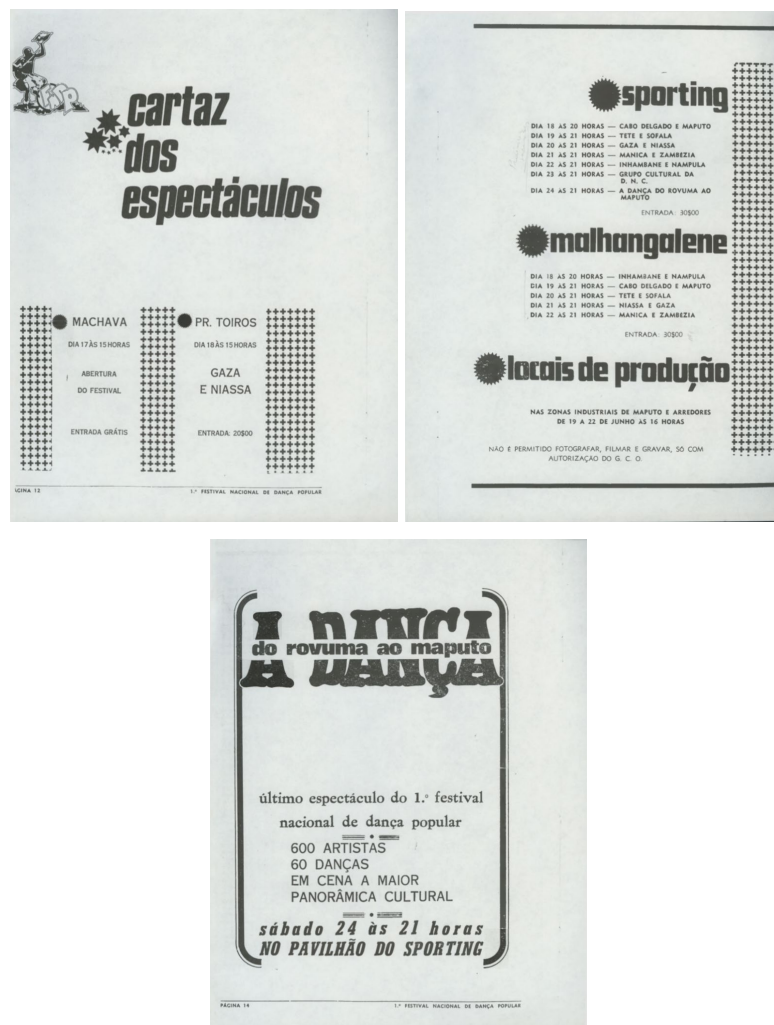
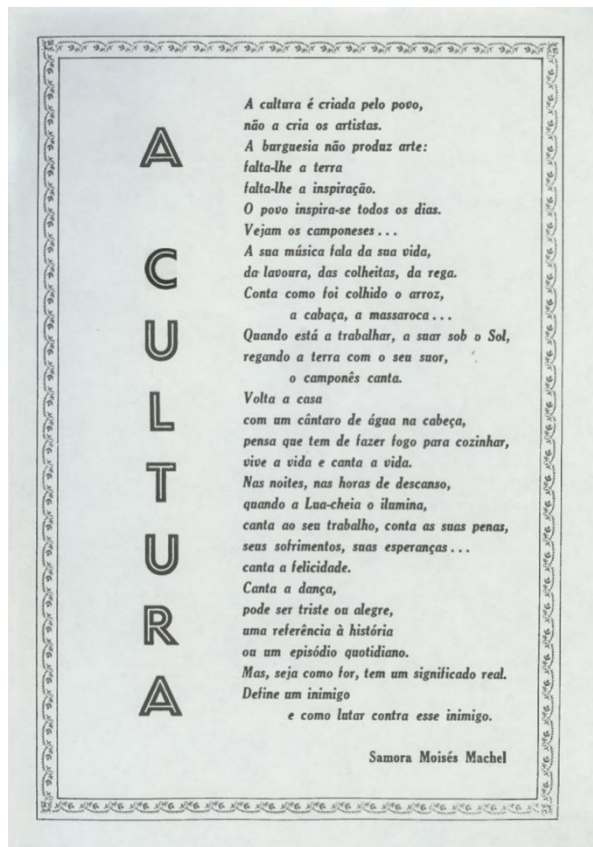


Figure 2.4 Programme pages of 1st National Popular Dance Festival, June 17-24, 1978
Announcing a week of performances over 5 different stages with the last show alone showcasing
600 Artists and 60 Dances from Rovuma to Maputo

⁵¹ During the decolonization process across Africa, the notion of ‘traditional’ music was questioned, indeed the very nature of ‘tradition’ which so often diminished the value of the medicine, song, dance or religion when used in the colonial context. The word was replaced with ‘popular’ for the first festival, but had returned by the second festival two years later.

⁵² Although not attributed to a specific author, this manifesto text was written by the then minister of culture and education and wife of the president, Graça Machel (see Gray, 2018)

The booklet opens with a poem by the new President Samora Moisés Machel



*Culture is created by the people
It doesn't create artists
The bourgeoisie doesn't produce art:
They lack the land
They lack the inspiration.
The people are inspired every day.
Look at the peasants
Their music speaks of their life,
Of labour, or harvests, of watering the earth
They tell of how the rice was brought in,
the gourds, the corn ...
When working, sweating under the sun
watering the earth
with their sweat,
the peasant sings.
Returning home
With a water jar on their head,
thinking of the fire they will light to cook on,
they live life and sing life.
At night, in the hours of repose,
In the light of the full moon,
They sing about their work and tell of their pity,
their suffering, their hopes and dreams ...
they sing happiness.
Song and dance,
Can be sad or happy,
a historical reference
or a quotidian episode.
But, whatever it is, it has real significance.
It defines an enemy*

And how to struggle against this enemy.

Samora Moisés Machel

Figure 2.5 Poem by President Samora Machel on Page 3 of 80 Page Festival Programme of the 1st National Popular Dance Festival, June 17-24, 1978

The festival also launched a Campanha Nacional de Preservação e Revalorização da História e Cultura Popular (National Campaign to Preserve and Revalorize People's History and Culture) which lasted two years. Researchers were sent to villages, districts and towns across the country. Groups were formed and trained and local competitions were held.⁵³ This culminated in the first *Festival Nacional de Canção e da Música Tradicional de Moçambique* (Festival of Mozambican Song and Traditional Music) in 1980.⁵⁴

⁵³ For more on the National Campaign to Preserve and Revalorize People's History and Culture (*Campanha Nacional de Preservação e Revalorização da História e Cultura Popular*) see Masters thesis by Richard Gray (2018) and Do Carmo Piçarra's 'Mozambique: a Nation with music and project in through cinema' (2018).

⁵⁴ The Festival of Mozambican Song and Traditional Music was part of a national campaign for the preservation and valorisation of culture launched in 1978. The performing groups had been selected over a series of competitions that took place from village to district and then to provincial level. They travelled from every province to the capital to be part of an 8-day festival that ran from 28 December 1980 to 6 January 1981 (See Gray, 2020:185) and were joined by international stars such as Miriam

Soon, music and dance were making an important contribution to the united identity of the new republic. In addition to dance and music, however, President Samora Machel was keen to explore other forms of non-verbal communication. In November 1975, just five months after the Mozambican liberation front FRELIMO were settled in government in the capital city, the National Film Institute was created with its slogan ‘delivering to the people an image of the people’ (Gray 2020, 127). A prolific period of Mozambican audiovisual production followed. In little over a decade, the National Film Institute produced 13 long documentaries and/or dramas, 119 short documentaries and 395 weekly editions of the famous weekly newsreel *Kuxa Kanema*⁵⁵ (see Gray, 2020, Convents, 2011 and Andrade-Watkins, 1999). These films produced during the ‘heyday’ of Mozambican cinema, are celebrated as having played an essential part in the social transformation of millions of disparate Mozambicans, encouraging them to contribute to the socialist dream, to embrace the new independent era of self-determination and national pride, to free themselves from their deeply entrenched colonial identity and to celebrate their own national culture and identity.

2.3 Language, music and independent Mozambican cinema



Figure 2.6. Film Reels from *Kuxa Kanema* Film Archive. Maputo.
Source: pelocinema

Makeba to huge crowds at the 60,000 seater national stadium. The Ministry of Culture had commissioned the National Film Institute to record the event, which they did in collaboration with a Portuguese production company Filmform (See *Música Moçambique*, by José Fonseca e Costa, 1981)

⁵⁵ The title of the 10-minute weekly newsreel ‘*Kuxa Kanema*’ in the language of the south, changane, translates literally as ‘the birth of cinema’. For years, 35mm prints were distributed to all the urban cinemas and 16mm copies to the rural areas through mobile cinema units. Black and White stock was used so that the institute was independent of foreign labs, conducting all production, and post-production in house. It was only, at the height of the war, when the film stock and the chemicals could no longer make it into Maputo and the film crews could no longer make it out of Maputo, that the production of *Kuxa Kanema* was brought to a standstill. This coincided with about the time that the first president Samora Machel was mysteriously killed in a plane crash in 1986 and the film institute lost their visionary founder. For more on this see Margarida Cardoso’s 2003 film *Kuxa Kanema* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJRM2UCH4cw>).

The challenge of harnessing the language of film as one of the first revolutionary activities of the newly independent nation required not only the training of the first generation of Mozambican film directors, producers and technicians, but also ensuring these films were seen and understood by the audience the films were made for. This task was entrusted to an unlikely combination of intellectuals, politicians, and ex-combatants who were brought together under one roof and set with the task of creating a revolutionary film culture from scratch. Trainers, writers and advisors flooded in from solidarity movements across the globe to help. The division of responsibilities reflected the continued divisions of class, race and gender in Mozambique. The few women at the institute were largely recruited to the traditional female roles of administration and post-production.⁵⁶ Amongst the men, the producers, directors and writers were predominantly white or mixed race, recruited from colonial film clubs, writers' organisations and the political elite, while the black technicians were selected from local schools and technical colleges to learn camera and sound recording.

In conversations with representatives of each of these groups, race was not mentioned as a defining distinction, however. Instead, those who were involved in those early days of Mozambican cinema describe the thrill of teaching themselves the language of cinema, with a view to use it to unify and educate the nation. One of the early arrivals from Portugal who came to contribute to the revolution was Pedro Pimenta. He was installed as the head of INC production and later became the institute's assistant director. He describes those early years in an interview he gave in San Francisco in 1983, when on tour promoting the work of the institute with his colleague Camilo de Sousa, a FRELIMO Comandante who became one of the first of the nation's film directors.⁵⁷

We started from nothing. Not one Mozambican filmmaker existed in 1975. We started training people and getting technology. Since 1978 we have had the basic technical facilities to produce,

⁵⁶ The black Mozambican women recruited to the INC were largely trained in the film laboratories and as editing assistants (see first-hand accounts in www.museudecinema.org). Film editing is a long-established women's domain. This was a legacy from early film production where the film rolls needed to be joined together by cutting and glueing, like knitting. Outside of the labs and cutting rooms in the basement, there was only one woman included in the INC editorial team. Her name was Moira Forjaz, an Irish woman married to a white Mozambican architect. Both were active in the revolution and the new ruling party.

⁵⁷ In his most recent film *Sonhámos um País*, We Dreamed of a Country (de Sousa & Noronha, 2019), made with his wife Isabel Noronha, de Sousa takes a critical reflection of his time in Frelimo after independence.

in black and white, 16mm and 35mm films. We started from a small organization of six people and now we are eighty. Even after twenty years of independence, several African countries don't have a film institute. Since Independence, we have made seventy documentaries and four feature films. It is our victory. We are not modest, we are not hypocrites; it's our victory.

Extract from Interview with Pedro Pimenta
Film reborn in Mozambique
by Clyde Taylor for Jump Cut (1983)

2.4 The heyday of Mozambican cinema (1975-1985)

The vision of the pioneers of the National Film Institute was utopian and ambitious; to support the creation of a free, educated, informed, healthy and aspirational socialist population of independent Mozambicans. The film institute spent the first decade of independence exploring the best language, the best format, the best aesthetic and theoretical approach to achieve this.⁵⁸ In 1978, two years after the formation of the National Film Institute, in addition to international collaborations, a ten-minute newsreel was being produced in-house and distributed through a mobile distribution network. The films were not only screened in the large public colonial cinemas found in every city and many towns across the country, but also in smaller towns and villages in each province through what was known as *cinema móvel*, (mobile cinema).⁵⁹ A fleet of 35 vans carried generators, screens, projectors and PA

⁵⁸ Many documentaries about the liberation struggle and independence movement in Mozambique were made before, during and after Independence. At first these films were international productions, starting as early as 1968 with *Venceremos* (Popović, 1968), a Yugoslav film made for Frelimo, followed in 1971 by more international films made in the FRELIMO training camps and liberated zones; the British production *Behind the Lines*, (Dickenson, 1971), the Swedish film *I vårt land börjar kulorna blomma*, In our country, the bullets are starting to bloom (Malmer and Romane, 1971), the Soviet film *Viva Frelimo!!* (Egorov and Maksimov, 1971) and the Chinese propaganda film *The People of Mozambique are Fighting*, (Tan Qi, 1971) and later *As Armas do Povo*, Weapons of the People, made by a collective of Portuguese film workers (Instituto Português de Cinema, 1975). As the Institute was established these became co-productions, most notably with two films made by Afro-American Robert Van Lierop's *A Luta Continua*, The Struggle Continues (1972) and *O Povo Organizado*, The Organised People (1976), and eventually independent Mozambican films such as *Mueda, Memória e Massacre*, Mueda, Memory and Massacre (Guerra, 1979), directed by Mozambican-born member of the Brazilian Cinema Novo movement, Ruy Guerra, as well as Cardoso's *Sing My Brother, Help Me to Sing*, (1981).

⁵⁹ José Cardoso, director of *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* and his wife Laura started screening films translated into the local languages in their home city of Beira in 1976. Between 1976 and 1978 Cardoso managed the distribution of these films ensuring they were made widely available by training up a group of projectionists. This model was replicated in Maputo in 1978. The projectionists would arrive with their projector, reels of film, screen and a generator, travelling by any means possible until

systems to a designated town or village each morning, announcing the film screening through large megaphones mounted on their roofs. Come the evening, hundreds of people would be gathered at the designated spot, keen to see other Mozambicans on the screen. This creative period resulted in heated debate amongst those involved as to the best way moving image could be used to change hearts and minds. Studies were conducted, practical solutions explored, reports written and long meetings held, all in search of the most effective way to exploit the true transformational potential of the moving image (see Cardoso, 2013 and Gray 2020).

Making films in those days required expensive film stock and processing in dedicated laboratories. Independent decolonial film cultures in West and North Africa, that had been evolving since their independence in the 1960's, didn't have these laboratories and the filmmakers were still dependent on France for their post-production and distribution. Learning from their predecessors' difficulties to free themselves of this economic and aesthetic colonial control, the INC decided to shoot exclusively on black and white. This meant they could process their own film stock in-house. They also maintained control of their own film distribution, and income from the urban cinema houses was fed back into new productions. Lab technicians were trained and employed full-time to process the film stock.

In the late 1970's, collaborative explorations into the use of other media formats were investigated. French *avant-garde* film maker, and pioneer of French New Wave, Jean Luc Godard, spent several months in Mozambique in 1979, invited to explore the use of video in the creation of a TV station in Niassa showing exclusively local content, while at more or less the same time the French ethnographer Jean Rouch, pioneer of *Cinéma Vérité*, or 'Cinema of Truth' was collaborating with the anthropology department of the Eduardo Mondlane University on the production of a series of super-8 ethnographic films shot by community members, also in the northern province of Niassa. Ruy Guerra, one of the leading figures of Cinema Novo in Brazil, the third *avant-garde* film movement shaking the world of cinema at this time, was also putting his theories into practice in Mozambique. While it could be said that Godard and Rouch had little or no lasting impact on Mozambican film production,

a fleet of 35 mobile cinema units had been built up. Ten arrived from the Soviet Union, one from East Germany in 1978. This was enough to start regular screenings of the locally produced newsreel documentary *Kuxa Kanema* which began to be screened by mobile cinema units countrywide. (See Gray 2020 p 117).

Guerra became the director of the National Film Institute and directed the historic anti-colonial performative film in Mueda, described in Chapter 1 (Guerra, 1979). The unifying element of all this exploration of different approaches to audiovisual production was the intention of finding the most effective way for Mozambicans from across the country to have the opportunity to be seen and heard and play a part in their own representation.

By 1978, a weekly newsreel called *Kuxa Kanema* was being produced out of the National Film Institute and distributed to all corners of the country. By 1980, educational videos were also being produced locally by regional representatives of the Institute of Social Communication (INC). While disagreements reigned between the filmmakers and the politicians, and the more creative explorations of moving image were superseded by the more didactic and propagandistic newsreel format, the 395 weekly editions of this uniquely independent newsreel nevertheless resulted in a highly skilled production team and an effective distribution model like nothing else in the region, or indeed the continent. (Diawara, 1992, Convents 2011 and Gray 2020). Rural communities who had never seen moving image before gathered under the stars to see what was going on in the rest of their country. Often the distorted audio from the loudspeakers would compete with the nocturnal calls of the crickets and frogs, plus the rumble of the generator and the excited murmur of children. The refined accents of the Portuguese voice-overs were difficult to make out, even for those in the audience who did have some grasp of the Portuguese language, so creative solutions needed to be found to reach the widest audience. What resulted was what could be described as a cinematic precursor to the music-video. Revolutionary songs and dances were incorporated into the early newsreels, while in the documentaries and features more creative musical solutions were found.

Come 1981, three Mozambican films were released that became known for their effective use of music and image; *Pamperi ni Zimbabwe* (Costa & Henrique 1980), *Música Moçambique* (Fonseca e Costa 1981), and our reference film *Sing My Brother, Help Me to Sing* (Cardoso 1981).⁶⁰ The first two were co-productions with Angola and

⁶⁰ Of these three films, two were international co-productions. *Pamperi ni Zimbabwe* (1980) between the Angolan and Mozambican film institutes to spread an African version of the story of Zimbabwean independence in the region, and *Música Moçambique* (1981) between the Mozambican government and a Portuguese production company Filmforum. Portugal had also become socialist in April 1974 after the success of a revolution against the fascism of the *Estado Novo* and there was much solidarity between socialist filmmakers in Portugal and the burgeoning film institute of Mozambique.

Portugal respectively, while the latter was one of the first films to be directed, shot and edited entirely by Mozambicans at the National Film Institute. It seems no accident that in one of the first independent films from Mozambique, music and dance are placed at the heart of the nation's audiovisual self-representation. Images of Mozambicans going about their daily lives are woven together with musical performances in the community, a few short interviews with some of the musicians and sparse, poetic narration, in what could be described as a series of musical film portraits. Although much about this film is a product of the 'patriarchal attitudes' that 'have not vanished with the coming of a new society in Mozambique' (Urdang 1989, 28), it is inspirational in its use of music and image and an important part of the struggle across Africa to decolonize audiovisual production.⁶¹

2.5 After the heyday: Shifting priorities in audiovisual production (1986-1990)

The first decade of Mozambican audiovisual production is the stuff of the revolutionary dream. Sadly, however, Mozambique's early successes towards the Pan-African goal of self-representation in film were short-lived. Shortly after independence Mozambique was embroiled in a crippling civil war, and by the mid 1980's, film production outside of Maputo was all but impossible. The tragic death in 1986 of the first President Samora Machel⁶² - one of the greatest advocates of the importance of the moving image for self-realisation - marked a shift in priorities for the National Film Institute. At a time of great political turmoil, negotiation and shifting allegiances, the Mozambican government abandoned its revolutionary ideology and socialist policies, and drastically reduced public sector funding to the cultural sectors. This second decade of Mozambique's struggle to bring about the vision of the nation's liberation and indeed women's liberation is riddled with complexities and contradictions and doesn't make for such a good story as the first.⁶³ First there was the failure of the feminist vision in Mozambique. The slogans around women's

⁶¹ For more on the successes and failures of the decolonisation of African cinema putting this Mozambican experience into a regional context, see Manthia Diawara (1992), Kenneth Harrow (1999).

⁶² See *Samora Vive* (Vuvu, Chabela, Albuquerque, 1997)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j6vo1NLgCQ>.

⁶³ The transition from early FRELIMO socialism to the later return to capitalism began in 1985. It is known as a period of 'structural adjustment' and was informed by numerous national and international factors leading to the current neo-liberal and neo-colonial policies across Africa. Much is written on this in the context of the continent, for example see Pitcher (2002).

liberation proved easier to paint on the walls and celebrate in speeches, than to bring about in reality. This is explained by the feminist historians Stephanie Urdang and Signe Arnfred as being largely due to the new government's failure to address family law (Urdang 1989, Arnfred, 2011). While the struggles for international women's liberation were being played out in new socialist countries like Mozambique, the path to socialist utopia was becoming increasingly rocky and impassable. The external and internal political factors shift this initially neat narrative of Mozambique's struggle to break from its colonial past from a tale of binary opposition of 'goodies' and 'baddies' and into the murky waters of complex sub-plots, new heroes and shifting allegiances. The fate of the north of Mozambique serves as a powerful example and goes some way to explaining my insistence on the inclusion of the forgotten province Niassa in the research methodology explored in the next chapter, however difficult this eventually proved to be.

As described above, the northern provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado were the first to be liberated and many of the socialist ideas rolled out over the country after independence had been tested and refined here in the early 1970's. This is perhaps why the first three important audiovisual experiments by the National Film Institute (INC) were conducted in the former 'Liberated Zones' in the years after independence. The first, in June and July 1977, Jean Luc Godard's attempt at the creation of a people's television station in Niassa was cancelled during the pilot phase carried out near Maputo, due to what the government saw as its excessive cost. Jean Rouch's research in those same months also took place in Niassa where the French ethnographer travelled with his colleagues from the anthropology department of Eduardo Mondlane University and shot a series of ethnographic films on 8mm film stock using his approach of 'shared anthropology'. Unlike Godard's plans to put the cameras in the hands of the community members, Rouch's films were shot by the anthropologists, but the subjects were offered an opportunity to contribute to the decisions made about their representation during evening screenings. Sadly, these films are all thought to have been destroyed during the war and only one film remains from this period. Pertinent to this study, this film is a musical portrait of a factory dance group in southern Mozambique (Rouch, 1977). When Ruy Guerra directed his first feature in Mozambique, he too chose to do so in the north, this time in Cabo Delgado. Working with a large crew from the National Film Institute and the participation of the entire community of the town of Mueda, Guerra drew on the

performative power of community theatre for the basis of his film. *Mueda Memória e Massacre* (1979) is a beautifully crafted and cinematic re-enactment of a play performed annually in the town to remember the Portuguese army's massacre of hundreds of its townsfolk in 1962.

All three experiments described above are indications of where the INC may have headed in its collaborative and participatory representations, had the nation's decolonial journey not been derailed. Some say this was due to the death of Samora in 1986, some blame it on the successful and violent destabilisation campaign mounted from South Africa, some on the nation's dependency on the Soviet Union's and Chinese finances and thus on their politics. All three clearly played their part, but the result was the same; come the early 1980's, polarised opinions on the merits of communism began to destabilise the still fragile nation state and this took its toll on all the government's plans, including that for the development of its own independent audiovisual film production. During this time, the north gained a darker reputation. Niassa, a land of remote plains, fertile soil and wild predators roaming free made it an ideal place for Mozambique's young and already challenged government to follow in the footsteps of their Stalinist and Maoist role models (and financiers) and establish camps of 're-education' designed to reduce the ever-growing threat of 'the enemy within'.⁶⁴

In recent years Mozambican filmmakers, writers and academics have found ways to bring some of the untold stories of the north to the public eye for the first time. FRELIMO were popular for liberating the nation from the Portuguese, however, as Mozambican historian Bendito Machava describes, the regime was 'as popular as it was violent' (Machava 2011, 593). So effective was the silencing of dissent in the mid to late 1980's, that Machava's analysis of the 'rigid politics of punishment' in 'remote areas of the country' at this time would have been punishable as 'treason and crimes against decolonisation' (ibid, 595-596).⁶⁵ Mozambicans lived in fear of saying the

⁶⁴ For more on this darker phase in Mozambique's revolutionary history and the repressive efforts to combat the enemy within see Machava (2018).

⁶⁵ An internationally brokered Peace Accord in October 1992 led to multi-party elections in 1994 and voicing dissent was actively encouraged by those introducing parliamentary democracy to Mozambique. Although most of the opposition parties that grew up at this time and tested out this newfound freedom of speech did not last long beyond the elections, expressing positions contrary to those promoted by the party-state could no longer legally be punished. Nevertheless, reading a publication of a Mozambican academic presenting the alternative and often unspoken narrative of Mozambican history is still unusual. There have been a number of public assassinations of outspoken academics, journalists and lawyers since the move to democracy. None have been directly linked to any

wrong thing to the wrong person and being sent to Niassa.⁶⁶ The place of dreams had become the place of nightmares. The war began to dominate the attentions of the government and the limited opportunities to travel safely to other parts of the country, combined with the critical finances of the state crippled the production of the flagship film newsreel *Kuxa Kanema*. During this time of transition, the experimental television station TVE was launched along with their flagship channel *Canal Zero*.⁶⁷

Perhaps as a result of market forces and the need to reach both local and international audiences, what followed was the start of a new kind of Mozambican non-fiction filmmaking. Innovative forms of Mozambican self-representation evolved on video. In these films, the line between ethnographic film and cultural documentary, music video and musical short film, fiction and non-fiction, became so blurred the international television and festival programmers struggled to know where to place them. Although downgraded in the eyes of the international market-place due to the video format, those behind the cameras were directors of photography trained in cinema, the directors were also *cinephiles* influenced by the French new wave, Italian neorealism, and the early North and West African fiction films of Haile Gerima, Ousmane Sembène and Sarah Moldoror. They shot their documentaries with shooting scripts based on prolonged periods of ethnographic research and their productions involved the active participation of entire communities where the films were made. Each experiment was seen by the directors as an opportunity to explore cinematic language and form. Later the relatively large budgets from the European broadcasters and American development organisations matched or even surpassed the budgets of the early INC fiction films.

The results were a new form of decolonial audiovisual production, designed to meet the international demands of the broadcasters and festivals, and the needs of the

official policy and scapegoats from Maputo's gang culture have been found in each instance.

⁶⁶ The first international feature film directed by Licínio Azevedo, *Virgem Margarida*, Virgin Margarida (2012) was a fictional look at the story of the 're-education camps' in Niassa. The film had limited screening opportunities in Mozambique, but in 2012 such criticism was quietly tolerated by the government. In 2019 however, filmmaker Camilo de Sousa, a FRELIMO commander in the northern province of Cabo Delgado during these years, recently released his own reflections on the re-education camps in the film *Sonhâmos um País*, We Dreamed a Country (2019) co-directed with his wife Isabel Noronha. The film has not been screened in Mozambique and the filmmakers have felt it prudent to remain outside of the country since its release.

⁶⁷ Mozambican television was launched in 1982 with INC Production Director Pedro Pimenta at the helm. The popular television channel Canal Zero was headed up by the Brazilian-born writer Licínio Azevedo. These two were to form one of the most prolific and internationally successful producer / director duos during the next chapter of Mozambique's film history.

Mozambican viewer. It is this chapter in Mozambique's cinematic history, from 1990 to 2005, where the story of the pioneers of the National Film Institute and my own intertwine.

2.6 Language, music and fifteen years of (not so independent) Mozambican audiovisual production and my role within it (1990-2005)

I was 28 years old and had been exploring the creative and combined use of music and sound in low-budget film productions in the UK when I was invited to Mozambique to spend 9 weeks working in an international crew with Mozambican filmmakers and musicians on the international co-production *A Child From The South* (Rezende, 1992). This was at a time where the young British broadcaster Channel 4 was venturing into co-productions with formerly colonised nations in an effort to present new perspectives on established colonial narratives, and multinational crews were an obligatory part of the external finance package of such international co-productions. The fact that Mozambique was in the middle of a civil war when I travelled there just increased my naive enthusiasm and I saw it as another adventure in my already international journey of creative discovery. I expected to return to my base in the UK before Christmas with new insights and understandings and to continue my itinerant lifestyle forging out a career for myself in the evolving discipline of composition and sound design. As it was, the production fell into difficulties, and the nine weeks turned into sixteen. During those additional seven weeks standing by on full pay while the production resolved its problems, I found myself working with top Mozambican musicians on the soundtrack of Licínio Azevedo's first broadcast documentary, *Marracuene, Two Banks of a Mozambican River*, while performing as guest saxophonist in a number of local bands. As a new director was found for the floundering co-production, I began to convert my rusty spoken Spanish into Portuguese, and my fate, it seems, was sealed.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ When I arrived in Mozambique in 1990, I spoke some Spanish. On that first international co-production and the two first films with Licínio Azevedo, strangely enough the lingua franca was French as the Brazilians in the crew didn't speak English, but the Portuguese and English speakers spoke French. I actually knew very few people who spoke English and I was able to speak Portuguese well enough within 6 months. The reason I didn't direct until 1997 however, was that it wasn't until then that I felt comfortable enough to work at that level in Portuguese, by which time I had also had lessons in *changana*, the language commonly spoken outside of the city centre.

Film production had been limping along at the National Film Institute and the possibility of a return to the international co-productions of the 'heyday' brought a new optimism to the under-occupied staff there. I remember the empty sound studios and cutting rooms during my first tour of the institute in 1990, the redundant technicians playing checkers with bottle tops on cardboard boxes, still dressed in their lab-coats. However, in early 1991, a devastating fire rendered the offices, labs and some of the archive to a blackened shell of rubble and ash, so accelerating the transition from nationalised to privatised audiovisual production. I remember passing ineffective buckets of water down a line of grief-stricken filmmakers as the institute blazed in front of us. I remember the heroic efforts of the Zimbabwean grips and gaffers who ran into the burning building to try to save the equipment essential to the continuation of our production.

The film we shot over those months was released the following year with little fanfare, the fire having been one of many obstacles to the realisation of the original vision for the film. This historic co-production was largely relegated to late night Channel 4 schedules and didn't pave the way for the start of a line of Mozambican feature film productions, as had been hoped. Instead, it was the parallel production I helped out on in my time off that contributed more to the new course of Mozambican audiovisual production. This was a poetic documentary about life in a town during war entitled 'Marracuene, Two Banks of a Mozambican River' (Azevedo, 1992) and was commissioned by the same ground-breaking British broadcaster Channel 4. It became the first in a long line of international non-fiction commissions that came to Mozambique over the next decade. In these films of the 1990's, as was the case in their earlier films, the directors of these celebrated documentaries drew heavily on music and sound.

By the time the filming on *A Child from the South* eventually came to an end, I had decided to stay 'a little longer'. I was still at the beginning of my career as a young composer, sound engineer and sound designer, a combination of skills not yet common in British film production, but that fascinated the Mozambican filmmakers. It was their interest in this that kept me in Mozambique until 2007. One exciting opportunity after another came along; recording the sound and composing and designing the soundtrack of a string of Mozambican films and television programmes, setting up an independent recording studio, producing sound and music-filled radio packages and features for

the BBC and developing initiatives to start training the next generation. The seeds for the *Speak My Sister* research explored in this thesis were sown over these years.

2.7 Recent Mozambican film and video production (2005 – 2020)

Ironically, the nature of international film finance led established Mozambican directors, such as Licínio Azevedo and Sol de Carvalho, to focus their efforts on large feature co-productions. The television commissions for non-fiction were now few and far between, and the options for them to continue as filmmakers were limited. Some, such as Camilo de Sousa, (1980, 1981, 1983, 1987, 2003, 2006, and 2019) resorted to producing news packages for international agencies, the two women directors that developed their crafts at the INC, Isabel Noronha (1995, 2004, 2007 and 2019) and Moira Forjaz (1981), moved into new careers outside of the film industry. Those trained in Cuba, such as João Ribeiro (1992, 1997, 2005, 2010, 2020) moved into national television, and others, such as producer and former production director of the INC, Pedro Pimenta developed their careers abroad.

Interestingly, the protagonists of the fiction films of those who remained were often women. Azevedo's films were both based on research he had previously explored in other creative forms. The first, *Virgin Margarida* (2012) was a fictional rendition of a documentary I had worked on called *The Last Prostitute* (1999), which told the story of the thousands of single women who were rounded up by FRELIMO soldiers in the early 1980's and sent to camps in Niassa to be 're-educated' as good socialists, producers of food, wives and mothers. Azevedo's second film brings his book *O Comboio de Sal e Açúcar*, *The Train of Salt and Sugar* (2017) to the screen. This book was based on months of research travelling on the railway line that continued to cross Northern Mozambique during the war. The book tells the stories of many of the passengers, the railway staff and the soldiers as they make the perilous slow journey through enemy territory. One of the narratives given great importance in the film focusses on the sexual abuse of the passengers by the FRELIMO soldiers who protected the train during the war (Azevedo, 2017).

Carvalhos's fiction films have also all been based on ethnographic research, often conducted by anthropologists and in collaboration with the untrained actors often

playing fictionalised versions of themselves.⁶⁹ His first feature *A Herança da Viuva* The Widow's Inheritance (1997), brings one of the inhuman and violent traditions against women into the public eye. The protagonist loses her husband and, as is common in southern Mozambique, is cast out of the family upon her husband's death, all her goods going to his brother. His most recent film, still in production at the time of writing, highlights a parallel practice called *Kutchinga*, where the widow must have sex with her deceased husband's brother, sometimes to stay with him and remain his second wife, sometimes then cast out with nothing. Two of Sol's other successful fiction films, *O Jardim do Outro Homem*, The Other Man's Garden (2006), and *Mabata Bata*, (2018), deal respectively with sexual abuse in schools and the relationship between early marriage and schoolgirl drop-out and the tradition of paying a bride price or *lobolo* in Southern Mozambique. Although these films are seen and praised by international audiences, the pace, aesthetic and cinematic language of Carvalhos's films, based on the formal and informal reception studies of the INC, is designed primarily for national audiences.⁷⁰

In 2007, 17 years after I had arrived in Mozambique, the shift in approach to film financing had pushed our independent production company into an all-too-familiar neo-colonial dependency on telling the stories dictated to by the international donors or supporting the productions of often international film crews. This, coupled with the needs of my now ageing parents, motivated my Mozambican husband Sidónio and me to leave Mozambique and make our home in the country of my birth. We kept our production company going, Sidónio returning regularly to Mozambique as line

⁶⁹ Considering the well-documented and oft-cited earlier films of Jean Rouch, seen as early examples of the form that became known as 'ethnofiction', films such as *Moi Un Noir* (1958) and *Jaguar* (1967) filmed between 1958 and 1961 and released much later, and the presence of Jean Rouch in Mozambique in 1977 where he was working in the anthropology department of the University Eduardo Mondlane, it would be tempting to assume Rouch influenced the style of the Mozambican filmmakers in their techniques working with local communities in their own fictional self-representation. In an interview with Licínio Azevedo in 2018, however, he was if anything offended by the association. He cited his experience as a journalist under the military dictatorship in Brazil as having a fundamental influence on his use of fiction in representing the lives of the people he gathered his facts from. Although initially to protect them and to dodge the censors, he discovered then the power of fiction based on fact. This was the start of his journey first as a writer, moving from Brazil first to Guinea Bissau and then a filmmaker when he was invited to the INC by his friend, then new director Ruy Guerra. Under the directorship of one of the pioneers of Brazilian Cinema Novo, the INC felt more creatively aligned by the more revolutionary *avant-garde* of France, Italy and Brazil than an anthropologist and visual ethnographer such as Rouch, who was seen as remaining rooted in his colonial past. On the other hand, Azevedo always speaks passionately about the influence Jean Luc Godard had on him, an enthusiasm I have heard shared by others who worked with him during his stay.

⁷⁰ Carvalho is as committed to distribution as production, running two cinemas in Maputo and Inhambane and prioritizing the screening of Mozambican content.

producer, or ‘fixer’ on international productions while I began to discover the academic relevance of the work I had been doing, first as a visiting speaker to anthropology, film and music departments of my local universities and later as a student. Over the years, during my annual visits ‘home’ to Mozambique, I watched on as more and more women found their place as professional musicians in Maputo. However, the professional opportunities for women in music were not replicated in the world of moving image production. Along with my former colleagues, I continued to lament the limited opportunities for any young Mozambican to find their creative voice in this seventh art, let alone women. One place where it was possible to do this, at least for the men, was in the production of music videos.

2.8 The role of the music video in Mozambican audiovisual self-representation

In the 1990’s, the requirements of the neoliberal film finance models heralded a return to old colonial approaches to audiovisual representation, to satisfy the needs of global production and distribution networks producing for the European, North and later South American audiences. Mozambican productions were no longer financed by Mozambican cinema distribution. Instead, established filmmakers turned to international broadcasters and development organisations while the opportunities for the younger generation, keen to start a career in moving image production, were extremely limited. Those determined to find a way, often did so through music video production.

In 1996, I remember visiting my friends of the Mozambican urban elite, watching on as their children, who had access to basic camcorders and improvised VHS tape-to-tape editing, set up their own makeshift studios in their homes. Unlike the revolutionary intellectual generation before them, this generation was not influenced by the cinematic language of the Italian Neo-realism, French *New Wave* and Latin American Cinema Novo. They were instead watching music-videos, now broadcast to the cable TV viewing urban elite on MTV and illegally re-broadcast on national television to fill those expensive hours of daytime airtime. Michael Jackson and Prince were soon replaced by hip hop artists such as 2Pac and Wu-Tang Klan, who entered into Mozambican homes and struck a chord with the young Mozambicans looking for the voice of their generation. Low-budget independent music videos put Mozambican

moving image production back ‘in the hands of the people’, true to the revolutionary dreams of times gone by. Here, filmmakers were autonomous and self-reliant. Cameras, microphones and editing equipment had become affordable and music video production had become an effective and self-sustaining training ground for the next generation of Mozambican filmmakers. However, there were no women behind the cameras and those in front were often expected to imitate the sexualised objectification of many women in the international music videos being screened on MTV.

An economic boom in 2007 improved urban Mozambican’s buying power. This led to higher budgets in the local music videos and TV commercials being produced now by successful corporate production companies. It was possible to have a career in music video production and commercials in Maputo. Some of those directors moved into producing short fiction films, largely for the international donors on themes such as HIV, domestic abuse and early marriage. In 2018 two young Mozambicans, Pipas Forjaz and Mickey Fonseca produced their first feature film and financed it entirely with the profits saved from their commercial productions. The result was *Resgate* (2019), a fast paced, emotional and visually powerful gangster movie set in Maputo, selected by Netflix in 2020 to blaze a trail for worldwide streaming of independent African cinema. Contrary to my initial fears, although set in Maputo’s masculine culture of gangsters, guns and crime, this film is as much about the impact of that culture on the women and children, as it is about increasing violence in the new generation of Mozambican men. The success of this young duo offers hope to the next generation, that they too can find their cinematic voice through first exploring the language of the music video.

Speak My Sister drew on this long legacy of nationally produced music videos and the even longer legacy of nationally produced non-fiction films. It combined the analytic and empirical emphasis on the language of music and dance of *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*, the collaborative ethnographic methodologies developed by the urban intellectuals that came after Cardoso, and introduced to this, the musical and visual ideas of the younger generation.



Interlude 3

Tell the group about this film we are making

Cardoso Portrait 3

Velho Mahamba
Zavala

Inhambane Province

EXT. DAY. ZAVALA, INHAMBANE TIMBILA MSÃO (GATHERING)

The MAHAMBATE TIMBILA GROUP are slowly revealed sitting by their instruments. Wooden keys made from the hallowed Mwenje tree sit on wooden frames, held together by twine and sap, masala gourds of different sizes are suspended beneath them. The men watch on with curiosity as the young white man in jeans and a T-Shirt in their midst, talks to a TRANSLATOR, a clapperboard in his hand.



MALE NARRATOR

Inhambane

Mwenje wood, masalas

and the glue from the sap,

plus the knowledge,

and the *jambil* wood and *Msão*,

the main music

and dance of the *Timbila*⁷¹

As the camera continues to ZOOM OUT, more of the crew are revealed sitting on the ground in front of the instruments, the TRANSLATOR, in his stylish cream suit, GABRIEL MONDLANE, the sound recordist, with his reel-to-reel tape recorder resting on his lap, HAROON PATEL, the production director and HENRIQUE CALDEIRA, the assistant director, script writer and editor sitting beside the translator. They are all focussed on the *timbila* master MESTRE MAHAMBA sitting at his instrument, their backs to the viewer. The TRANSLATOR speaks in the language of the Chope people, guardians of the knowledge of the *Timbila*. His words are not translated, but

⁷¹ Timbila is the plural of the singular M'bila. However, the instrument is only recently starting to be played solo, and the plural term Timbila has become an accepted noun for one and many instruments. The Chope terms for the movements are familiar terms to most Mozambican musicians. The gathering of Timbila Orchestras is known as a *Msão*. A Timbila dance suite is known as an *moodo*. The virtuoso introduction which opens the piece in this scene is called a *Mitsitso*. There are *movements*, or *mzeno* in each composition and each individual tune or piece within the whole composition is known as a *nadando*. Timbila music is perhaps one of the most known and most studied of Mozambique's musical traditions. The instrument and the music have been recognised by UNESCO as part of the World's Intangible Heritage (see <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/chopi-timbila-00133>). For a useful introduction in English, see Tracey, (2011), or Wane (2020).

we can catch some familiar words among them.... "Rovuma"
 "Maputo" (the two rivers at the extreme north and south of
 the country)... "Festival".. The old man answers with one
 word.

MESTRE MAHAMBÁ

Mesa vieha (I know)

CALDEIRA

Does he know it?

TRANSLATOR

He knows it

CALDEIRA talks quietly to the translator asking him to
 speak to MAHAMBÁ on his behalf

CALDEIRA

We can say that ... we want you
 to tell the group that this
 film we are making seeks to
 show the traditional music of
 almost every province of our
 country. Then we will show this
 film in the provinces - to the
 villages, so that people can
 really know the music of the
 whole country.

The TRANSLATOR communicates the message to MESTRE MAHAMBÁ in
 his language. Again, the Chope words are not translated for
 the audience, but we can hear the word 'festival' repeated
 often. MESTRE MAHAMBÁ remains silent, CALDEIRA tries to
 encourage a little more from the musician.

CALDEIRA

In the province of Inhambane,
 the timbila is without doubt
 one of the most important
 instruments eh?

The TRANSLATOR speaks again to MESTRE MAHAMBÁ for some time,
 before receiving another short, polite answer.

MESTRE MAHAMBÁ

Grupo Mahambate

The TRANSLATOR directs his attention to CARDOSO and explains
 in Portuguese

TRANSLATOR

The group of Mahambate went to
 represent the province of
 Inhambane

CALDEIRA

Exactly...(Pause)...

.... OK, can we begin?

CARDOSO, stands up, cueing the crew to follow and move out of the shot. Cardoso walks towards the camera, clapperboard in hand and announces the scene.

CALDEIRA

Sound? Camera? Shot 269

CARDOSO marks the shot with a clack of the board, and the group begin to play. We watch on from behind the sound-recordist GABRIEL MONDLANE, microphone in hand and JACINTO BAI-BAI leaning over the camera, protecting his eyepiece from the sun. There is a woman in a blouse and flares standing next to him with a clipboard and a light meter.



MESTRE MAHAMBA plays a virtuoso solo introduction. A woman and child sit quietly by his side. The crew are no longer visible and the virtuoso introduction to the song begins to build. There are seven Timbila of different sizes, each playing their own part composed by a Timbila Master that came before him, possibly before they were born. Their parts compliment and respond to those of the leader, MESTRE MAHAMBA, sometimes in unison, sometimes in complex counterpoint.



Our attention is taken from the group to the community they inhabit. Men, women and children go about their lives at the port of Inhambane, a wooden sailing boat known as a Dhow is

filled with passengers sails across the water. Naked children play in the water while a soft woman's voice provides a translation to the song.

FEMALE NARRATOR

*In the South, the Portuguese
distributed the passbooks
and a parcel of land for the
mandatory cotton quota.
We were prisoners
and they beat us.
They only knew how to oppress
and we had to pick and prepare
the cotton*

The music continues to build. Ululations and shouts are joined by whistles and loud shakers. The energy builds. We start to observe smiles on some of the musicians' faces. The camera moves through the orchestra, populated also by members of the community sitting in respectful stillness amongst the instruments.

Back in the town of INHAMBANE, men are seen walking the empty colonial streets. Women scoop muddy water out of the earth and fill their tin pails. The men in the orchestra begin to sing. They are joined by male dancers who face the orchestra carrying shields. Their movements, ululations, shouts and the sound of their shields hitting the ground intensify the music. The rhythm changes, a unison call brings the full eight-minute rendition of the song to an end.

To the sound of a new drum beat, the red line on the map of Mozambique is now extended from Inhambane to the provincial capital of Pemba, in the far north of the country.

MALE NARRATOR

To the north, Cabo Delgado



Chapter 3. A critical reflection on method and positionality

3.1 Reflecting on effective intersectional methodologies

The 1981 film *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* was not only a historical, conceptual and theoretical provocation and frame of reference for this research, it was also a methodological one. As mentioned in the introduction, the film was very much a product of its time. Despite its limitations from a feminist perspective, it was a committed creative expression of the filmmakers' socialist values and the desire to close the distance between the urban elite and the rural poor. It was made at a time the ethics of representation and notions of 'self-consciousness' (Geertz, 1973, p19) in anthropological writing, and 'exposing yourself' in ethnographic film (Ruby, 1980), were being recognised as important methodological approaches amongst anthropologists and documentary filmmakers. Cardoso's inclusion of the crew in many of the portraits in *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* prompted me to take these ideas further in *Speak My Sister* and to include the films telling the stories behind the stories in the web documentary.

Keen not to disguise or misrepresent their portrayal of the musicians in the film they were making as anything but their personal perspective, Cardoso and his team from Mozambique's National Film Institute (INC) explore the creative possibilities of authorial reflexivity at various moments of the film itself. The crew make their first stop on their musical odyssey around Mozambique in Zavala, Inhambane, and establish the narrative devices to be continued throughout the film. The portrait consists of a 'conversation' which, albeit rather stilted, does involve communication between the Assistant Director Henrique Caldeira and the Timbila Master Mestre Mahamba. They wanted the viewer to know who was behind the camera and why they were making this film. The crew, with almost as many members as the orchestra they are filming, sit on the floor in front of the musicians, like an audience at a public performance. In explaining the objective of the film to Mestre Mahamba through an interpreter, Caldeira also introduces the premise behind the film to us, the viewer. This group represented the province of Inhambane in the festival; now they can be seen by

the nation in their home environment. Through their music and dance they can share their lives and their knowledge with the visitors from Maputo and the people of the other distant provinces they know so little about. The musicians poised at their instruments in front of the camera are still and serious, impatient to perform. Mestre Mahamba also seems shy, perhaps intimidated by the camera and the words of these men from Maputo. When he starts playing his instrument however, his power and authority returns to him.

Cardoso's choice to reveal the relationship between the musicians and the largely white crew, highlighting the communication through the translator, was an unprecedented break from the earlier productions coming out of the INC. The documentary filming style of the institute's flagship weekly newsreel *KuxaKanema*, used the expository formality of the earliest proponents of the documentary form. Images illustrated the 'voice of God' narrative, offering the viewer the 'truth' the young revolutionary government was carefully constructing.⁷² These sequences were reinforced by the occasional interview with a primed representative of the party, worker or peasant - on the whole a man - and speeches by the charismatic president Samora Machel. In his new reflexive style, Cardoso is asking questions about the power of the filmmaker in the representation of the other. He is also introducing a new visual, somatic and sonic cinematic language to the Mozambican audience, one that can be understood by audiences across the country, despite their spoken language. There are still sequences narrated in Portuguese. However, breaking with the established practice, there are two voices, a male and a female and they are not there purely as representatives of knowledge. Sometimes this narrator is translating the words of the protagonist, sometimes reflecting the thoughts of the filmmaker and only sometimes imparting abstracted information. For those in their audiences who won't understand the words, the tonality of the voices forms part of the soundtrack, as if part of the music being shared.

As reflected in the title of Cardoso's film and the explanation offered to the leader of the Timbila group in the scene above, the filmmakers intend to learn from the musicians of the country and to draw on the affective power of song, dance and film to unite their divided nation. The first song of the film introduces the past these

⁷² For more on the expository mode of documentary, and the five other modes proposed by the American film critic Bill Nichols see Nichols (2010) first published in 1991.

musicians have left behind: the forced labour in the cotton fields under the colonial master, the passbooks, the beatings. When the dancers arrive, their facial expressions shift from angry to weary to joyful as they wave their wooden clubs and small shields made of goat skin defiantly, stamping their feet in the sand, singing in unison. The performance is an embodied expression of the hardship introduced in the lyrics, and the role of music in offering both resilience, self-determination and joy for these men.

Through the rest of Cardoso's film, each of the subsequent musical portraits is offered through images of the community going about their daily activities intercut with full renditions of their songs and dances. The songs featured range from those with more overtly political intentions, to songs about courtship, marriage and the hardships of life. In Nacululo, in Cabo Delgado, the men cut cane so they can buy clothes to attract the local women as wives. In Tete they sing of a lady called *Kalimanjora* who doesn't want to work and comes home from her wanderings with nothing but grass to feed herself. One portrait, from the *Ilha de Moçambique*, offers us a female perspective where women sing of a laughing bird in flight, of being criticised and speaking out, ending their song with the phrase "I am not afraid of making mistakes".⁷³

Over the rest of the film, there are three more formal interview set-ups like the one in Zavala at the start of the musical odyssey. In each, the leader of the group offers the researcher additional information about the music they perform for the camera. In Zambezia the *Cedho* group leader is interviewed with his fellow drummers and dancers around him, in a similar musical tableau as the scene described above. The leader, whose name we never learn, is a little more comfortable talking to the crew and camera than *Velho Mahamba*. He offers his explanation of the ritual and ceremonial importance of *Cedho*⁷⁴ in the form of a simple story:

"As night falls, the logo drum plays alone. We dance from when night falls on the Saturday until the next day. The drums always stay in the same place. Nobody can touch them. Then after dancing we conduct a ceremony together because everything has gone well. And then on Monday we are working again."

From interview with leader of Cedho group in Quelimane, Zambezia
in *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* (Cardoso, 1981)

⁷³ See Interlude 4 for illustrated transcription of this scene.

⁷⁴ *Cedho*, from Zambezia, is an athletic dance common among the workers on the coconut plantations. The moves are reminiscent of capoeira, break dancing and other street dances of the black communities of Brazil and North America.

The musician ends with the clarification “Almost all of us are peasants”. In this way, although *Sing My Brother, Help Me to Sing* fails to directly respond to the intersectional inequalities of gender and race, it begins a discussion about the inequalities of class.



Figure 3.1. Leader of Cedho group being interviewed in Quelimane, Zambezia in *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing*. Screenshots taken from the Cedho group portrait.
Photographer Jacinto Bai Bai

In the opening dedication to those who work and ‘sing the sounds of the earth’, it offers a space for the rarely heard *camponeses* or peasant farmers who make up the majority of the Mozambican population yet were rarely heard before independence. This deference and respect for the rural classes continues through the film. The filmmakers do not hide their position of power when they visually establish their relationships with the subjects. The researcher is often sat on a chair, the musicians on the ground, shy, awkward and uncomfortable in the spotlight. Yet, the strength and personality of the ‘musicians of this land’ is shared through their performances, shown in long musical sequences, where the drummers, instrumentalists, singers and dancers are proud and confident of who they are, sharing their embodied knowledge, offering their worldview of community and participation through their song and their dance. This way, the gap between the researcher and the researched is bridged, as is the gap between communities across the country, when the film takes this embodied knowledge to others across the country and shares it through the new language of moving image.

As our contemporary response to this film, *Speak My Sister* also sets out to share the somatic knowledge of the women portrayed in the film series. The young filmmakers extend and expand upon Cardoso’s reflexive methodologies to bridge the gap between the researcher and the researched, between those represented and those representing them. Learning from the country’s musicians, and like Cardoso, attempting to bring the people of different corners of Mozambique together through

their music, this generation foreground the music of the Mozambican women. The brothers sang and spoke to Cardoso and his audiences, now it was time for the sisters. *Speak My Sister* draws on the participatory research methods and production techniques of *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*. It also shares the understanding of the importance of the non-verbal language of music and dance in Mozambique. The methodologies used in 1981 inspire our contemporary response nearly forty years later. However, in *Speak My Sister*, the positionality of the filmmakers, and of myself as the series producer, are not made visible in the musical portraits. Instead, these are explored in the ‘Explore Behind the Stories’ and ‘Explore the Ideas’ sections of the *Speak My Sister* web documentary.

The answers to the questions I set myself at the start of this research revealed themselves through the methodology explored below. The process behind the making of these contemporary musical portraits revealed more than the films themselves. From the initial phases establishing the research partnership, through the analysis of the cinematic aesthetic, form and content of the final films, and their eventual reception, each lesson on this research journey served as a humbling reminder of my own colonial, gendered, linear, logical and speech-based relationship to knowledge and power explored in the analysis below.

3.2 Reflecting on effective institutional partnerships

Berlin of 1884 was effected through the sword and the bullet.
But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the
morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical
violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological
violence of the classroom.

(Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, 1986, p9)

The methodology for this research was built on the long-established principles of decolonial thinking being explored in Africa in the 1960’s and 70’s and argued so articulately by the Kenyan author Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o.⁷⁵ His work on the ‘economic,

⁷⁵ Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o published his first two novels and won a Nobel Prize for literature under his Anglicised name James Ngũgĩ, which he denounced in 1977. He describes his book, ‘Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature’ as a ‘summary’ of some of the issues he had been involved in over the 20 years before the first publication of the book in 1981. For example, text written by concealed pencil stubs and smuggled out of prison between 1976 and 1978. The book has

political, military, cultural and psychological consequences of imperialism on the whole world' remains as poignant and relevant as it did the day it was published. He dedicates the last section of the book to what he calls 'the quest for relevance' (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o 1986:87) and especially the struggle over what is to be taught, and in what order, with what attitudes or critical approaches.⁷⁶ Ngũgĩ focusses his argument around the teaching of literature in African universities and school, asserting however that this struggle was really about the direction literature, history, politics and all the other arts and social sciences ought to take in the 'ever-continuing' struggle of African people 'to seize back their creative initiative in history through a real control of all the means of communal self-definition in time and space' (ibid, 4). Ngũgĩ concluded his argument with an analysis of the role of higher education in this struggle against what he saw as the reinforcement of 'colonial alienation' through the teaching where 'bourgeois Europe was always the centre of the universe' (ibid, 17). He relates this to a cultural bomb, describing it as 'the biggest weapon unleashed .. by imperialism ... to annihilate people's belief in their names, in their language, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves' (ibid, 3). Producing and distributing the *Speak My Sister* film series forms part of a continued effort to counter the continued impact of this cultural bomb nearly half a century later.

The National Film Institute was established after Mozambican independence to defend Mozambique against this cultural bomb and in many ways, my institutional partner, ISArC (The Higher Institute of Arts and Culture) was established in 2008 to take up the struggle and put art and culture in the front line again. Discussion with the director Dr Filimone Meigos began in November 2017, fifteen months into my research, when I had realised that I was going to have to accept that the third partnership was going in the same direction as the first two: starting well but needing a larger team and larger finances to be sustainable. My research plan was ambitious, as I wanted to follow a process from the initial research, through production to exhibition and reception analysis. The partnership with ISArC offered not only this,

since been reprinted numerous times, with the 1996 edition often cited. His name is shortened as both Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ. In this text I cite the 1986 publication, shortening his name to Ngũgĩ.

⁷⁶ 'The Great Nairobi Literature debate' began in 1968 with a small memo within the English Department at Nairobi University and culminated in the publication of a report on the teaching of literature in Kenyan schools 1974. (See the entire chapter 'The Quest for Relevance' Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o 1986, 87-109).

but also a diverse group of enthusiastic young researchers and filmmakers, staff and administrators prepared to do all they could to ensure this interdisciplinary, practice-led creative research was enriching for all involved.

ISArC began offering a degree in film theory and practice in 2014. At the time of *Speak My Sister*, film students from the first intake were in their final year. Although desperately under-funded and poorly equipped, as a state university its students can access the government bursary and scholarship schemes, which enables it to attract passionate young students from all over the country who previously thought filmmaking was not for poor or marginalised people like them.⁷⁷ The four-year combined theory and practice degree course offers ‘training in cinematographic and audiovisual production and direction’ to potential talents from across the country who have completed secondary school education.⁷⁸ This simple description of the course on the university website stands as testimony to the hard work, insistence and strategising that took place over decades to offer state-subsidised film training in Mozambique. As a founder member of the filmmakers’ association AMOCINE, I had been working towards the creation of a subsidised national film school since the distant demise of the production wing of the national film institute in 1991. The creation of a state university of creative arts was an important step towards the eventual creation of a state-funded national film school. The director of the institute, Dr Filimone Meigos, who received his academic training as a sociologist of the arts in South Africa and Portugal, not only fought for this film course to be included along with Art and Design, Cultural Studies and Dance, he also instituted an active national recruitment policy, and argued for targeted course promotion to introduce more women to this historically male discipline.

“Gender equality is written into ISArC’s statutes and by including more women on this course we are providing opportunities for more women to write themselves into Mozambique’s general history. There are fifteen million women in Mozambique at the moment and thirteen million men. How is it that the majority of the population don’t get to tell their own stories? Here, there’s a big problem of inequality and, let’s be frank, a problem of subalternisation of the feminine discourse, and

⁷⁷ See behind the stories films in web-doc <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister> to hear first-hand accounts of the impact of this belief on potential filmmakers, especially *Behind Tambourines of Mafalala*

⁷⁸ See: <http://www.isarc.edu.mz/>

I think cinema could bring out this feminine discourse; this discourse around equity, this discourse about the people who have always been subalternised on the margins and who we need to tell Mozambique's story. Cinema has a part to play in this. In truth, as a course it is an expensive course, but this was always my dream, to create a film course, and it's a great pleasure to marry this dream with the dream of the country. There are few women involved in cinema here, I find it very satisfying training a new generation, especially the women. I think this generation can offer a lot to change the status quo".

Dr Filimone Meigos, Director, Instituto Superior de Arte e Cultura, ISArC
From filmed interview with researcher, July, 2018⁷⁹

The institute's commitment to addressing geographical, class and gender inequalities in Mozambique's audiovisual self-representation matched my own research objectives and made for a fruitful and mutually supportive research partnership. Soon it was suggested ISArC's own two institutional partners, the National Festival of Culture and the Mozambican Filmmakers Association (AMOCINE) come on board. Film students from ISArC had traditionally gained work experience at the bi-annual cultural festival with AMOCINE providing logistical support for film workshops and screenings in the community.

AMOCINE Director, Gabriel Mondlane was also able to deepen my own knowledge of all the previous attempts to decolonize Mozambique's audiovisual production since independence. Gabriel had been one of the first recruits to the National Film Institute when it was formed and had been the sound-recordist on many of the early films of the institute, including *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*. His patient and good-humoured advice always came with a story from his long and impeccable memory going back the heyday of the National Film Institute and the stream of international advisers who came to train them, and the challenges and successes of the many projects and experiments in Mozambican film production and exhibition since then. There seemed no end to the obstacles he and his colleagues had faced and the ingenious and pragmatic solutions they had found to overcome them. These lessons were all the more enriched by Gabriel's extraordinary skill as a storyteller. His wise and irreverent determination to keep searching for solutions to the challenges to finding an intersectional approach to decolonising film production in

⁷⁹ See extracts of the interview with the ISArC director in the film *Behind Stella* found in the 'Behind the Stories' section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

Mozambique, ensuring not only men and women were representing Mozambicans, but also urban and rural Mozambicans from the whole country, informed many of the eventual methodological choices used in the research.⁸⁰

In March 2018, four months before the festival was due to start, I was finally walking into a hall full of animated students alongside the Heads of Departments of Cultural Studies and Management and Film Studies and Audiovisual Production. There were ripples of excitement as we entered the hall, and it took me a moment to realise I was the cause of the students' enthusiasm. This younger generation of filmmakers were still children when I left Mozambique in 2007, but they knew of the part I played alongside my contemporaries in Mozambican film and music and some even knew my films and my music. They were keen to meet me, work alongside me and most importantly, learn from me.

3.3 Reflecting on positionality

During my time in Mozambique, I learned that friendships with international staff of large organisations and embassies involved in diplomacy, development and conflict resolution, would be short-lived. Their fresh eye, and the presumed impartiality and objectivity of their outsider perspectives was valued by their employers. After four years, occasionally eight, they would be posted somewhere new where they continued to represent the values and culture of their own national position, before the lines between insider and outsider had become blurred. For an ethnographic researcher or documentary filmmaker, there are also strong arguments in favour of the outsider position.

I know from my own experience that my first encounters with the scents, the sounds, the stories, the convivial good humour and the poverty will remain ingrained in my memory in vivid detail, while later memories blur and blend. In my early radio reports and later films, I responded to the external aesthetic of the landscape, the buildings and the people around me with an attention to detail of the unfamiliar any

⁸⁰ The path to this collaboration with ISArC and AMOCINE was eased from the outset due to the long-shared professional history and friendship I have with the directors of both. The director of AMOCINE, Gabriel Mondlane was my sound assistant when I first arrived in Mozambique in 1990 and we have worked on many films together since. The director of ISArC Filimone Meigos is also an actor and a musician. Our paths overlapped since my very first day in Mozambique when I was invited to play at a jazz club and he was in the audience. We later worked together for many weeks on the very memorable production of Mozambique's first ever soap opera in 1993.

tourist in an unfamiliar environment will recognise. Later, after some years, that shifted. I had become embroiled in the human dramas of others and of my own complex relationships. The surprise and wonder of the new was replaced with memories on every street corner of Maputo, on every resting place on the long road trips. The smells and the sounds became my ‘normal’, so familiar I no longer noticed them. I ceased to be shocked by the comfortable distinction between a wife, a lover and a mistress, and the common assumption that any man would have all three. I learned to discuss ‘informed consent’ not only with the living, but with the dead, through mediums and ritual. The familial terms of brother, sister, cousin and uncle that I had previously associated with a nuclear family, ceased to have such finite distinctions. The street children drinking from puddles and the naked ex-soldiers eating out of skips, ceased to bring tears to my eyes. I still remember the moment empathy and pity started to be replaced with an impatience and annoyance. Even unacceptable levels of suffering, I thought, can be normalised over time.

When I returned to Mozambique at the start of this research, I realised I had regained the capacity to be moved and surprised again. A phenomenon had developed in the poorer neighbourhoods of Maputo since my departure, for example, where young girls and women were being ‘raped to death’. I failed to find anyone as shocked about it as I was as they heard of yet another case. So I recognise and value the outsider eye. It can reveal what the insider has long ceased seeing. However, the insider’s nuanced understanding of the values, relationships and history of those around them has its own value, and in poor countries such as Mozambique this complex understanding is still little explored in literature, film production or academic research.

There is a third position, however, one between insider and outsider, that I inhabit in Mozambique, especially in the south and most specifically in the capital. I came to the partnership with ISArC from this position of what anthropologist Paul Stoller describes as ‘the between’ (Stoller, 2009). I was familiar with the individuals, the history and the ongoing work of the institutional partners, the staff and the students. I was also experienced, if a little out of practice, at managing the uncertainty of rapidly changing plans, of letting go of expectations and learning to take advantage of any new opportunity that presented itself. I spent many years in regular states of exasperation before learning to apply the necessary skills of ‘going with the flow’ as part of my daily life. The musician António Marcos summed this up for me in a film I made with him in 2005, “Here, suffering is easy”, he said with a laugh as he stood in

front of the ruins of a building where he used to play to the Portuguese in colonial times, “it’s learning not to suffer that’s the difficult skill to learn” (Marcos, in *Marrabentando: The Stories My Guitar Sings*, Boswall 2005). Stressing about what is not possible only makes you sick, he used to tell me when we were working together. His remedy to that was through music and laughter.

Now that I had become used again to the British logic and order of my current home base in the UK, following his advice seemed much more difficult. I found myself responding with stress and anxiety to the challenges and obstacles that inevitably arose during my attempts to realise my ambitious research vision. I had effectively reverted to my ‘outsider’ responses to adversity. I used to laugh at the ‘results-driven’ approach of filmmakers from northern Europe and North America I sometimes worked for. They would have flights booked home and deadlines to meet and experienced terrible tension and anxiety as their best laid plans disintegrated around them. Conducting my doctoral research, I was now in their position, working to a tight deadline with objectives I felt I had to achieve. I found myself responding to adversity more like those visiting professionals than I had anticipated. However, in my ex-insider position, I also had an invaluable asset all Mozambicans draw on; a phone full of numbers of friends who I could call on for support and assistance when the challenges presented themselves.

I was also an outsider, not only because I now lived in the UK, but also because I came from the older generation, because I was white, and most of all, because I was a woman. I always experienced much of Mozambique as an outsider to the male status quo, often as the only woman in a film crew, the only woman in a band, and sometimes one of only a few women out at night having fun. I had to wait years before I was introduced to wives and families, knowing only the temporary lovers when on tour or at film festivals and the mistresses that came to the Maputo clubs. It took a long time to learn to navigate these very complicated gendered relationships in the cultural and social ‘between’ space described by Stoller (2009), perhaps longer for me as a female musician and filmmaker between both two geographical and cultural spaces and two gendered spaces. In the context of this first encounter with the students in March 2018 however, as I stood there with those obvious differences of age and race patently visible, my outsider status seemed mostly to be associated with the experience that came with it and the hope of new ideas and new knowledge this opportunity provided.

In 1999, Linda Tuhiwai Smith published another important book about the colonisation of knowledge from the ‘between’ position of the indigenous academic. Like Ngūgĩ Wa Thiong’o, she learned to apply the language and logic of the coloniser in her academic work from her position as a member of a colonised indigenous population, calling for a deeper reflection on the positionality and methods of outsider researchers. In her introduction to *Decolonising Methodologies* (1999, 2012) she explains that she wrote the book ‘to show the possibilities of re-imagining research as an activity that indigenous researchers could pursue within disciplines and institutions and within their own communities’. She asserts ‘There are always lessons to be learned in the process of decolonising. It is not enough to hope or desire change. Systemic change requires capability, leadership, support, time, courage, reflexivity, determination and compassion’ (Smith, 2012, xiii). This doctoral research holds these values described by Tuhiwai Smith and Ngūgĩ Wa Thiong’o, as well as the radical educator Paulo Freire, at the core. It was conducted from, and perhaps because of, my own layered position of ‘the between’, and also, as is always the case, because of other more personal motivations.

3,4 Reflecting on my motivation

When I left Mozambique in 2007, I carried with me the burden of many previous ‘failures’. I had spent three years developing two films I was beginning to resign myself to never finishing. One, a portrait of South Africa in collaboration with the multi-racial band Freshly Ground, had been commissioned and financed out of South Africa and was still on hold after months of research, four weeks of filming and as many again of editing. The other, a Southern African musical road movie I was co-producing with Angolan, Portuguese and Brazilian partners, had taken two years to develop and research, and took another year after my return to the UK before I could discuss it in the past tense. My doctoral research began a decade later. During that time I had recovered some of my optimism. The colleagues from my generation I left behind had not. They had continued to struggle on through disappointment after disappointment. The young filmmakers I was about to work with had little confidence or belief in their abilities stemming from a similar series of disappointments. Through the string of challenges and disappointments we experienced over the eight months of

this research, there were many times when I lost sight of my core motivation. Yet at each hurdle, it was through reconnecting with our collective motivation, that we hauled one another through the times of doubt and despair to complete what we set out to do. On the last day of my last trip to Mozambique, hours before leaving for the airport to return to the UK, I had one such conversation that reminded me of my own motivation.

The seeds of this research go back way beyond my time in Mozambique. They stretch back to my own time of transformation in the 1980's, when I was supported by others committed to the voice of women in the arts and the possibilities of inclusive technical training in them. The battle still being fought across world medias today for inclusive training for women and black, Asian and other minority ethnic musicians and filmmakers had begun by those a little older than myself and I was a grateful beneficiary. I wanted young Mozambicans to benefit from my activism as I had benefitted from those before me in the UK. This was brought home to me sitting on a wall in the fading light of a quiet corner of Maputo. It was my last night in Maputo. I was squeezing in one last interview with one of the subjects of one of the portraits that makes up the *Speak My Sister* film series. Her name was Guiggaz, and the more I heard of her story, the more I was reminded of my younger self and my own journey of self-discovery through creative expression that had begun forty years earlier. As we sat on that quiet street corner in Maputo, too dark now to film and too noisy for clean audio, the interview turned into a conversation. After sharing her history and her plans, Guiggaz asked me about my journey. Her questions took me back through the long thread of creative exploration and discovery that eventually led me to that moment with her on the wall.

By the age of 20, Guiggaz and I were each asking ourselves similar questions about how to fit in as women in the very male-dominated worlds of music and film we wanted to be accepted in. Guiggaz had been orphaned at a young age and worked any job she could to support her young siblings while continuing her studies. Yet, despite all the obstacles Guiggaz encountered, she found her creative voice and her purpose through hip hop. Guiggaz wanted it to be easier for women like her to be accepted, and for their desires, thoughts and life experiences to be expressed through the music and poetry she loved. Through sheer willpower, ingenuity and resourcefulness, she eventually formed her own women's hip hop group that she called *Revolução*

Feminina (Feminine Revolution).⁸¹ Through her questions Guiggaz reminded me of the same thing happening for me when I was about her age. The world of jazz, the music of Africa and later the world of film that I discovered in the 1980's, were (and still are) worlds dominated by men, as Hip Hop and the music industry was (and still is) in Mozambique.

As a teenager, in the late 2000's, after I had left Maputo, Guiggaz would spend her evenings in a studio of a friend who produced hip hop from his bedroom. She sat in the shadows, just watching, invisible, never invited to contribute, never allowed to touch the console. Eventually she visited a larger studio closer to town and was invited to come back as an apprentice. When I decided I wanted to learn sound engineering in the UK in 1986, there were government-funded film training courses and even an open-access recording studio for women only called 'ovatones'. It was here that I produced the music for my first film score, a film made by a woman director funded by a government film fund with an infrastructure in place to support women in film. Guiggaz didn't have this. Instead, she learned the ropes of studio engineering thanks to the support of the producer who saw her passion, eventually encouraging her to record her own beats and later her own voice. In 1987, I was able to start earning a living as a sound-recordist, thanks to the work of activists amongst the trade unions and broadcasters who implemented pro-active recruitment of women into this infamously patriarchal world of film. In my first job in the sound department of a large feature film, I was the only woman amongst 72 technicians. I navigated the bottom pinching and jokes about women drivers until I eventually found a place in the documentary world where women technicians were more welcome. The progressive production companies producing for the new broadcaster Channel 4, even sought me out.

The area of sound has historically nestled in the shadow of the image since its late arrival in the film industry. As a discipline it suited the skills I had developed in a world where, as a woman, I was used to negotiating my position from the shadows. In the supportive refuge of all women crews and productions keen to encourage female technicians, I learned the craft that subsequently took me around the world and eventually to Mozambique. At a similar age, the young Guiggaz had joined the

⁸¹ I have translated the name of the group *Revolução Feminina* as 'Female Revolution', but a more accurate translation might be 'Feminine Revolution'. For more on this see Chapter 5 and the exploration of Obioma Nnamemeka's term 'Nego-Feminism'.

electricity board and forged her own path there as the only woman. Unable to support her family from music production, she had lied about her age at an interview for a traineeship as an electrician. She had succeeded in impressing her trainers so much that when they found out about her age, they couldn't do without her.

At 22, Guiggaz formed her collective of women poets and hip hop artists, with lyrics such as "I am condemned to this life, just by being born a girl?".⁸² At the same age in Nottingham, I had formed a women's musical collective too. Ours played jazzy pop songs but our lyrics reflected a similar sentiment "You just take, take, take, take, the biggest slice of the cake" (Skeeta, 1987). I would never have used the term revolutionary or feminist to describe myself in those days, however. *Speak My Sister* and women like Guiggaz have not only offered new perspectives to the women of Mozambique, but also to me, as I still try to be seen by my male colleagues with the kind of parity and respect I hoped to encourage between the male and female colleagues in *Speak My Sister*

Guiggaz helped me see that had my life taken me elsewhere in the world, or had I remained in England instead of accepting that sound job in Mozambique in 1990, I would probably have still been making musical films with the next generation of men and women, creating opportunities for the under-represented to be included. As it was, I had ended up in Mozambique, and called it home for nearly twenty years. I had watched Guiggaz's generation grow up over those years and was inspired by their fearless optimism and courage. The years of political oppression, war, hardship, and disappointment had numbed, or worse, extinguished this optimism in many creative Mozambicans of my generation, especially the filmmakers. I was a well-intentioned yet inexperienced English girl when I arrived in 1990. I was an older woman now, back from the other side of the world, with experience, reputation and long-standing partnerships and friendships in Mozambique. With my coveted research budget, it was time for me to learn what the next independent, creative generation would do with my older decolonial, feminist vision for Mozambican self-representation through the arts, and more specifically through film and music.

⁸² See *Revolução Feminina* perform "Eu Sou Livre" (I am Free), where these lyrics come from, on the stage at the Gala launch of the film series in The Music section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

Part 2.

Development



Interlude 4

***To play, I must first learn to play alone. Later I learn
to play with others and dance at the same time***

Cardoso Portrait 4

Nyanga Panpipe Group
Bairro Sansão Mutemba

Tete Province

EXT. DAY. BAIRRO MATEUS SANSÃO MUTEMBA, TETE, NYANGA
PANPIPES

Women guide a plough through the dry earth behind two oxen

A RESEARCHER is seated with a group of *Nyanga* musicians. They hold their instruments, hollowed bamboo pipes of different lengths, tied together with twine. The RESEARCHER speaks in the local language to the musician (we hear the word 'Maputo' and 'festival' - although this is not translated). A female voice translates the reply from the musician.

NYANGA GROUP LEADER (FEMALE
NARRATOR)

*Today we are independent
We can dance and play the
Nyanga at will.
In weddings, when there's a
death or for fun
There are 28 different kinds
of Nyanga
To play I must first learn to
play alone
Then I learn to play with
other Nyanga
And later, to play and dance
at the same time*

RESEARCHER (FEMALE NARRATOR)
And you? What is your name?

BOY (NOT TRANSLATED)
My name is N'gwire

RESEARCHER (FEMALE NARRATOR)
What's your Nyanga called?

The conversation continues untranslated. The boy shyly holds his *Nyanga* panpipes, looking at the ground. He then puts the pipes to his lips and begins to play and sing, the voice and the sound from the pipes combine to form the melody. He gains confidence and the voice and pipes complement one another, like a conversation between lovers, echoing now across the village

Next to be addressed by the RESEARCHER, a third member of the *Nyanga* group with a larger instrument of four long pipes reaching down to the floor

RESEARCHER (FEMALE NARRATOR)
And this, what's its name?

NYANGA PLAYER (not translated)
Condoro

RESEARCHER (NOT TRANSLATED)
Ah, Condoro is it? Mmmm

The conversation continues untranslated. By his gestures it seems he is asking about the different size of pipes.

RESEARCHER (FEMALE NARRATOR)
*In Portuguese that means Lion
 doesn't it?*

NYANGA PLAYER (in Portuguese)
Yes, Lion.



As they continue to talk, we understand from the gestures the Nyanga player seems to question the idea of playing alone. He cautiously brings his instrument to life with his breath. His bass line is then joined in the soundtrack by a chorus of voices and pipes and the lone musician is now playing with his group. Twenty men and boys circle eight steps anti-clockwise before turning to the centre and bend over their pipes and dance and play. Shakers on their legs provide the counter-rhythm. We see the timid young boy from the interview, confident now, fully engrossed in the music and dance, becoming more animated with each cycle. As they circle, the pipes, foot shakers and yodelling voices provide the response to musical questions provided by the lead vocalist. The song is only complete when the men and boys play together. Each member of the group contributes his own small part to the melody and the rhythm.

Women and children watch on quietly. Carrying babies on their backs, some of the women sing along, some gently dip and sway. This music is speaking to them. A horn made of a long gourd joins the full sound as women ululate and the intensity continues to build.

Life in the quiet village continues as the sounds of the Nyanga fades, replaced by the distant laughter.

Chapter 4.

Speak My Sister Pre-Production: Early lessons in collaboration

4.1 A musical lesson in collaboration in *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*

The portrait of the *Nyanga* pipe group in Cardoso's film offers the viewer a lesson in polyphony, providing a rich, non-verbal example of the power of collective 'speaking' and listening. Set in the Zambezi Valley in Tete, it first introduces notions of collectivity and collaboration to the audience through images of co-operative farming. It then goes on to demonstrate the creative potential of such collaboration through the music and dance. There is little explanation of what has been described as 'the magnificent *nyanga* panpipe ensembles of the *Nyungwe* people' (Tracey 1971 p73⁸³). This portrait instead introduces the audience to the individual elements of the genre and the different sounds that make up the whole. This polyphonic pipe music of Southern Africa was first brought to the world's attention by the ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1962, 1967, 1969). The genre has since been studied across Southern Africa prompting similar practices in educational settings to explore the importance of listening in group communication and the benefits of collective practice. Although it is associated with male and female initiation in some parts of Southern Africa (Reiley, 1998), in his 1971 article Andrew Tracey describes seeing large secular festival gatherings where men and women played together. On some occasions the men played the pipes and the women sang. On others, women were also playing the pipes. However, since independence, *Nyanga* has been predominantly passed on between men and boys. Cardoso's portrait makes no reference to the gendered nature of *Nyanga* music in 1981. He does, however, stress the importance of individual practice and self-awareness through the examples of three individual members, who each introduce themselves and their instruments by name before revealing to the

⁸³ The ethnomusicologist Andrew Tracey has written extensively on the *Nyanga* panpipes, providing transcriptions (1971) and dance steps (1992). Each player stands in his place in the circle, each *Nyanga* has a part, each instrument a name. In his 1971 analysis Tracey describes the Mozambican panpipe dance as exceeding the pipe dances of the Congo, Rhodesia, and South Africa 'in complexity of musical organisation and richness of sound'.

viewer their individual melody and then what can happen when these elements are brought together. The feet move in counterpoint to the pipes and the voices. We hear the distinct parts of the melody from the pipes. The rhythm of the shakers on the ankles provides the beat that all participants listen and respond to in short bursts of melodies, formed in part by their sung voices, and in part their panpipe melodies brought together in musical conversation.

4.2 Voices of the next generation Part 1. Song, speech, listening and collaboration in the first pre-production meeting of *Speak My Sister*

The portrait of the *Nyanga* Panpipe group also serves as a useful analogy for the collaborative methodologies I explored in *Speak My Sister* and the polyphonic nature of the eventual web documentary. In this chapter I will introduce and analyse the participatory methods explored, most of which were established during the pre-production period. Much like the period of individual learning for the *Nyanga* pipe players, the early discussions around content, form and structure, the training and practice and the eventual selection of the stories to be told, built the foundation for what was to come through the collective realisation of these plans over the next four months.

I began that memorable meeting by explaining to the expectant students crowded into the hall that I was coming to work with them in preparation for the National Festival of Culture, due to take place in Niassa in July. The theme of the Festival, ‘Women promoting culture, identity and sustainable development’, coincided with my own research interests in Mozambican women’s creative voice. I also hoped this would be an exciting opportunity for young Mozambicans to explore their own approach to audiovisual practice-led research. The ideas and methodological approach I presented to the group had been approved first by the director of ISArC, Dr Filimone Meigos and then formalised with the festival committee, of which he was also the president. The day-to-day running of this institutional partnership was then delegated to his colleagues in the Departments of Film and Audiovisual Studies and Cultural and Management Studies. We developed documentation and research plans together and then shared a written summary with the students to introduce the ideas and to invite them to the meeting to learn more. The director of the Mozambican

Filmmakers' Association (AMOCINE) Gabriel Mondlane, who was working with ISArC on delivering the film content at the National Festival, was also consulted and involved from the outset. This meeting was the first opportunity I had to flesh out the ideas with the young students I would be working with. I wanted to involve them in the decisions around methodology and output and to identify training needs. Much like the approach of the *Nyanga* pipe musicians in Cardoso's portrait, this research would depend on the individual voice of every participant in the production of one contemporary polyphonic response to the festival theme.

Until recently, visual anthropologists have looked back to the past, and most notably to the writings, interviews and films of Jean Rouch, for some of the core terminology to describe processes of developing a more collaborative and participatory representation of 'the other'.⁸⁴ The 'Rouchian' terms of 'shared anthropology' and 'ethno-fiction', for example, have become a commonly used shorthand, in the field of visual anthropology, for describing methods of collaboration between those behind and in front of the camera.⁸⁵ These methodological approaches continue to be explored by ethnographic filmmakers and visual anthropologists with the shared objective of ensuring audiovisual researchers and documentary filmmakers do not speak 'for' or 'about' the other, and instead speak 'alongside' or 'with' their subject (Trinh, 1983, Ruby 1991, Rose, 2017). There is a different body of academic research and analysis around non-fictional audiovisual representation and self-representation among African filmmakers and film historians. In these academic circles, the name Jean Rouch may be more likely to provoke discussion around Ousmane Sembène's challenge to Jean Rouch as looking at Africans 'as if we were

⁸⁴ When seen outside of the context of the ongoing discourse within the discipline, the notion of the 'other' is still seen as an uncomfortable reminder of the colonial beginnings of anthropology in contemporary anthropology and associated with the concept of 'othering', where 'we' or 'us' are set apart from 'they' or 'them'. Yet among anthropologists, the practice of recognizing and investigating the relationship between the 'self' and the 'other' continues to be at the core of the discipline and is regularly contested and questioned within this context. See, for example: Sarukkai (1997) and Greverus (1994). Exploring the relationship between 'the self' and 'the other' within anthropology could be compared to the continued exploration of the relationship between the filmmaker and 'the subject' among documentary film theorists.

⁸⁵ The Rouchian concepts of 'shared anthropology', a method of using filmed material to provoke further conversations and mutual learning, and 'ethnofiction', where the process of producing a fiction film in collaboration with research subjects reveals new understanding to both the researcher and the researched, are described by Rouch in interviews translated by Steven Feld (Rouch and Feld, 2003). They are also cited in many books exploring the work of Jean Rouch (see for example Eaton, 1979, Stoller, 1992, and Henley, 2009) and continue to form the theoretical basis of many contemporary collaborative methodologies within the discipline of visual anthropology.

insects’ (Cervoni, 1965)⁸⁶ than to thoughts on collaboration and ‘shared anthropology’. In presenting my research here from the decolonial interdisciplinary perspective of ‘epistemic disobedience’ (Mignolo, 2009), I would have ideally included perspectives across the disciplines my work intersects. However, for this chapter on collaboration I have opted to draw largely on the language, theoretical and audiovisual references at the academic intersection between anthropology and creative film practice and so contribute the ongoing discourse within these disciplines about collaboration and representation in indigenous film production, through practise led research.

In the collaborative methodologies of representation developed in Mozambique in the 1990’s and 2000’s by filmmakers such as Licinio Azevedo, Sol de Carvalho, Gabriel Mondlane and myself, it was important the subject was engaged in the process of generating the epistemological and ontological knowledge about them. This was the methodology that inspired and informed the methodology at the root of *Speak My Sister*.⁸⁷ In the continued global efforts to decolonise the process of knowledge construction through the audiovisual representation of others, it is essential to challenge the prevailing social paradigms of gendered, racial, regional and other forms of social exclusion. In Mozambique, as in any part of the world, it continues to be important for the next generation of researchers and filmmakers to reflect on this, and find solutions to bridge the generational, geographical, cultural, linguistic and gendered differences between the researcher and the researched. Designing and applying research methodologies in *Speak My Sister*, that took this representation of difference into consideration, was therefore an essential element of my own research methodology.

One influential film that explored the representation of difference and was made around the same time as the reference film, *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* (Cardoso, 1981), is *Reassemblage* (1982). In it, Trinh T. Minh-ha introduces the now oft-cited idea of the researcher ‘speaking alongside’ their subject, as opposed to

⁸⁶ For a full transcription of this oft-cited conversation conducted in 1965 between Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembène and French ethnographer Jean Rouch, see Busch and Annas (2008:3-6)

⁸⁷ For Mozambican films where fiction meets non-fiction and participation and collaboration form an important part of the research and production methodology, see *The Tree of Our Forefathers* (Azevedo, 1994) *Tchuma Tchato* (Azevedo, 1996), *Disobedience* (Azevedo, 2002), *Muipiti Alima* (Carvalho, 1997), *The Miner’s Tale* (Mondlane and Hofmeyr, 2001), *From The Ashes*, (Boswall, 1999), *Boya Boya* (Boswall, 2015).

speaking on their behalf. She also reflects on the disparity between the researcher and researched, as seen in this observation halfway through the film:

“An ethnologist and his wife gynaecologist come back for two weeks to the village where they have done research in the past. He defines himself as a person who stayed long, long enough in a village to study the culture of an ethnic group . . . ‘If you haven’t stayed long enough in a place, you are not an ethnologist’ he says. Later in the evening, a circle of men gathers in front of the house where the ethnologist and his wife gynaecologist stay. One of the villagers is telling a story. Another one is playing music on his improvised lute. The ethnologist is sleeping next to his switched-on cassette recorder. He thinks he excludes personal values. . . . But how can he be a Fulani?”

Trinh T Min Ha narration. *Reassemblage* (1982)

Sleeping beside a switched-on cassette recorder is an extreme and yet useful metaphor of the methods of some ethnologists who claimed expertise on a people as a result of a prolonged period in their company. We have no idea how much of that time this researcher was metaphorically asleep with his cassette recorder switched on, but, in questioning his research methods, Minh Ha finds it important to point out, “He is not, nor will ever be a Fulani” (ibid). This reflects the ideas around the representation of ‘the other’ also being explored concurrently by anthropologists working in text-based representation.⁸⁸

Over the decades that followed the release of this film, many other films came out of documentary and visual anthropology departments in western universities that reflected as much on the process of representation as the subject being represented.⁸⁹ Both audiovisual and text-based ethnographers and documentarians have continued to study and discuss the inequalities between researcher and interlocutor and how these can cause gulfs of misunderstanding and mistrust. Participatory and collaborative methods have been developed in order to avoid any eventual misrepresentation of those documented and described by the ‘outsider’ researcher, yet navigating the inequalities continues to be a constant challenge for even the most sensitive of researchers when working in a place where there are clear power imbalances between the researcher and the researched.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, many of those being researched,

⁸⁸ For two of the core texts on ethnographic methodologies and modes of representation through the written word, see Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Ruth Behar and Debora Gordan (1995).

⁸⁹ Two oft-cited reflexive films exploring representation for example are *Photo Wallahs* (MacDougall and MacDougall, 1981) and *Cannibal Tours* (O’Rourke, 1988).

⁹⁰ The question of navigating power imbalances in the field can work both ways, of course, especially when power based on gender, race or political or social affiliations can put researchers at risk. For a

especially in the formerly colonised nations, continue to experience the research process as one where their own knowledge is subjugated by ‘a set of ideas, practices and privileges... embedded in imperial expansionism and colonisation and institutionalised in academic disciplines, schools, curricula, universities and power’ (Smith, 2012 px).

I am reminded of the scene in David and Judith MacDougall’s *Turkana Conversations* trilogy, where the camera is turned on the filmmakers and we see inside their home. Shot in Kenya over fourteen months between 1973 and 1974 by the husband-and-wife team David and Judith MacDougall (1977-1981), the couple go to great lengths to reduce the gap between themselves and their subjects during the filming and reflect on this within the film. Inviting their subjects into their homes was an important aspect of their reflective process. Consequently, the viewer sees not only the simple homes of their nomadic subjects, but also the home the couple live in during the filming. This house of brick with walls lined with books and the subsequent conversation among the nomadic herders, who pity this white couple for their clutter, highlights the different perspectives each can have of this difference. Although the series is celebrated for the intimacy developed between the couple and their subjects, the scene reminds the viewer of the continued gulf in understanding and experience that remains between the researcher and the researched.⁹¹ MacDougall later explores those experiences of filming in the 1970’s and 80’s in exacting detail in his influential series of essays *Transcultural Cinema* (1998), arguing that filming ‘as if the camera were not there ... remains far less interesting than exploring the situation that actually exists. The camera is there, and it is held by a representative of one culture encountering another. ... No ethnographic film is a record of another society; it is always a record of the meeting between a filmmaker and that society. If ethnographic films are to break through the limitations inherent in their idealism, they must propose to deal with that encounter’ (ibid, 133-134). Many years later, having spent the interim period extensively exploring the representation of the other in text and moving image, MacDougall writes:

further exploration of this, see *Toward a Fugitive Anthropology* (Berry et al, 2017).

⁹¹ See Lambek, 2015, for an introduction to the ethical quandaries of navigating the power dynamics of ethnographic research. For a more feminist interpretation that also takes all intersectional imbalances of power into account, see Strobel, 1979.

‘ .. any form of collaboration requires compromise, but when there is a considerable gap between the backgrounds and interests of the filmmaker and subject, the compromises may result in a kind of double negation, so that the interests of neither are properly expressed, or else remain blurred. It may be impossible to know whose perspective the film finally represents. My experience of collaborating with film subjects, which initially I embraced, has convinced me that the resulting ambiguity often constrains both parties. It may be far better to create the conditions in which each can make their own films, or failing this, construct films (such as by alternating scenes) to show their two different perspectives. This stance retains and reaffirms the value of individual authorship.’ (MacDougall 2020, 10)

It is a sad indictment of the still colonial nature of academic research and ethnographic filmmaking therefore, that long after MacDougall, Minh Ha and many of their contemporary visual ethnographers began to explore their discomfort at the disparity between themselves and their subjects, and nearly half a century after most African nations gained their independence and have been wanting to tell their own stories, there is still so little published research and so few research films or documentaries made by African anthropologists, ethnomusicologists and ethnographic researchers. Indeed, the colonial legacy reflected in the language and literature of these disciplines can already draw a wedge between them and similar disciplines taught in many African universities. In teaching in Mozambican universities, for example, I am often asked to avoid the term ‘ethno’ where possible, replacing ‘ethnographic film’ with ‘audio-visual research methodologies’, and ‘ethnomusicology’ with ‘musical and cultural studies’.

After my decades of experience exploring the different collaborative practices described so well above by David MacDougall, and first introduced in his essay ‘Beyond Observation’ and the production of what he calls *participatory cinema* (MacDougall 1988, 134), I reached a similar conclusion to his around authorship. My motivation was based less on the need for a clear expression of interests, however, and more on my concern that the legacy of Mozambique’s efforts to ‘dismantle the hierarchies they had inherited from the colonial period’ (Gray, 2020) was at risk of being seen by the next generation as nothing but unrealistic idealism. I share the objectives of the pioneers of revolutionary Mozambican cinema to harness the transformative power of cinema. I want to continue my own creative work as a filmmaker, but not to do so at the cost of the next generation. I therefore decided to produce a film with the next generation, constructed, as MacDougall proposed, from

our two different perspectives. I would tell their stories, share their motivations and their responses to their research from my perspective, and they would explore the musical forms of female creative expression from theirs. This was not only an experiment in creative collaboration, however; it was also an exploration of the potential and the needs of the new generation of filmmakers at ISArC. I wanted to learn what it would take to stimulate real decolonial research and film production again in Mozambique.

I invited the young filmmakers at that first meeting to take what techniques and approaches they could learn from me over an intensive training period, call on me when they needed during the production and post-production, so that they could carry on with their work as filmmakers and I with mine. I believed my authored work about them, their desires, their ideas and their potential, when screened alongside their authored work, could attract more interest in the continued vision of the pioneers of Mozambican cinema forty years earlier.⁹² This was an extra-curricular opportunity, however, and there was no obligation to take part. Those who chose to participate would have to work hard, but they would get training and mentorship from me through each phase of the research, production and exhibition of their films. I would be creating opportunities throughout each stage of the process where we would discuss ideas, reflect on our progress together and so learn from the experience.⁹³ I was there to support, guide and advise them, but also to learn from them. We would all be gaining new knowledge through our practice.

I proposed we take the earlier Mozambican festival film *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* as inspiration and provocation for our own contemporary audiovisual response to the themes of the festival. I had learned from previous experiences training young filmmakers that a framework that defined parameters did not curb their creative response. On the contrary, it stimulated individual solutions to the constructed limitations. I learned quickly that this group of young people were bursting with

⁹² When funding for ISArC's contribution to the festival fell through, I focused my attentions on training the thirty young filmmakers and ensuring they were able to screen their six films in Niassa. I continued my own filming throughout, but with less time and energy than was required to capture all the moments I would have liked to construct the feature-length documentary I had envisaged. The polyphonic solution may attract some of the audiences I had hoped to reach, however a linear feature-length documentary may see the light of day in the future, and perhaps attract different audiences and new interest in the wealth of talent and extraordinary stories still untapped in Mozambique.

⁹³ For more on the value of praxis and experiential learning, see Paulo Freire's praxis of theory, action and reflection (1986, p.36), developed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1992). See also David Kolb's Experiential learning cycle (1984).

creative ideas and a deep understanding of their subject and their audience. They welcomed the opportunity to turn their ideas into films and to learn from someone who had the time, energy and experience (and funds - albeit minimal) to guide them on their journey.

We started by discussing the historical context of the film. We also reflected on its key stylistic and structural elements.⁹⁴ Cardoso had chosen to join his series of ethnographic musical portraits through the narrative of a road trip. Using the visual device of a map and some marker pens to delineate the route accompanied by a simple narration, the viewer is led from one Mozambican musical genre to another. We learn about the music and dance, while also learning about the people. We see Mozambicans from across the country leaving their colonial past behind and singing their way into the future. With the theme of the 2018 festival being about women, and the original film of the festival being largely about men, the simplicity of this creative startingpoint proved a helpful catalyst for an animated hour of brainstorming. The excitement was only slightly subdued when I added that unfortunately, only basic production costs of 5,000 MT (approx £50) could be covered. This would however guarantee the essentials of food, transport, mobile phone credit and other essential consumables for a short period of filming in or around Maputo. Some present at that meeting had been anticipating the larger budgets of other film competitions⁹⁵ and decided not to take part at this point. However, thirty of the students present at that first meeting submitted proposals and dedicated themselves to the research project that was to be called *Speak My Sister*.

The other serious limitation was that of time. We only had four months before the start of the festival, enough time to research, film and edit a short portrait but not an

⁹⁴ I had edited some of the key elements of the original film into an 8-minute clip to remind students of the form and content of Cardoso's film and kick-start our discussion (see ideas section in the web documentary). I was surprised to discover however, the classrooms had no screening facilities. I would not have made this assumption had I not been teaching in British Universities for years where such things come standard in every classroom. I instead made a verbal summary and emailed students a link later. I arranged to change the location of the following meetings to the National Film Institute, where AMOCINE have their offices and teaching spaces and access to a recently renovated cinema space.

⁹⁵ The German Cultural Centre had recently announced the winners of a competition to produce short 3-minute films. The proposals selected had 20,000MT (£200) to work with. An international competition, *Kugoma*, had recently offered a professional budget of €20,000 to the one selected script from Mozambique. My proposal was based on the Cuban method of providing minimal '*ajuda de custos*' (helps with costs) to enable more film practice to take place under autonomous conditions, while encouraging a parallel budget be produced by the filmmakers in training. This would itemise the contributions that would be expected to be also covered, such as fees and equipment rental, were these films made in professional contexts.

in-depth ethnographic study. We discussed the nature of a portrait and how individuals or groups can be portrayed through a photograph, a painting, sculpture or text and extended this to the medium of moving image. I proposed the students began to think of individuals or groups they already had a relationship with, rather than strangers, as it takes time to develop a relationship of trust, and as they were still in training, it might be more comfortable to work with those more understanding of their limitations. I was moved by the rich and inspiring stories of women the students immediately thought of whose lives and art or choice of creative expression resonated with their interpretation of the themes of the festival.

i) **What's in a name? Song, speech, and a lesson in listening**

“If we are to make a creative response to a historical call to *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* this time focussing on women”, someone suggested in that first production meeting, “why don’t we call it *Sing My Sister?*”. “The festival is about women, identity and all forms of culture.” came a voice from the back, “Women do more than sing. They paint, they dance, they make films. Let’s make a film about that and call it *Speak My Sister*. Personally, I preferred the closer association with the title of the Cardoso film and the way it used singing as a poetic metaphor of the non-verbal creative ‘voice’ of the under-represented. I told the group of the women I had been working with in Niassa. There, when the women had something to say that was considered too harsh to be communicated directly through speech, they ‘spoke’ through their songs (Boswall and Cowan, 2022). I reminded them of the early *Marrabenta* musicians who in colonial times had smuggled anti-colonial messages past the censors by incorporating them into their songs (Laranjeira, 2014). I argued that the power associated with speech is still being circumvented by song and that keeping closer to Cardoso’s title would help us make that connection.⁹⁶ The young filmmakers were more concerned around the exclusion of the voice of women in all other art forms, such as poetry, dance and their own medium of moving image. I learned my first lesson in listening. I had shared my ideas on the title and my new research partners had made a strong argument which I accepted. Although I was sorry to see my preferred title rejected, the title *Speak My Sister* was agreed upon. As time passed and I witnessed

⁹⁶ Feminist anthropologists, sociologists and ethnomusicologists such as Jackson (2012), Abu-Lughod (2016) Impey (2020) describe silence, poetry or song as alternative forms of communication for those who feel disempowered by speech, women in particular.

the way the filmmakers and the wider public played with the word ‘speak’ and notions of voice and subaltern ‘speech’, I learned to let go of my need for the poetry and symmetry of retaining the reference to ‘song’ in our series title, and all that implies for me as an ethnomusicologist, and eventually recognised the value of their improvement on my suggestion.

The subtitle of Cardoso’s film, *Help Me to Sing*, was also of concern. In this case, it was the concept of ‘help’ that was being questioned. The word *ajuda* or ‘help’, when coming from a position of power, had lost any of its original deferential and respectful meaning for the young and often powerless filmmakers. This generation grew up at the time of the World Bank’s structural adjustment program. Instead of the Portuguese telling them what to do, they had the United Nations and all the other international non-governmental organisations (NGO’s) offering their ‘help’, which they saw as another way of continuing to tell them what to do. The extraction of wealth and knowledge by those with more power had been re-framed in terms of ‘aid’, with international ‘donors’ offering ‘advice’, which on the face of it often seemed to ‘help’ the ‘donors’ more than the ‘recipients’.⁹⁷ The Mozambican people being ‘helped’ during that early period of neo-colonialism, they reminded me, were the new political elite, who brought their corruption and lies with them. The intimidation and subsequent assassination of the pioneer of Mozambique’s free press, Carlos Cardoso, had motivated this generation sitting in front of me at that first meeting, as had the outspoken rap music that his death inspired.

*Eu sou da geração
que não deixa o nó da gravata
Prender o grito de liberdade
que explode na garganta
A geração que sabe
quem merece uma estátua
Carlos Cardoso
e Siba-Siba Macuácua*

I’m from the generation
with no tie knotted round my neck
to block the cry of liberty
that explodes in the throat
The generation that knows
who deserves a statue
is Carlos Cardoso
and Siba Siba Macuácua

Extract from Azagaia’s *Minha Geração* (My Generation) 2011⁹⁸

⁹⁷ There is much written on the so-called neo-colonisation of international development agencies and the impact international aid has on those they are designed to help. For two publications with specific focus on Mozambique see: Hanlon (1991) and Arnfred (2004).

⁹⁸For more on the ‘Citizen Voices’ of Azagaia and his contemporaries, see Manhiça et al 2020. To watch the video of this track see Azagaia – *Minha Geração* (Banda Wird Sound and Power co-production). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPSLvFRz_RA0

As I look at the young faces in front of me at that meeting and hear them express themselves with confidence, I am reminded of the hip hop artist Azagaia and his view of how one generation must question and challenge the one that came before them.

“Since independence we've had 2 or 3 generations, and this last generation is not feeling very connected to all that happened in the past. When my music came, for the young Mozambicans, it was like ‘ooof, that's what we're saying, now let's say it loud!’”

Azagaia (Edson da Luz); interview with author, January 2014

Azagaia's unique sound has formed part of the soundscape of Maputo since the mid 2000's and his unforgettable music videos form part of the collective memory of young urban Mozambicans like those at this meeting. In his video that was released alongside his 2013 hit MIR (Rapid Intervention Music), he is seen under a tree listening to a radio where the Minister of Justice is justifying the use of the Rapid Intervention Forces who used tear gas and water jets to disperse peaceful protestors. He seems to speak for them all as he makes his scathing attack on the minister and her cabinet back to the radio:

*Ah, Senhora Ministra,
cuidado com as palavras
Se não fosse o sangue do povo, .
nem sequer governavas
Avisem o conselho de ministros
que na próxima terça-feira*

Ah, Senhora Minister
be careful with your words
If it weren't for the people,
you wouldn't even be in power
Tell the cabinet
that next Tuesday

*Eu levo um par de gira-discos
e colunas lá para a feira
Com milhares de kilowatts
para os nossos camaradas
Vou ligar o microfone
e lançar um jacto de palavras*

I will take a pair of turntables
And speakers to the square
With thousands of kilowatts
for our comrades
I'll switch on the microphone a
and release a jet of words

Extract from
MIR Rapid Intervention Music⁹⁹
Edson da Luz (AKA Azagaia) 2013

⁹⁹ Rapid Intervention Music was named after the Rapid Intervention Forces of the state who were breaking up protests with tear gas at the time. (See Boswall, 2019 and Manhiça et al 2020) To watch video of this track see MIR Música de Intervenção Rápida produced by Kongoloti Records (2013) Video produced by Case Graphics <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtO1uPqnG2Y>.

These young filmmakers at the meeting no longer believed in the utopian dream presented by the older generation. The revolutionary films such as *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* were tainted with the disappointment of the years that followed. They were born into its legacy of poverty and broken promises and the early signs of corruption that became a familiar consideration in their view of power. Some of these young students may have been more critical of the idea of responding to a revolutionary film that represented this failed utopian dream, had it not been for the music. As Azagaia had done with his Rapid Intervention Music, and musicians of each generation have done through their different musical genres, these filmmakers were excited by the idea of responding to the festival theme with their own cinematic kind of musical intervention.

“Who is asking to be ‘helped’ here anyway?” someone asked, “the filmmakers or the viewer?” Some felt it was the filmmakers and political and intellectual elite of Maputo at the time, wanting to understand more about the people of the rest of the country through song, others were not so sure. Mozambican writer and filmmaker Luis Carlos Patrequin, who was working at the INC at the time Cardoso’s film was made, offered an answer to this question in a conversation with the film historian Ros Gray. He suggested the term ‘brother’ was expressing deference, a gesture of ‘respectful supplication by the urban filmmaker to the rural indigenous musicians’, (Patrequin in Gray 2020, 188). At the time, the more egalitarian term of address was the *camarada* or comrade, introduced as part of FRELIMO’s Marxist-Leninist intention to condense ‘fissures in the new nation between the assimilated urban culture and rural indigenous traditions to the level of the personal, the conversational and the familiar ...’. Gray suggests the musicians were being invited to ‘teach the nation to sing a song that henceforth will be shared’ (ibid).

However, there was an alternative reading by the film audience looking back with their contemporary perspective of the political context at the time the film was made. Perhaps the ‘brothers’ being addressed in the film were being informed by the new government that they needed ‘help’ to learn about FRELIMO’s socialism through song. Notions of supplication and respect for other brothers or sisters by those who held power was met by this young generation with the cynical laughter of hindsight. “If anything, we’ll be helping one another” it was agreed, and the subtitle was dropped from our creative response to Cardoso’s film. We settled on the simple invitation to Mozambican women ‘*Fala Minha Irmã*’ (Speak My Sister). The phrase was happily

adopted by all who later heard it in association with our work. I became used to friends answering phone calls from me with the friendly invitation “*Fala, minha irmã!*” (“Speak my sister!”).

ii) Perspectives on content and form - the shape of things to come

One thing the students were unanimous about was that they wanted their films to counteract the stories of victimhood often told about women in Mozambique. They cited films about ‘AIDS orphans’, those looking after their siblings after they have lost their parents to HIV, that portrayed the lonely deaths of those with the virus abandoned by their community. Now, unplanned teenage pregnancies are being presented within the framework of ‘early marriage’. They felt this reinforced a negative outsider view of Africans and were keen to produce an alternative to this image of Mozambique that contradicted their own views of their community. These filmmakers wanted to use the festival theme to celebrate the contribution women make to Mozambican culture and identity and to find stories that inspire and motivate their audiences to find their own strength in the face of the adversity still faced by many Mozambicans. They were also keen to make films that, were they to be seen internationally, would improve the image of their country and not damage it further. One idea that had been presented by one of the tutors, for example, was to portray a group of girls who were part of a cultural association and danced a male warrior dance called *xigubu*. They were responding with their ‘feminist *xigubu*’, as she called it, to vindicate their human rights as girls. Nobody picked up the idea. Perhaps this was because this would be addressing the subjects of sexual violence, girls’ education, and early marriage, already prevalent in films by the international community, reinforcing the stereotypes of Africa they wanted to avoid.

As for the form, we considered devices, such as referencing the use of the map and how this represented the road trip of Cardoso’s filmmakers. We thought we could similarly use a map to unite our series of short musical portraits into one film. I described my idea to weave their films together with behind-the-scenes footage of the research, production and exhibition. This was not rejected outright, but I subsequently understood that longer linear films were only one small element of this young

generation's audiovisual consumption.¹⁰⁰ The creative 'device' that united their films was, for them, the platform they use for their exhibition. "We could put them on YouTube, we could make a website, we could get them broadcast together on television". Someone suggested creating a Facebook page with stills and videos from behind of the scenes that we could keep adding to over the next four months. This would build up *Speak My Sister* followers from the outset and could later be used to promote further activities,¹⁰¹ such as community pop-up screenings. A young student popped his head in the door "You need me?" His name was Iassine. He was from the Design Department and lived on campus with many of those in the room, who had been sending him messages telling him he was needed. After a quick briefing, Iassine agreed to invite others from his department to join the team and be responsible for the branding and promotion of *Speak My Sister*. Within days we had a series logo that put women centre-stage and reflected the contemporary feel the group wanted for their films. By the end of the first meeting, we had agreed:

- The festival theme would serve as a creative entry-point for proposals for an individual or group video portrait of around 10 minutes in duration.
- The students would conduct independent research on their own subjects. I would be supporting them, while also conducting my own research on the process.
- The students would have two weeks to conduct preliminary research and develop their ideas before submitting their proposals.
- A series of open master classes would be offered in all aspects of film research, project development and production during these two weeks.
- 5,000MT (€70.00) would be available for each proposal selected to cover costs of local travel, food and consumables. Only projects that could be completed within these financial restrictions would be considered.
- A jury made up of producers, distributors, trainers and researchers would select the proposals that would go into production.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ After months of editing in 2019, it became clear that although a linear film modelled on our reference film was possible and may eventually still be made, this was not necessary or even appropriate for *Speak My Sister* which was well-served by the polyphonic dialogue between multiple voices and ideas made possible by the web documentary.

¹⁰¹ The Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=fala%20minha%20irm%C3%A3> had no dedicated administrator and was not as useful a research tool as I had hoped. A private WhatsApp group of all involved was more active and more useful for the purposes of this research. However, as Facebook is still very popular amongst Mozambicans, this would be an interesting area to explore in future research.

¹⁰² The jury was formed of representatives of the three institutional partners, ISArC (Director of Film

- Filming and editing equipment would be made available from ISArC and AMOCINE¹⁰³.
- Continued technical training and project development would be offered during each stage of production.
- Proposals from mixed teams of men and women and researchers and filmmakers would be well received.
- The students would also assess the reception of their finished films amongst the communities where the films were shot, among diverse urban audiences of Maputo and in Niassa during the Cultural Festival.
- The series would be called *Fala Minha Irmã*, (Speak My Sister).



Figure 4.1 Series logo by Iassine José (3rd year Graphic Design Student, ISArC)

At the end of that initial meeting three students came forward to greet me personally. I remembered them from an encounter two years before when they had asked me to come and teach them at ISArC. They thanked me for taking their invitation seriously and for finally coming to visit. Despite the film course being in its fourth year, it was, in fact, my first time ever to visit their campus. Hosted in a temporary shared campus out of town, you needed to allow an hour, sometimes two to reach ISArC by car and tales of the slow journey had put me off visiting before.

Studies, Angélica Novela), AMOCINE (Director Gabriel Mondlane) and The University of Sussex (Karen Boswall) with one additional 'star' jury member, the independent producer, Pedro Pimenta. Former Director of Production at the National Film Institute (1977-1982), Director of the experimental television station TVE (1982 - 1990), Founder and Producer of the independent production company Ebano Multimedia (1990-1999), Director of the Southern African Film School in Harare (1999-2005) and of the Durban Film Festival (2005-2014). All accepted this invitation on a voluntary basis.

¹⁰³ All films were shot in Full HD on domestic DSLR cameras. Separate sound was recorded on small Zoom recorders and external microphones, and resynchronised in post-production. Tripods were also provided, introducing optional techniques new to the filmmakers.

The students are bussed into town for specific workshops, screenings, master classes and collaborations hosted by cultural organisations active in the city and I had been at these events. When the three students thanked me for coming, I realised it had been the pitch those students had made to me at the end of the film screening two years ago that had set this entire research project in motion. It had taken me this long to find the finance and organise the partnerships and now we were finally able to realise that dream. Those three students, André Bahule, Sive Castigo and Narciso Lufagir took part in every subsequent workshop and master class offered, they were behind two of the films in the series, they travelled with their films to Niassa, one even travelled with his film to Brazil. They taught me as much as I taught them. As with the discussion around the title of Cardoso's film, I didn't 'help' them and they didn't 'help' me, we helped each other.

4.3 Voices of the next generation Part 2. Training, provocation, observation and listening

In the build-up to my partnership with ISArC, I had offered film training to Mozambican musicians, artists, activists and anthropologists, all with no film experience.¹⁰⁴ Some demonstrated innate ability and enthusiasm and showed great potential. However, none produced a completed film that could be screened in public. The participants also had to focus on their work and family commitments and in the case of the anthropology postgraduate researchers, their credited assignments. Instilling autonomy and self-reliance were important criteria for the methodological model I had hoped to develop as part of this doctoral research, and in each of the three initial collaborations, the participants were unable to take their new filmmaking skills to the point of working independently, at least within the timeframe of my doctoral research. This time, I chose to work with individuals who had already travelled from all corners of the country to study. There was 'equality' in the cultural and social diversity of the students at ISArC, and as they were already dedicated to the improvement of their craft, there was also a greater chance they would be able to produce the 'quality' work Claire Bishop speaks of in her analysis of the dichotomy

¹⁰⁴ ISArC was not the first institutional partnership of this doctoral research and came eighteen months into an exploration of different methodologies that have eventually resulted in this model.

between quality and equality in participatory art (Bishop, 2012). I wanted to emulate the decolonial successes of revolutionary National Film Institute after all! However, *Speak My Sister* was still in competition with many other personal challenges and pressures on these young filmmakers' time. My offer of intensive advanced training and the tangible target of public screenings at a high-profile event proved an important motivation for us all. Both quality and equality were essential. Nonetheless, when I began the process of training those thinking of taking part, it was clear we had our work cut out.

The master classes

I began with a series of 'master classes' where I explored elements of the theory and practice of the musical portrait drawing on my own work and experience. These sessions were designed to inspire interesting portrait proposals and to prepare those selected to consider their methodologies when designing their own musical portraits. I focussed on three themes:

1. Audiovisual research methods & ethnographic film. In this master class I explored methodological approaches to audiovisual representation. I focussed on my own participatory and collaborative filming and audiovisual research methodologies, illustrating the ideas I introduced with examples from my work.

2. Audiovisual production goes digital. Here I explored the possibilities of shooting on DSLR's and mobile phones. Again, within the context of my own journey, I described early Mozambican video production, where there were six or seven crew members (camera, camera assistant, sound, production manager, production assistant, director and assistant director), to exploring the benefits and challenges of working in very small groups or two or three, and lastly, the practicalities of assuming all these roles and working alone.

3. From idea to film. Again, using my own films as case studies, I examined the process of translating an idea for a film into a proposal. I introduced some routes I had used to finance my films, describing how these films had been pitched focussing on the concept or more effectively, the story and character. I showed clips from some of the completed films, and some of the teasers of those that didn't make it to the screen.

The presentations were open to the public, hosted by AMOCINE at INAC, (The National Institute of Audiovisual and Cinema) at the refurbished headquarters of the renamed National Film Institute (INC).



Figure 4.2 The author delivering open master class in March 2018 at the Instituto Nacional de Cinema e Audiovisual (INAC)

Technical Training

The second training opportunity was an intensive five-day technical course. In May each year, Eduardo Mondlane University offers its grounds to host an international music festival called AZGO. This fell towards the end of the *Speak My Sister* pre-production period and provided an ideal opportunity for offering training in different technical aspects of filming musical performance. I developed this in partnership with *Espaço Inovação*¹⁰⁵ and asked a young Mozambican director of photography, Emídio Jozine,¹⁰⁶ to help me deliver the training. Of the twelve who started, eleven completed the course, all of whom went on to apply their skills in their independent productions.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Espaço Inovação was established in 2017 ‘to promote the creation of a national ecosystem of innovation based on science and technology’, see: <http://www.inovacao.uem.mz/>. I had been working with them since their formation and they enthusiastically offered their support to this initiative.

¹⁰⁶ Emidio Jozine was discovered by a Dutch NGO when he took part in a ‘photo-voice’ workshop. They helped him apply for international funding to study abroad. He received the place with fees paid for and a letter of invitation to apply for a visa. He worked nights as a hotel receptionist and had a small cupboard at the hotel for his things. He slept where he could. He returned to Maputo and earns his living as a cameraman for Reuters, taking time out to apprentice in international crews when he has the opportunity.

¹⁰⁷ There were only two female participants, despite my recruitment drive. One of these two women, Pércia, only attended the first day of the course. The other, Lourdes, also nearly left on the second day explaining the difficulty she and the other women had in attending. Some of the activities were inevitably at night and they did not want to risk the journey home on public transport. Further arrangements were made for Lourdes to continue attending and I will ensure the same is always included in all future training I organise.



Figures 4.3 - 4.8 Emídio Jozine delivering camera training on Location Camera and Sound Course at the Innovation Space UEM, André Bahule practicing sound, Lourdes Rubaine practicing camera and group selfies during the AZGO Music Festival, Maputo 2018
Photographs by the author

This course was my first opportunity to observe some of the young filmmakers at work. Our first practical exercise was filming the reggae fusion band *Granmah*, fronted by the powerful vocals of Regina dos Santos. She is one of the new generation of female vocalists to come out of the evangelical church bands. I had followed her career for some years and offered the band now an edited live recording of the performance, if they agreed to the training to take place around their rehearsal, sound-check and show. During the preparation and performance, I had a sense the students were applying the theory well. However, when the material was screened the next morning for analysis and reflection, I had to work hard at masking my surprise at the poor camera work and the distorted sound. This material was unusable. Very few shots were in focus. The cameras moved clumsily with no sense of intention or musicality. I was surprised, given that these students were in the third or fourth year of their course. The next group who had agreed to a similar arrangement as *Granmah*, was a 12-piece band called TP50, again with a strong female vocalist Xixel Langa. I was

concerned I would once again have to disappoint the musicians to whom I had promised a live recording of the performance. I also began to doubt any of the films produced by these young filmmakers would reach the technical standard required to be screened during the National Festival.

I had made assumptions on the knowledge and experience of these students based on what they and their tutors had told me, and not what I had seen. I had spent the first day of the training outlining the principles of multi-camera filming of musical performances, the challenges of filming a stage performance and the importance of the relationship with the event technicians to get the best out of their lighting and sound mix when I should have been delivering basic camera training. In hindsight, it was clear the limitations of the practical training at ISArC were greater than I had anticipated. I realised too late that the information provided in the master classes had also been at a much more advanced level than was appropriate. I took steps to increase the technical aspects of the training and simply embed the conceptual during the practice. Jozine and I delivered a crash course in basic photography focussing on the essentials of focus, exposure and camera movement. I also wanted the young filmmakers to explore principles of how to visually highlight the relationships amongst the performers and between them and their audience. I wanted them to explore techniques in ensuring the viewer has a sense of the atmosphere of the event; principles I hoped they would take further in their own films. Instead, the challenges of filming we did identify, such as filming a performance in daylight, working with unpredictable lighting from the sun, and recording good live, undistorted audio, although more fundamental notions than I had hoped, proved to be important lessons and were applied in their final films by all those who participated in this intensive training opportunity during the AZGO music festival.¹⁰⁸

Apprenticeships

The third opportunity of more advance apprenticeships was only taken up by four of the students, Samo Mula, André Bahule, Alzira Guetza and Lurdes Rubaine. Samo

¹⁰⁸ The partners in this training initiative, *Espaço Inovação* (Innovation Space) and AZGO, the International Music Festival were keen to continue to roll this training out in subsequent years. For financial reasons, this did not happen at AZGO in 2019, but with the covid restriction in 2020/2021, there was increased prevalence in on-line live-streamed performances. The professionals behind these sessions had been responsible for AZGO stage and sound delivery and inspired by the Speak My Sister training initiative, they ensured many more young film technicians had the opportunity to train in the filming techniques taught during this first AZGO partnership.

and André had more technical experience than the rest of the group and were looking for opportunities to practice in a more professional environment. Alzira and Lurdes also wanted to practice camera and sound under my mentorship, as neither had had any technical experience in the past. These four worked alongside me filming behind the scenes during distribution of the series in Niassa. I also invited Samo to work with me professionally in the production of a seventh film portrait, shot in Maputo alongside the others in the *Speak My Sister* series, but only edited in the following year.¹⁰⁹



Figure 4.9 André Bahule, Alzira Guetza and Samo Mula
filming as part of apprenticeship scheme during the National Festival of Culture 2018
Photo by the author

Although the lines between my roles as researcher, producer and trainer were sometimes blurred, one thread that ran through all three that emphasised my researcher role, was my feminist approach to the research, both in terms of my own methodologies and the analysis and reflection I encouraged among the participants. The young filmmakers began to evaluate their own methodologies from a feminist perspective, seeing the challenges women face behind and in front of the camera and the choices both men and women make when representing the other that ultimately are informed by preconceptions around gender. The young men behind the cameras have grown up in a world where men sit on chairs and women on the floor, where boys are sent to school and their sisters care for them when they return home. The young women were expected home before nightfall, many were caring for children, husbands and parents while studying. I light-heartedly made simple observations such as the body language of the men as they crowded around the camera blocking access to the

¹⁰⁹ The film *Warrior Dancers* (Boswall, 2021) is an edited version of the 28 minute documentary *Her Xi-gu-bu: The Dance of the Warrior* (Boswall, 2020) See: <https://vimeo.com/382097197> Password: Maputo.

women watching at a distance, or the physical positioning in vehicles or cramped spaces where the women were often in the squashed and uncomfortable positions. The young men began to reflect on their behaviour around women, and the young women began to rise to the challenge the increased authority and voice the experience offered them, and the expectations that go with it. Interestingly, the area where neither the men nor the women needed guidance, and where the examples offered during the master class served as inspiration, was when it came to their relationships with their film subjects. As soon as the young filmmakers began devising and later making their own films, all involved their subjects in the decision-making around their own representation.

4.4 Voices of the next generation part 3. Project selection the limitations of the written word

Working with moving image requires costly hardware, software and human resources. Despite the technological advances over the past decade, there are still unavoidable costs for those wanting to practice and improve their technical skills, explore methodologies and develop their own audiovisual language. As such, the cost of moving image production continues to be beyond the financial means of many wanting to use it as their vehicle for creative expression. Unlike dance, visual art (painting and sculpture), the written word and much music production, the so-called ‘seventh art’ of cinema remains to be considered by many in Mozambique an art form for those with means.

“In Mozambique, they say cinema has no market, that there’s no space, no opportunities, and for you to do it, you have to have money. So when I chose to study cinema, my brothers and sisters had to sit down and decide together if they would support me. But they decided they would and since then have done all they can so I can follow my dreams”

César Vitorino, Director *Tambourines of Mafalala* (2018)
From filmed interview with researcher, July, 2018¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ To see Vitorino speaking about his route to becoming a filmmaker see the film *Behind Tambourines of Mafalala* in the ‘Behind the Stories’ section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

The young talents of Maputo have found ways to teach themselves some filmmaking skills through producing content that others will see and someone else is prepared to pay for. Music video production has therefore become a popular progression route for many Mozambicans starting out in moving image production. However, when making a music video, there is little opportunity to practice the other skills needed to go beyond the music video genre. Even those students with experience in music video production, had little or no experience recording and editing with audio, structuring narratives and arguments and exploring the choices for how to document and represent those in the world around you. All were also interested in exploring the methodologies of conducting research, recording interviews or conversations and reflecting on the ethics of positionality and perspective.

There are occasional funded training programmes and institutional production funds. However, despite the non-verbal language of the medium itself, starting out as a filmmaker and accessing these funds inevitably depends on the strength of a written proposal. The funders need to be assured that their money will be well-spent. Having been on both sides of this experience, I know how difficult it is to deliver the essential elements required by those on a selection panel, and also how important the written document is to the panel's choice. I wanted to develop more inclusive alternatives during the *Speak My Sister* selection process.

I formed a jury of three respected professionals, Angélica Novela, the Director of the Film Department at ISArC, Gabriel Mondlane, the President of the Filmmakers' Association AMOCINE, and Pedro Pimenta, ex-Director of Production at the National Film Institute and seasoned international film producer, trainer, festival director and jury member. I had very limited funds and would be delivering the support single-handedly, so knew it was a sensible decision to limit the number of films selected. I asked them to help me select four portraits from the seven proposals that were received. I was keen to ensure all those who wanted to submit a proposal had an equal chance of being one of those selected, regardless of their literary skills, internet access or funds for the bus fare. Too often I have seen the more intellectual and linguistically confident progress, not necessarily on the basis of their ideas or their ability to deliver, but their ability to pitch. This confidence and linguistic ability is often rooted in class, gender and, in many contexts, also race. In the African context these values are also rooted in colonialism and imperialism still controlling the continent's economy, politics and culture, as outlined decades earlier by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o who identifies

these forces ‘mediating (an African’s) very being ... mediating between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature’ (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, 1986, p15).

The irony here is that film does not require spoken language, yet to access the necessary finances to enter the ‘club’ of those who will be supported in their choice of film as their medium for creative expression, language is still essential. In my attempt to mitigate the limitations of the established mediations, I made it possible for applications to be made on video, through on-line forms or hard copies, with delivery points on campus and at the AMOCINE offices in town. I also abandoned the convention of requiring a ‘synopsis’ and ‘treatment’ as I have seen many a talented filmmaker, and many an exceptional idea, stumble at this first hurdle for lack of the necessary skills to synthesise their idea, be it in a verbal or video pitch or in writing. Instead, I identified five themes that would provide the necessary information to describe the idea and its viability to the jury, with additional guidance on what the jury was looking for:

CHARACTER: Describe the woman/women you intend to portray

GUIDANCE: Explain what is unique about them.

RELATIONSHIP: Describe your relationship with this person/these people.

GUIDANCE: It's very important that they have already accepted your proposal to film them. If you don't already know them, this will require spending time with them before submitting this proposal.

CINEMATIC TREATMENT:

Describe the style of portrait you intend to make.

GUIDANCE: Describe this in terms of image, sound and content

MOTIVATION: Describe why you want to make this film

GUIDANCE: Provide details on your motivation to take part in Speak My Sister and why you have chosen this person/people to portray.

EXPERIENCE: Describe your technical experience.

GUIDANCE: This is to ensure you receive the support you require. There is no requirement for any prior technical experience to take part.

Applicants were not expected to provide the helpful one sentence summary of the essence of their portrait or identify their research question. These would be developed with them later. They simply needed to demonstrate their readiness to start. It is possible all seven applications received may well have been rejected had the projects been externally adjudicated amongst others in an international selection process. They were poorly laid out, had errors in the written Portuguese and generally failed to instil confidence in the jury members. The decisions were inevitably made in part on prior

knowledge of the context these young people were working in and some knowledge of the subject matter they were wanting to explore. Still, the four groups chosen for me to support through the rest of the project were also the four who had submitted the best-presented proposals.

*Tambourines of Mafalala*¹¹¹

'A group of motivated women who found solace through the practice of Tufo dance, (and) see dance not only as a form of entertainment but also as a form of work through the fees received during the performances'

As an important female song and dance tradition in Mozambique, Tufo's inclusion in the series was welcomed by the jury. The proposal was written by a second-year student who goes by the nickname of 'the poet' and it was, unsurprisingly, the best-written proposal. Personally, I was concerned about the practicalities of realising this vision but was very happy to support this group and looked forward to the lessons they and I would learn from the experience.

*Stella*¹¹²

'Her name is Stella in addition to singing and dancing, she is a young student in the course of management and cultural studies (ISArC)...Born in the province of Zambézia, she is also a composer and the traditional rhythm is part of her largest musical resource. ... we want her story to be shared and heard by many as an example of overcoming obstacles (through her life story) that will help other young women not to stop with their dreams for the future because of their difficulties'

This was the second proposal to sail through the selection process. Although the group hadn't taken up the offer of making an audiovisual application, they had shared a video on the newly created *Speak My Sister* Facebook page that I showed the jury to introduce them to the protagonist. The protagonist herself makes a tantalising case for the film through her direct connection with the audience, flirting with the lens

¹¹¹ I will use the English translations of the *Speak My Sister* films in this paper. These are my translations of the original titles and most are literal translations. However, in the case of this film, the original title is *Pandeiros da Mafalala*. and as is sometimes the case with film titles a level of poetic licence was used in translating this to *Tambourines of Mafalala*. *Pandeiro* is the name of the hand-frame drum used in *Tufo*, also used in Brazilian Samba. They do not have metallic resonators, however, there is no English word for 'pandeiro'. It was felt the title *Tambourines of Mafalala* would give a clearer visual and musical trigger to than using the correct word that many English speakers are unfamiliar with.

¹¹² To watch this promotional clip see: <https://vimeo.com/457224582>.

with captivating energy and mystery, as she sings and dances with her group. The written proposal gave little information about the filmmakers' approach to the portrait, but the confidence of tone in the written application, together with the video, left the jury curious to see more.



Figure 4.10 Series of screenshots from promotional video of *Stella* (Mula, 2018)
Featuring Stela Alberto and her new group formed from Zambézia Province
Photography: Samo Mula Produced by Francisco Valia¹¹³

*Xingomana*¹¹⁴

'A group of women who use singing and dancing as their weapon of war, ... to explore the best of xingomana women seeking to know how they managed to overcome many obstacles as women and what they seek to aim for in the future, since prejudice still prevails in that area'.

Despite the logistical challenges associated with this proposal, Angélica Novela vouched for the filmmaker and was insistent in her support of the proposal. She had been with the author of the proposal André Bahule when he first encountered the group when they performed at a public event filmed by ISArC students. She was moved by the women, their dance and what she knew of the importance of *xingomana* and was confident André had the commitment and vision to make a good film. She even offered to drive the group the 200 kms to the village in Gaza and stay with them if needs be, making a case for a slight increase in the expenses budget by 2000 MT (£20) to make this possible. It became the third proposal to be accepted.

Three proposals vied for the final slot. The decision was not easy, and in the end, the presentation and clarity of the written proposal informed the jury's decision. They selected the portrait that focussed on the relationship of a couple presented as a

¹¹³ This single shot of Stela Alberto and her group was shared on Facebook with heavy promotional graphics and the end title "coming soon".

¹¹⁴ The original title for this film was simply *Xingomana*. It resulted in two versions of the film. The director's cut *Nhenha*, (a *changana* word used to describe women's strength) and the shorter edit that forms part of the *Speak My Sister* film series, that was eventually entitled *Xingomana - A Dance of Generations*.

validation of women as hip hop artists, “a call for society to accept them as they are, and to believe that they are women like any other woman not connected to the hip hop style”.

Crossing Paths

‘F.T, a young artist, composer and interpreter of music, specifically in the rap style, who has performed as a duet with her husband for almost 10 years’.

The producers of the four accepted and three rejected proposals were informed of the jury’s decision. They covered an interesting variety of musical genres, social themes, individual stories and creative approaches. The night after the decision had been made, I couldn’t help thinking of the two portraits that got away; *Victorious Dancer*, the only proposal to come in from a group made up entirely of women and *Rhythm Art Poetry And Life*, the only portrait of a high-profile popular artist who, coincidentally, I had been wanting to make a film about for years. I had a feeling I might regret turning them down.

The proposal from the women’s group was also the only proposal to come in from fourth year students. I had been following these women for some time and was keen to work with them. Their proposal was submitted in the form of a life-story

Victorious Dancer,

‘Cristina, 30 years old, mother of a son and student of the fourth year of the dance course at the Higher Institute of Arts and Culture. Born in Tete, she had a normal childhood, lost her mother at the age of 3 and at the age of 15 went to live with her step-sister (by her father) in the city of Matola, Maputo province because her father was very ill and at 16 she became fatherless’.

The text goes on to explain the many challenges Cristina had overcome, including sexual abuse within her own family and again in the streets as she tried to escape her brother-in-law. It was not clear from the proposal how the young women planned to explore this theme, but I felt I could give them some helpful suggestions and that the film would make a good contribution to the research and the series. The dance department at ISArC had developed a reputation for excellence, having recruited dancers from all over the country it was now delivering performances that rivalled the country’s national dance company. I saw potential for a creative portrait exploring a sensitive subject through the language of dance.

I was also very interested in the portrait of the high-profile popular artist described in the proposal as '*one of the biggest and best voices in Mozambican rap and has a degree in law*'. She was named as Isaura in the proposal, yet I knew her stage name to be Yvete. She is the nation's pioneer of women's hip hop and although I had never met her, heard she was an extraordinary woman with a powerful personality. From her work, I knew she was an excellent poet and musician who has used her public profile to speak out about issues affecting women and girls for over twenty years. For her day job she is a hardworking and humble human rights lawyer. I was excited that she had agreed to make this audiovisual portrait with the named director Lutegardo. He was an up-and-coming hip hop artist himself and had already some experience making music videos. The producer Alexandre Pita had also presented himself to me on a number of occasions and demonstrated real commitment and enthusiasm to learn the skills of filmmaking and take them back to his home province of Zambézia. I had long envisaged making a film with Yvete and had been kept at arm's length, with my calls and emails going unanswered on three separate occasions. I sensed she wanted her story to be told by Mozambicans and this was their opportunity.

I do not regret the decision I made to increase the number of films to go into production from four to six. However, it was a difficult decision to make at the time, not least because it overrode the collective democratic process I had put in place to help me make the best selection. There were also strong arguments against the inclusion of the two proposals I was now keen to support. Firstly, neither had used the requested application format or answered the required questions about access and motivation. Secondly, and perhaps more convincingly, it was thought only one film featuring hip hop musicians should be accepted in such a small series and the proposal for the film *Crossing Paths* included an interesting dynamic of a couple, with an emphasis on the relationship, which the jury felt showed promise of a more complex and unusual portrait. However, both the rejected proposals told powerful stories of their main characters, both clearly had unprecedented access to those stories, and both showed promise of delivering fascinating insight for my research. I explained my decision to the jury members who despite their concern about my increased workload, admitted to being relieved, as the decision had been difficult, and they too were keen to see these films made. I contacted the producers and explained that although they

had been rejected by the jury selecting possible films for the festival, I was keen to see their films made as part of my research. I offered additional support during pre-production and initial production to ensure the doubts raised by the jury as a result of the poor written proposals and missing pre-production paperwork would be addressed. Both explained that they had struggled to make the proposal deadline and were now very excited to put all their efforts into a second chance. It is possible they worked harder on their films as a result.

Yvete eventually had to pull out and suggested the women's hip hop group *Revolução Feminina* in her place. Their portrait and that of the dancer Cristina enriched the series and I learned a great deal from their inclusion. However, had I known the additional challenges involved in supporting and analysing the production and distribution of six as opposed to four films, I may have made a different decision. Some of those from the additional two groups have already proven their eventual inclusion worthy of my additional efforts. Following this decision, 26 young first-time filmmakers were able to take part, 16 men and 10 women from eight of the ten provinces of Mozambique. All portraits were directed by people with a personal connection to the stories being told. All of the protagonists inspired action and celebrated female resilience and the power of the creative spirit to inform and transform. I assumed the role of commissioner and series producer holding regular meetings with each group. Sometimes I offered logistical or technical help, sometimes conceptual. Often it was emotional support and encouragement that was needed. One of the most important lessons the first-time filmmakers needed to learn was to pick themselves up and find a new approach or solution to the inevitable setbacks and disappointments. This is an essential skill in all film production, especially when making films that engage with the complex lives of real people, and all the more necessary in a country like Mozambique, where situations can change from moment to moment.

4.5 Reflecting on collaboration and participation

I was never in doubt that this research needed to be conducted using participatory and collaborative methodologies. I had been informally researching the inclusion of

women in the world of Mozambican music and film since I became a part of it and experienced the challenges of inequality and prejudice from my female perspective. I would have thoroughly enjoyed formalising this research, identifying some of the most significant female musical genres, and perhaps some of those still undiscovered and conducting my own audiovisual research into women's lives, resulting in a visually and musically rich feature-length film. I can even see in my mind's eye the film I would have authored, had I been responsible for the product alone; Karen Boswall, musician, filmmaker and musical researcher with a longstanding connection with Mozambican music and film. Inspired by Tony Gatlif's musical odyssey *Lachto Drom* (Safe Journey) (1993), which traces the migration of the Roma people from rural Rajasthan to central Madrid through the music and dance, I can see a musically, visually and culturally rich exploration of the life of women across Mozambican space and time. I would track Mozambican women's slow progress towards recognition, equality and human rights through songs, dances and a few carefully placed stories. My film would have been based on comprehensive ethnographic research with a view to being screened in Mozambique and across the world.

However, we are well into the 21st century and still there are only a handful of films available that were made by Mozambicans, most of them by white men of my generation. The number of Mozambican ethnographic researchers is gradually increasing through a larger roll-out of higher education over the last decade, but their research remains text based, untranslated and unpublished. A film such as the one I have made in my head, may well have helped me, and perhaps could have introduced more people around the world to Mozambican women, music and culture, but it would have still been replicating the old model of colonial power over the representation of the colonised. I would have raised my finance using models that may have obliged me to work with a European crew, conducted my post-production outside of Mozambique. I would have been the person invited to the festivals, lamenting the hardship of poor Mozambican women, representing them in my capacity as researcher and filmmaker along with the others trained almost exclusively in western institutions. It has been clear for decades that more needs to be done to decolonise both research methods and audiovisual production, if we are to make the necessary changes in the power relationships perpetuated in knowledge production. Methodologies need to be adopted that 'talk back' to the long-established 'institutions of knowledge embedded in a global system of imperialism and power' (Smith, 2012 ix). So, much as I would love to make

my feminist Mozambican *Latcho Drom*, I chose instead to look for ways to contribute to making this change possible through inclusive ‘participatory’ methodologies and what has become known as ‘Collaborative Knowledge Production’ (Shaw, 2007).

4.6 The tension between quality and equality

In an interview published in 2014, participatory art historian Claire Bishop argues that ‘there is no point celebrating an “ethical” working process as a goal in itself’, instead ‘the overall meaning’ of a creative work has to be more complex than a mere celebration of how a work was implemented’ (Bishop cited by Eschenburg, 2014). Her book on the subject, ‘Artificial Hells’, explores the existing binary between process and product in participatory art, or as she describes it, a binary between equality and quality (Bishop 2012, 7). In it, she makes a descent into what she describes as ‘the inferno’ of social engaged participatory art, making a case for a return to ‘reflections on quality that characterise the humanities’ .. ‘in order to render them more powerful’ (ibid, 8). Her analysis takes examples from the kind of collaborative creative experiences more commonly known as ‘community art’ when I was working as an artist and filmmaker in the UK in the 1980’s. She explores the familiar themes of authenticity, aesthetics, collaboration and authorship drawing on examples from *The Hooter Symphonies*, an extraordinary sonic collaboration involving the population of a soviet shipping port in Baku, (now Azerbaijan) in 1922, to *Tenantspin*, an internet-based TV station for elderly residents of a run-down tower block in Liverpool in 2000¹¹⁵.

I too associated the idea of ‘participation’ with a creative practice where the process took precedence over product. The compromise of consensus-based collaborative authorship was more of a compromise than I was prepared to make. Although politically motivated, I saw myself as an artist and viewed the process that became known as ‘Participatory Video’ (Shaw and Robertson, 1997) as part of community activism driven by social workers rather than artists. I understood the value of this creative expression to those involved and recognised the power of the ‘Path to Becoming’ (Shaw, 2012) through using video for self-representation and reflection.

¹¹⁵ For more on the hooter symphony see Bishop, (2012, 64-66).

However, I was never drawn to the practice of Participatory Video because the resulting films didn't inspire me creatively. I believed that the artistic language of moving image, the poetry and metaphor, rhythm and polyphony required certain technical standards to be met that needed to be learned and valued. Without these, the path itself; the process, became the product. The films produced seemed a short-lived by-product seen only by those directly connected to the production. I did not know then that I was part of an ongoing and lively academic conversation spanning decades about collaborative authorship that I, too, would eventually find myself defending.

When the quality vs. equality pendulum swings in favour of the high-end product that meet the needs and expectations of the Western audiences, however, the result can be equally as problematic. Film theorist Pooja Rangan describes the award-winning documentaries born out of this kind of product-focussed participation as Pseudoparticipatory Documentaries (Rangan 2017, 29). She cites a number of acclaimed award-winning documentaries such as *Born into Brothels* (Briski and Kaufman, 2004) and *Trouble the Water* (Lessin and Deal, 2008). In the first, the victims of child labour in Calcutta and the second, the abandoned citizens of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, are presented within the tropes of what she describes as the '*immediation* of the humanitarian documentary'. They follow the aesthetic and structural conventions of the networks and institutions that finance them, supplying them, Rangan argues, with their *raison d'être* (Rangan 2017, 5). She cites the 'mission statement' introduced to the viewer in the opening narration of *Born into Brothels*, for example, where director Zana Briski explains "It's almost impossible to film in the Red Light district. Everyone is terrified of the camera ... I knew I couldn't do it as a visitor." Yet the children in the brothels were "all over me They wanted to learn how to use the camera. That's when I thought it would be really great to teach them and to see the world through their eyes." (*Born into Brothels*, by Briski and Kaufman 2014, cited by Rangan 2017, 29).

By giving a camera to those with an experience to share that would be difficult for an outsider to film, the filmmaker (often from countries where film training is more accessible and becoming a documentary filmmaker still a difficult but accepted career path) can gain unprecedented access to a world (often in countries and with people who have little expectation of being able to share the realities of their lives with outsiders). The problem being raised by Rangan, however, is that the outsiders who commissioned their subjects to film their lives can later imprint their values and

aesthetic on the material they receive in post-production. As a result, although the act of giving the camera to the other is rooted in humanitarianism, those handing over the cameras are in fact ‘exploiting the concrete material circumstances and labours of disenfranchised individuals in a manner that reinforces their status as other’ (ibid 7-8). Those disenfranchised individuals are being invited to ‘perform their humanity’, yet, it is a humanity based on the benchmarks of the liberal west, and not, necessarily those of the people being represented.

By being the arbiter of ‘what does and does not count as human’, these kinds of collaborations can, she argues, undermine, rather than empower the subjects. The craft and expertise of the trained filmmakers behind these award-winning films do however ensure that the experience of those without the technique, skill or normally, the technology required, can be seen by large western audiences and understood using the tropes their aesthetic and narrative expectations demand. The filmmakers clearly believe in the power of documentary ‘to resolve the discriminatory paradigm of representation and to mitigate the impacts of a hostile or absent state’ (Rangan 2017, 7). The subjects are given an opportunity to talk back to the global system of imperialism and power, described by Tuhiwai Smith, and be heard. However, they can reinforce the very values that have informed presumptions and prejudice by those who watch the films in their cinemas and televisions of the privileged west, a privilege often built on the poverty of those whose response to poverty they lament and judge.

Architect Markus Miessen, another analyst of participatory creative practice whose book title ‘The Nightmare of Participation’ (2010) mirrors Bishop’s sombre ‘Hellish’ view, is even harsher in his criticism of those in the more powerful positions of much participatory practice. He suggests that part of their motivation is to create ‘a veneer of worthiness’ around a creative project (Miessen 2010, 33). While cloaking their project in nostalgically fuelled romantic notions of goodness (ibid, 54), they are in fact simply ‘outsourcing responsibility’ to people who require little or no payment (ibid, 51). ‘When jobs were no longer available, due to the reduction in artistic funding and commissions’, Miessen argues, ‘practitioners started to rethink their formats’ (ibid, 46).

Through *Speak My Sister* I was offered many opportunities to recognise elements Rangan and Miessen criticise in participatory creative practice. I can identify a ‘humanitarian impulse’ in myself: for example, in the first meeting with the young filmmakers, when I especially encouraged the story of the girl warrior dancers who

appropriate a male genre to stand up to sexual violence, and the subsequent selection process when I went against the decision of the jury to include stories highlighting sexual violence and women's empowerment. I also had willing yet unpaid collaborators/participants who conducted fascinating research into five musical genres, producing six films that have a life beyond the end of the project. Conducting this same research and producing those films with professional researchers and filmmakers would have required a budget that in the current economic climate may have been impossible to source the finance for. Was I also guilty of Miessen's accusation of cloaking the project in romantic notions of goodness to outsource responsibility? Like the pseudo-participatory documentaries gaining unprecedented access by giving the camera to others only to later take the credit? Although I would have struggled to find the necessary trained Mozambican professionals to work with, it is important to recognise that the daunting and thankless task of raising the finance to pay professionals in a research project can be a factor in some methodological decisions, especially when that includes working with those, such as the young Mozambicans I worked with, who already have minimal training. The additional intense and contextual practical training, however, was my way of ensuring this research was not determined through my *immediations*, and that the filmmakers had the skills to share their own *un-immediated* version of their experience. It was for them to decide what was and wasn't important to focus on and how.

David MacDougall also highlights another home truth I often reflect on. 'A filmmaker' he explains 'may feel uncomfortable about occupying a position of power (as a filmmaker per se or more broadly in society) and seek to attenuate it' (MacDougall 2020, 10). I myself do not find holding the camera up to the private worlds of individuals a comfortable experience. I am in constant internal dialogue with myself as to whether to continue to impose the power of the camera on a situation or to stop filming and allow the moment to go unrecorded. I have begun to make films and decided to stop or shift the focus altogether when this discomfort has become too great. This power of the camera is only worth harnessing when it benefits the subjects as much, if not more than it does me. I have even found myself lamenting the choice of becoming a filmmaker and not a writer, longing for a creative process of writing based on experiences uncluttered by the presence of the camera.

I once heard a Mozambican musician describing being filmed as being 'perpetuated'. "*Perpetuamo-nos*" he said, after we had been filmed on stage: "We have

perpetuated ourselves!'. I wonder if it is this recognition that what is filmed can live on beyond the lifespan of one's own body that produces this self-consciousness around a camera that, when filming, I work so hard to diffuse. Added to this, as a writer, it is possible to disguise the identity of someone who wishes to remain anonymous. Women who have cultural codes around their private and public selves can only present their public self to the camera, but offer their private selves to me, and trust me to be discreet with my words. Such discretion and anonymity is possible when working with image and sound, but it often requires aesthetic decision to be made which can complicate the filming and editing process. Also, when you film a person in the shadows or blur the details of their facial features and voice in post-production, you may be doing so to protect their privacy, but such aesthetic choices can also interrupt the viewer's engagement with the subject in a way that using anonymity through the written word does not. When I film, I long to be freed of the clutter of the camera. I find that without the camera, the people around me are soon comfortably able to continue their lives with minimal inconvenience. They are aware of my presence as an outsider of course, but the shift in their behaviour becomes more marked the moment a camera comes out of the bag. They have that 'soon I will be perpetuated' air about them.

There is another process that happens behind the camera, in my own behaviour that shifts the moment I decide to film. I know that not only will I have to place the camera between myself and the people I am with, I also have to worry about setting white balance, focus, exposure, sound levels, positioning the tripod, charging the batteries and all the myriad of technical considerations that accompany the experience of self-shooting. This can distract me from the relationship with those I am filming. I may be able to use the camera as an extension of myself, but it is a self that requires methodical production skills, inter-personal skills and technical skills that are developed over years of experience, until they have developed into muscle memory, as is the case for me with sound recording. If I am to gather the images and sound that truly reflect what my eyes and ears would have experienced without the camera, I need to focus part of my attention on this. I spend the whole time I am holding the camera balancing and judging which of these two requirements is more important, my relationship with the demands of the camera or those in front of it. The alternative is filming with a group of professionals who can assume responsibility for the technical requirements of recording image, sound and managing the production. Working in a

team frees me to concentrate on the relationships with those in front of the camera and the creative and conceptual decisions around their representation. It is also a pleasure sharing ideas and concerns with understanding colleagues. However, the presence of four outsiders disrupts the world of those around them and the intimacy and trust gained as an individual is more time-consuming, costly and complex to develop when with a group of four.

My attraction to the medium of music is, in part, a creative and ethical response to the discomfort I feel intruding on people's private lives with a camera. There is something less voyeuristic and greedy about 'perpetuating' someone's music. The process of discussing memories, emotions and vulnerabilities in conversations about songs, instruments, or dance practices is more poetic, indirect and sensitive than the direct approach of discussing memories and feelings without the helping hand of metaphor and simile. Whether it is performing or talking about music and dance, the process moves the memories and experiences into a part of the body and mind able to translate the raw experiences into a language that is more about sharing and less about suffering. The collaboration required in capturing those moments and encounters in front of the camera, is also generally more welcome and enjoyable. However, while recognising elements of the more dubious motivations identified by Rangan, Miessen and MacDougall, when I think back to how I felt at the screenings, sensing the thrill among the Mozambican audiences to see their stories told in their visual, conceptual and sometimes spoken language, I am reminded that making this possible in the future was the main objective behind these collaborative methodologies in the first place.

4.7 The language of collaboration

David MacDougall has recently offered those exploring questions around collaboration, co-creation and participation a proposed common vocabulary by breaking different practices into 'seven types of collaboration' (2020). This offers a shorthand to distinguish between different collaborative practices and I will use it in my own critical reflection of the collaborative practices I explored during *Speak My Sister*. Inherent within them is a recognition of the constant tensions between quality and equality described above, and a suggestion as to ways to navigate the challenges of balancing process and product, and authorship and consensus, in different contexts.

It also helps place my own research within a broader discussion around the role of collaborative research models, as part of the global move towards decolonial self-representation and autonomous knowledge production.

MacDougall calls the first category ‘dispersed collaboration’. This describes an ‘industrial’ model, where strong directors are needed to override a powerful corporate system of commercial documentaries. In this long-established collaborative approach, specialised creative tasks are assigned to different members of the crew. Claire Bishop also describes this kind of collaboration. She associates it with ‘the worlds of music, film, literature, fashion and theatre’ that she envies for their ‘rich vocabulary to describe co-existing authorial positions (director, author, performer, editor, producer, casting agent, sound engineer, stylist, photographer), all of which are regarded as essential to the creative realisation of a given project’ (Bishop 2012, 8-9). Such delineated roles are not the exclusive domain of commercial film productions, however. ‘Dispersed collaboration’ as defined by MacDougall has, in fact, been an effective collaborative practice outside of the commercial mainstream for decades.¹¹⁶

While making films in Mozambique in the 1990’s and 2000’s, for example, each task was clearly allocated and there was an understood hierarchy of authorship and decision-making power. The director had the last word during production as did the producer during post-production, although they rarely used it. Despite this hierarchy, the process was extremely collaborative, democratic and ethical in its representation of others. I recommended the same approach to the *Speak My Sister* filmmakers, believing assigned roles ensure high standards in each specialised area and also avoid any prolonged discussions or tension that might spring out of the uncertainty and that could disrupt the collaboration and engagement with those in front of the camera while filming. This model also prepared them for a professional approach that may be useful in future employment.

¹¹⁶ There may be some disagreements as to what constitutes mainstream, commercial or peripheral practices. However, I would not include the documentaries produced for international broadcast in the 1990’s and 2000’s in Mozambique as commercial. They were produced on budgets of between £20,000 - £50,000. This may have seemed ‘commercial’ and ‘industrial’ to those Mozambicans making their music videos on borrowed VHS recorders. However, the equivalent documentaries being produced out of Europe and the US at the same time commanded budgets of up to £400,000 from the same commissioners. Making documentaries in Mozambique, we struggled to achieve the high-quality results we were aspiring for on the periphery of the periphery of a global industry, while also being mindful of the economy in which we were working. We were acutely aware of the difference our budgets could make to the Mozambicans whose stories we were telling and considered our work professional rather than commercial. We lived humbly on the living we made from the moderate and irregular fees we paid ourselves to tell the stories we believed in.

As was the case in the Mozambican ethnographic filmmaking in the 1990's and 2000's, *Speak My Sister* combined the 'dispersed collaboration' of assigned roles described above with two other types of collaboration described in the 2020 publication: 'Creative Assistance' and 'Subject Collaboration' (MacDougall 2020, 3). The former describes the kind of collaborative dynamic between two people where one 'takes a secondary role, helping the other realise his or her objectives, while still making a substantial contribution to the work' (ibid, 6). The latter is a model familiar to those ethnographic filmmakers and documentarians who often learn early in their studies of the old favourites of documentary and ethnographic film literature, *Nannook of the North* (Flaherty, 1922), *The Human Pyramid* (Rouch, 1960) and *Jaguar* (Rouch, filmed 1955, released 1970), all of which were made as a result of a creative collaboration between those behind and in front of the camera. MacDougall associates this type of collaboration with the Rouchian term 'shared anthropology' (Rouch, 2003), which he describes as 'a dialogue between ethnographers and members of the culture they studied' (MacDougall 2020, 9).¹¹⁷

There is a different kind of productive creative tension implied by MacDougall's definition of 'creative assistance'. When a production has different individuals responsible for production, direction and editing, the decision-making process can be charged with creative conflict. Being between peers, this can have a very different power dynamic to the process of screening rushes or a first edit of a film with those portrayed. In addition to the obvious power the outsider with a camera can have on a community with no prior experience of this, there is also a power of proximity. It is not common for the editor and the producer to have been present during filming. When offering 'creative assistance', it is argued, their opinions are free of the memories of the joys, trials and tribulations the director and her subjects went through on their journey to capture whatever material they now have to edit. Their opinions may, however, be informed by other social factors and it is therefore important to recognise the objectivity, subjectivity, balance and bias of both collaborative approaches.

¹¹⁷ One notable difference between 'creative assistance' and 'subject collaboration' that MacDougall doesn't highlight is the kind of collaboration that happens in post-production, when the actions and testimonies of the subject are structured and made into an argument and a narrative. It has not been common practice for the subject of 'subject collaboration' (MacDougall, 2020) or 'shared anthropology' (Rouch, 2003) to sit alongside the author and the editor during post-production. There are a number of examples where the subject is invited towards the end of the process to provide a narration, most notably in Jean Rouch's film *Moi un noir* (1957); the first documented example of this but for many participatory productions, the collaboration during the construction of the film is more likely to fall into MacDougall's category of 'creative assistance' than 'subject collaboration'.

Both the Mozambican films of the past and those made in *Speak My Sister* have a desire to identify and recognise some of the social inequalities that can inform the nature of the collaboration at the core of their collaborative objectives. This could be in the subject collaboration between the largely uneducated rural men on screen and the intellectual men from Maputo behind the camera in the case of many Mozambican revolutionary films, or between women and men from all backgrounds behind and in front of the camera in the case of *Speak My Sister*. It could also be the kind of creative assistance between the director José Cardoso and the assistant director and script writer Henrique Caldeira in *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* (1981) or the urban hip hop artist Lutegardo Lampião who directed the *Speak My Sister* film *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life* (2018) and his producer Alexandre Pita who pushed for creative choices that recognised the perspective of women from his rural background.¹¹⁸

When the individual will and passion, often present around a camera and edit suite, is combined with mutual respect and understanding, this kind of collaboration can lead to a productive creative tension that inevitably strengthens, rather than dilutes the voice of the director. It challenges them to defend their creative and ethical decisions and can often help them find their own authorial voice. These days, with ever shrinking crews, the director shoots, edits and often also produces the work single-handedly, and the absence of such critical collaboration can be apparent in the final film. In all of the *Speak My Sister* productions, made by teams of four or five individuals, there was such ‘creative assistance’ always available to the named director. Each had such a collaborative relationship with one member of their team. In *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*, and *Stella*, this was the producer. In *Victorious Dancer*, *Crossing Paths* and *Xingomana - Dance of Generations* the editor, while in *Tambourines of Mafalala* it was the photographer. As the trainer, commissioner and series producer my roles were also designed to offer such assistance. I was nevertheless aware of a more discernible power imbalance based especially on my age and experience, but also possibly my race, and was keen not to abuse it. I supported the designated producer and director team as they in turn worked in collaboration with the members of their team and their subjects.

¹¹⁸ To see Alexandre Pita speak about his experience see the film “Behind Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life” in the ‘Behind The Stories’ section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

Using the type of collaboration MacDougall simply describes as Subject Collaboration, each of the six *Speak My Sister* films were also made collaboratively with their subjects. This came as no surprise to me, as all the productions I had worked on in Mozambique actively engaged those in front of the camera in the decisions around their own representation. MacDougall makes a clear connection between his seven types of collaboration and the discussions around the decolonisation of knowledge creation of the 1970's and 80's, describing Jean Rouch's formative form of Subject Collaboration; shared anthropology, as a way 'to insist that ethnographic knowledge should not be the preserve of Western scholars' (MacDougall 2020, 10, citing Rouch 2003, 9). He goes on to reassert an opinion still commonly held across schools of visual anthropology that 'there is little doubt' the films by Jean Rouch of the 1950's, 60's and 70's 'provide one of the most comprehensive instances of collaborative filmmaking that we have' (MacDougall 2020, 9). A continued in-depth study of fiction and non-fiction filmmaking production across Africa over the decades since Rouch was producing his films may reveal an even more comprehensive set of examples of subject collaboration, however.

In Mozambique, since films began to be made by Mozambicans, subject collaboration has been an assumed aspect of the methodological approach. Working on my own films, and those directed by Licínio Azevedo and Sol de Carvalho, for example, after nightfall we would invariably watch the day's material alongside the community members and their feedback informed the decisions for the next day. Decisions around what to film would also have been based on long periods of collaborative research between the director, or sometimes the producer/director team, and the community represented.

Implicit in MacDougall's description, however, is that he is describing the collaboration between Western scholars/filmmakers and their subjects. This model of collaboration continues to be important, and the ethnographic film practices of both 'insider' and 'outsider' ethnographer should be included in the conversation among academics of the 'West' and those of the 'Global South' as it progresses. However, the longer-term decolonial objective would be that the knowledge produced without the 'help' or 'collaboration' of the Western scholar is equally respected and valued within Western scholarship. Currently the African 'producers of knowledge' are expected to learn the academic language of the Western academy, while those from that academy may be less versed in the conceptual, aesthetic and narrative language of their hosts.

Wearing my hat of ‘Western Scholar’ and Mozambican Producer¹¹⁹, in *Speak My Sister*, I was fascinated by the continued gap between the Western academic analysis of ethnographic film and that of the African ethnographic filmmaker and the stuff that is inevitably lost in translation.

In all six *Speak My Sister* films, the young filmmakers combined the three collaborative methodologies described above, of assigned roles and responsibilities and named director (Dispersed Collaboration), the Critical Assistance of close collaborative partnerships and the Subject Collaboration with those in front of the camera, with a third collaborative methodology that MacDougall has called Symbiosis. As in biological symbiosis, MacDougall explains, there is ‘a process of exchange and interdependence’ and ‘a tacit understanding that emerges between the filmmaker and the subject’ in Symbiotic Collaboration, where ‘the subjects’ intentions are merged with those of the filmmakers’ (MacDougall 2020, 13-14).

In four of the six films in the series, there was a symbiotic collaborative power dynamic based on peer-to-peer respect and friendship. In *Victorious Dancer, Stella, Crossing Paths*, and *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*, all those involved both behind and in front of the camera were already studying and working together. Notwithstanding the continued power imbalances of gender and class, the films produced were examples of the symbiotic collaborative process MacDougall describes, where those being filmed ‘step forward and take possession of the film’ (ibid). The remaining two group portraits, *Tambourines of Mafalala* and *Xingomana, A Dance of Generations*, were slightly different in that there had been no existing friendship prior to the initial approach between the filmmakers and their subjects. Nevertheless, there was still mutual passion for the directors’ objectives and the film subjects were consulted every step of the way in both portraits. Those being portrayed in these two films, however, were happy to leave most of the decision-making to their visitors, the invited outsiders. It is the combination of these different kinds of symbiotic and creative collaboration, dispersed among the crew and the subjects from start to finish, that produced the particular style of ethnographic films produced in Mozambique over the 1990’s and

¹¹⁹ Although I still don’t have a Mozambican Passport, I am entitled to one as both a long-term permanent resident of Mozambique and the wife of a Mozambican. My role in Mozambican popular music could also afford me the title of ‘honorary Mozambican.’

2000's and that also formed the foundation of the collaborative approach to the production of *Speak My Sister*.¹²⁰

4.8 The surrender of authorship

A common issue at the heart of much criticism of much participatory and collaborative practice in the arts is one of authorship. The documentaries Rangan describes, for example, are described as pseudo-participatory, in part because the authorship resides with the filmmakers who provided the cameras and constructed the material. During a Q&A session after a festival screening of another such film, *Mogadishu Soldier* (Grude, 2016), a polarised debate about authorship ensued. Two Burundian soldiers, Bernard Ntawuyamara and John Merry Bakundimana, shot the film when they were working as UN peacekeepers in Somalia. Yet the Norwegian director Torstein Grude, who gave them the camera and edited the material, did not share the director credit with them. He argued that as he initiated the process and devised and constructed the narrative in post-production, he was the author and felt no need to credit the soldiers as anything but cinematographers. He seemed almost surprised by the question (Grude, speaking at Frames of Representation, 2017). I was shocked, as the film itself is full of moments where it is clear the process behind the camera was one of creative personal expression requiring commitment to a certain authorial integrity.

In the same year, *Those Who Jump* (Sidibé, Siebert & Wagner, 2016) was also winning awards. It follows a group of refugees who had travelled across Africa to reach Europe. The viewer has an extraordinary first-hand experience of the wait in the forest in Morocco and their eventual success 'jumping' the razor-sharp fences into Spain on the other side. Here, experienced Danish filmmakers Moritz Siebert and Estephan Wagner gave the camera to the refugee Abou Bakar Sidibé, a University

¹²⁰ I would cite all the Pimenta/Azevedo producer/director collaborations that came out of the production company Ébano Multimedia, , as examples of the ethnographic non-fiction style produced Mozambique in the 1990's. This includes *Marracuene: Two Banks of a Mozambican River* (1991), *Tree of our Forefathers*, (1994), and the subsequent Ribeiro/Azevedo partnership with *Water War* (1996). and *Tchuma Tchato* (1997). My own producer/director collaboration with Ribeiro, *From the Ashes*, (1997) and Gabriel Mondlane's *The Miner's Tale* (2000), produced by Rehad Desai, are other examples of this ethnographic approach to non-fiction not common in indigenous production in the rest of the region, or indeed the continent.

educated Malian English teacher and edited the extraordinary material they received. In this case, however, they shared the co-director credit alongside him.¹²¹ There is a moment in the film where he looks over to Spain from a hillside ridge in the forest, the razor wire stretching across the horizon and has Celine Dion playing on his phone. His choice for the soundtrack of the film spoke volumes and did not match that of the Danes. In an audience discussion after a RAI Film Festival screening in 2016, members of the audience were excited by the new depths this creative choice took them as viewers. In this case, the Malian co-director's appreciation of Celine Dion resonated with the audience. This may not always be the case in creative collaborations between individuals with different cultural references, yet the additional depth of understanding the different perspectives of cross-cultural collaborations can be just as revealing. This is discussed in the analysis of the *Speak My Sister* films in the next Chapter.

With or without the director credit, the three Africans behind the cameras of *Mogadishu Soldier* (Grude, 2016), and *Those Who Jump* (2016, Sidibé, Siebert & Wagner) continue to work towards authoring their own films in the future. This will give them the chance to control not only the material that is shot, but also how it is constructed. Without this, those given the camera by those who were able to access the finance and the markets will have to continue to resort to forcing the creative decisions through their ingenious use of camera and sound during filming, while the eventual creative control of that material resides with those who edit their material together into the structured linear narrative the viewer eventually sees.

There are, however, other ways to see a world through the eyes of another. David MacDougall, for example, also gave cameras to children from a village primary school in Rajasthan, with a view 'to reveal a parallel world of knowledge possessed by young children'¹²². The resulting eleven films form a series 'Eleven in Delwara' (2014) and were part of a 'Childhood and Modernity' Project, supported by The Australian National University and the Australian Research Council in 2014. One of the children, ten-year-old Manyak Ver, stood out to MacDougall. He had no prior experience, yet

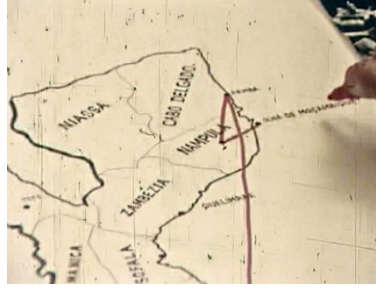
¹²¹ See Kaur and Grassilli (2019: 9-14), for a detailed analysis and exploration of the collaborative process of *Those who Jump* (Sidibé, Siebert & Wagner, 2016) within Kaur and Grassilli's conceptualisation of 'fifth cinema' where authorship lies with refugee-filmmakers.

¹²² Taken from review of the series 'Eleven in Delwara' Dr. Rossella Ragazzi, visual anthropologist and Associate Professor at University of Tromsø Museum, University of Tromsø, Norway, on the Berkley Media website, https://www.berkeleymedia.com/product/eleven_in_delwara/.

he ‘instinctively knew what to do with the camera, decided which scenes to include in the film and what order to put them in’ (MacDougall 2020, 8). MacDougall describes himself as the ‘instructor, facilitator, and finally co-editor’. The credited authorship of the resulting film *Mayank’s Family* (2014) remained solely with the ten-year-old director Manyak. MacDougall collaborated with Mayank through the kind of collaboration he has named ‘Creative Assistance’ (MacDougall 2020, 6). He sat with Manyak during the edit, acting as his editor, following his ideas on editing parallel narratives of his mother, father and brother, and ‘adding the titles, sub-titles and end credits’ (ibid, 8). Having offered this type of creative assistance to less experienced filmmakers myself, I know how hard it is to suppress your own creative vision in service of that of another, especially when the original material has a potential you may feel is not best exploited. That MacDougall was able to remain a passive technician is perhaps testament to his maturity as a filmmaker. My solution in *Speak My Sister* was to work with young people who were keen to edit their films themselves and had already mastered the basic technical skills of editing. MacDougall’s idea behind the *Eleven in Delwara* project was for the children to use the cameras as research tools. This too had been my intention for the young filmmakers behind *Speak My Sister*. However, the research, and more importantly, the process of creative authorship continues during editing. It was therefore essential to me that the filmmakers edited their own films.

As mentioned above, I would have happily made each of the six films in the *Speak My Sister* series myself. Handing over my creative authority was challenging. Pooja Rangan describes such a process as a radically non-interventionist ‘mimetic surrender’ (Rangan 2017, 194). This powerful choice of words avoids the slippery concept of aesthetic, while including the all-important act of representation associated with mimesis. Further weight is added to this concept by associating this act with one that comes at the end of a conflict over power. In surrendering authority, the power to make meaning, to make ‘knowledge’, is being given up, handed over. The authority is being relinquished. For an artist such as myself, with a passion for the subject, and a desire to express this passion through music and moving image, a word with these strong associations seems apt. After all, as Rangan points out, such surrender in this context also means ‘there is no guarantee that the ideological messages codes and conventions of documentary immediacy will find their mark’ (ibid). Rangan also reminds us of the tantalising benefits of such surrender, which, she argues, does not need to be made as

an altruistic practice ‘unmotivated by the expectations of a return’. Instead, the ‘gift’ of the camera can offer unexpected returns. The resulting images and sounds (and, I would add, the way these are combined and meaning constructed in post-production) ‘opens up new vistas of relationality’ as they are inscribed with ‘a trace of themselves, and their mode of being in the world’ (ibid). In the next chapter I will explore the unexpected returns from my own surrender of authorship and the important role music played in this.



Interlude 5.

I'm not afraid of making a mistake

Cardoso Portrait 5

A Luta Continua Tufo Group
Ilha de Moçambique

Nampula Province

EXT. DAY. A LUTA CONTINUA TUFO GROUP. ILHA DE MOÇAMBIQUE



VOICE OVER (MALE VOICE)

The *Tufo* that comes from far
away from the north of Africa
became ours already long ago
As for us
We feel that
We could have created *Tufo* ourselves

VOICE OVER (FEMALE VOICE)

*I was struck yesterday
When I saw a bird fly
And flying
He laughed
Those who arrived in paradise
No longer suffer*

*Their hearts free
By the power they have there
They have no luggage to carry
rubbish around in.*

*When I go to sea
If there someone asks me
something
What shall I answer?
I do not know what to say*

*I was criticised
But I'm going to finish what I
want to say
They are good things
I'm not afraid of making a mistake*

Images of the sea, wooden *dhaos*, and daily life on the Island, conclude with a close-up of a little girl with the iconic mask from the white paste made of ground tree bark and water. This *msiro* mask used by women of the Island to keep their skin beautiful, is worn proudly by the singers, as if to say - 'you want us beautiful? This is how we stay beautiful for you'.



26 women dressed in red blouses, yellow *capulanas* and yellow headscarves are seated in 2 rows of 13 facing one another making an oval. 3 Women and 1 man play the drums. 1 woman on *chocalho*, a diamond shape shaker made of welded tin. The rest are singing, seated, the small sensual movements like soft lapping waves.



People are watching; a man, woman and child are walking together, smiling. We have not seen much smiling from the musicians in previous portraits. A man casually scratches his armpit sitting on a bench as two women walk carrying a basket together, also smiling. The atmosphere is easy going as if celebrating the female energy *Tufo* is known for.

The music picks up speed. The women hold small imitation paddles in their hands. A little girl plays in the middle of the circle of women, dressed as the women and dancing with them.

The women raise their bodies up onto their knees, the rowing gets harder. Some dance in the centre with a large frame drum as the song builds to a climax. The women are smiling, comfortable, having fun!



Back in the office, and the map, a red line is drawn from Ilha de Mocambique to Quelimane further South

Chapter 5.

Making the *Speak My Sister* film series: Musicking as research

5.1 A musical lesson in the poetic female voice

It is said that when the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama first landed on Mozambique Island (*Ilha de Moçambique*) in the northern province of Nampula in 1498, he was greeted by four boats ‘under sail and oar, with people *tangendo e cantando* [loosely, swaying and singing]’ (Barros, 1952). More than four hundred years passed between this recorded event and the formation of contemporary *tuyo* groups during the re-Islamization of the region in the early 1930s. Originally *tuyo* was performed by men, in particular at *Maulid* to celebrate the birthday of Prophet Mohammed. However, the male *tuyo* groups were eclipsed by the women’s ensembles over the following decades and *tuyo* is now one of Mozambique’s most iconic female song and dance forms. It is still popular at Islamic celebrations and festivities in the north, but also regularly seen at political and other secular occasions across the country, especially those where women are celebrated and may otherwise be underrepresented.

It is a soft, lyrical vocal music sung by groups of women and accompanied by tuned frame drums played by both men and women. The women kneel or stand in rows, swaying, rocking and gesturing to the lyrics with graceful arm movements. The interweaving rhythms of the *Tuyo* drums and the accompanying rising and falling movement of the dancers are said to reflect the undulating waves and ripples of the Indian Ocean at the heart of their music and their culture. Despite its increased secularisation after independence, the clothes worn by the women still reflect the Islamic values of women’s piety and the modesty of the genre’s early beginnings. The women dress in matching brightly coloured *capulanas* (printed cloth worn by women across Mozambique) covering their heads and stretching down to their ankles. *Tuyo* women nevertheless take pride in the subtle sensual movements of the dance and in their physical beauty. Part of this beauty is attributed to the traditional skin cleansing mask made of a ground tree bark called *msiro*, originally worn in private but now common during performances. Loved and respected throughout Mozambique for its

delicate sensuality, *tufo* song and dance combines the nation's relationship with the sea, its pride in its rich cultural history and the legendary beauty and strength of its women.

Cardoso's film portrait quietly celebrates these iconic qualities of *Tufo*, introducing them to new audiences across Mozambique. Where the portrait of the *Nyanga* pipe group in Cardoso's film offers the viewer a lesson in collective 'speaking' and 'listening', the portrait of the *Tufo* Group, *A Luta Continua* (The Struggle Continues) introduces the viewer to gendered alternatives to speech. There is no interview with the women in their portrait; instead, the narrator claims *Tufo* as part of the nation's musical heritage before leaving the women to talk to the audience through their song. In this chapter on musicking as research, the last stanza of the song is especially pertinent:

*I was criticised
But I'm going to finish what I
want to say
They are good things
I'm not afraid of making a
mistake*

Extract from song sung by *A Luta Continua* Tufo Group
in *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* (Cardoso, 1981)

5.2 *Speak My Sister* research and production through local musicking

Before Christopher Small popularised the term *Musicking* (Small, 1998), those who studied, played or appreciated music will have experienced the social and affective threads that connect individuals, communities and societies through music making. They will have associated places, emotions, memories and even identity, their own and others, with musical experiences. They will have found ways to describe the experiences of playing, practicing, listening to, learning from, communicating through, and being touched by music. *Musicking* offered both a theoretical framework and conceptual language for understanding music as a verb, as opposed to a noun—an object to be studied—capturing the entire collective experience of engaging in the production and experience of music. Musicking, moreover, considers all stake-holders

and participants in a musical experience: those working behind the mixing desks, those designing the album covers and those dancing to the music at the parties and in their back yards are all engaged in the interactive process of musicking.

Pertinent to this study, is the concept of ‘Local Musicking’, a term developed by an international research group working out of Brazil to describe the relationship between music-making and place; where the place informs community music practice and this practice also informs the place, what Arjun Appadurai describes as ‘the production of locality’ (Appadurai 1996, 178; cited by Reily et al, 2016).¹²³ Musicking—all activities related to the production and consumption of music—therefore is central to creating the ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams and Orrom, 1954) that forms the relations that construct place and identity.¹²⁴ The study of local musicking in this context, therefore, is an investigation of the relationship between all the activities around the production and consumption of music and the role this has in constructing place, identity and emotional context.

The *Speak My Sister* film series is also based on questions around local musicking. How does music and dance construct locality? How is it constructed by locality? These questions are also at the root of the films’ exploration of the production of locality in different urban and rural contexts through the hip hop, *xingomana*, *tufo*, gospel and popular fusion genres. The exhibition of these films, in turn, also contributes to the construction of this locality. All phases in the project, the research, production, editing and exhibition of the films are an extension of the collective process of knowledge and identity formation through music and dance. This is local musicking as practice-led research.

This practice helped me answer a wide range of questions: What are the different considerations and challenges of representing someone from your own world to representing the ‘other’? What is ‘the other’? Where is the line drawn when this becomes apparent? Does gender inform methodology, style, form and content of the representation of ‘the other’? How can the non-verbal languages of music, dance and film inform and inspire such representation? These questions were also being

¹²³ For Appadurai, locality is a structure of feeling that forms relations between ‘the sense of immediacy, the technologies of interactivity and the relativity of contexts’, (Appadurai 1996, 178). For more on local musicking see the Routledge Guide to Local Musicking, (Reily and Brooker, 2020).

¹²⁴ For more on Raymond Williams concept of ‘structure of feeling’ see Sharma et al (2015)

addressed by the young filmmakers in their own practice-led research, as they worked with practitioners of different musical genres and learned from them. The filmmakers were not interested in ‘knowing about’ these forms of creative expression, or ‘knowing that’ they have this or that structural or melodic form. They were interested in ‘knowing who’ these people were and in ‘knowing how’ this music informed their subjects identity and their engagement with the world they lived in. This is a kind of knowledge gained through the practice of making the musical films.

In the discipline of performance studies, the ethnographer Dwight Conquergood makes a powerful case for practice-led research as a form of radical research and intervention, describing this need not of ‘knowing that,’ and ‘knowing about’ but ‘knowing how’, and ‘knowing who’ as a way of ‘braiding together disparate and stratified ways of knowing’ (Conquergood 2002, 152). He shares the decolonial values of Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o and wants to cut to the root of how knowledge is organized in the academy, making a case for the creation of knowledge that is not ‘anchored in paradigm and secured in print’ but one that is ‘grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection’ (ibid, 146). Also recognising the notion explored by Appadurai of location as an itinerary and not a fixed point, Conquergood uses a phrase by the French scholar Michel de Certeau as his theoretical springboard: ‘What the map cuts up, the story cuts across’ (Certeau 1984, 129). He paints a picture of a postcolonial world ‘crisscrossed by transnational narratives, diaspora affiliations, and the movement and multiple migrations of people’ (Conquergood 2002, 145) drawing on the power of story, dance and music to explore the kind of knowledge that is ‘grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection’ (ibid,146). This argument for practice-led research and the picture he paints of a world criss-crossed with the stories of those who live in it, is also at the heart of *Speak My Sister*. Together, the researchers, filmmakers and their subjects shared and constructed knowledge across social boundaries through the practice of music, dance and film.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ The remainder of this chapter is designed to be read either alongside the website <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>, or having already watched the six films and explored the behind-the-scenes material. While the website can be explored independent of the text, this text complements the audiovisual material and offers deeper analysis, but descriptions of the films or citations from interviews have been kept to a minimum to avoid repetition.

5.3 Feminist research and audiovisual co-creation through musicking

A core theme in all the films of the series is women overcoming the obstacles they face as women through resilience and determination. It is about Mozambican women's sense of self and their place in the society they live in. It is also, however, about the role music and dance can play in that self-forming and resilience. Despite the emphasis on recruiting women to the film course and the encouragement of those women to participate in this research, the men outnumbered the women two to one. The six films were produced by two male crews, one female crew and three mixed crews. The different decisions, perspectives and experiences of each offered insightful and sometimes surprising perspectives from both gendered perspectives. It was an essential aspect of this project design that men and women worked alongside one another. Women-only spaces clearly offer opportunities for some women to develop in ways that mixed spaces may not. The gendered power imbalance of society sometimes needs to be eliminated for women to find their own power. However, if men and women can grow and learn together, if young men brought up in the patriarchal world of Mozambique, are given a chance to rethink some of their gendered assumptions and behaviours, there seems more chance of those gendered behaviours to continue to be explored and questioned beyond the project end.

Yet, it can be difficult attracting men to a feminist research project.¹²⁶ The ISArC students were keen to go to Niassa and keen to make films. I imagine had they been asked to make films on sustainable development, or any other theme presented by those offering finance to make films, they would have had a go at delivering what was expected of them. Being given the freedom to make films about music and dance however, about culture and identity, gave them an opportunity to explore what they wanted to explore. They were attracted to the musicking and the feminism followed. The twenty men who took part learned to work alongside women, to listen to them and to reflect on their own behaviour around them. They did this in service of the music. The ten women, on the other hand, were given a chance to develop technical

¹²⁶ It is beyond the remit of this research to explore the question of masculinity in Mozambique. There are an increasing number of studies being conducted on the subject however, many focussing on urban centres such as Maputo. See for example Victor Agadjanian (2002) and Inge Tvedten et al. (2020).

skills around the camera; a place they had previously been excluded from. Each was surprised by what she learned.

The two hip hop films, *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life* and *Crossing Paths*, were the only two films in the series to have been made by an all-male crew.¹²⁷ In the former, the Maputo hip hop artist Lampião teamed up with two cousins from rural Zambézia, Alexandre and Gabriel Pita, to make *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*. The cousins had come to the capital two years before. They found the young, independently minded women in the band *Revolução Feminina* unlike any they had met in Zambézia. The idea of ‘women’s liberation’ is often still associated with the previous generation of white feminists in the USA, Europe and indeed Mozambique. These young confident and outspoken Mozambican feminist hip hop artists make the ideas contemporary and relevant.

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Eu sou livre para dar a minha opinião</i> | I’m free to give my opinion |
| <i>Eu sou livre para escolher a minha profissão</i> | I’m free to choose my profession |
| <i>Eu sou livre para tomar a minha decisão</i> | I’m free to take my own decisions |
| <i>Eu sou livre, tu es livre</i> | I’m free, you’re free |
| <i>Desde eternidade que mereço liberdade</i> | I deserved freedom from the start |
| <i>Poder opinar</i> | To have opinions |
| <i>e exprimir mentalidade</i> | and express myself |
| <i>Embora ainda criança,</i> | Although just a child |
| <i>Sou inibida ir a escola</i> | I’m not allowed to go to school |
| <i>Vejam minhas memórias</i> | None of my memories |
| <i>Que não ponham fora</i> | will get out into the world |
| <i>Que o sistema apoia</i> | As the system helps those of |
| <i>o sexo masculino</i> | the masculine sex |
| <i>Sou condenada por nascer</i> | Am I condemned when born of |
| <i>ao sexo feminino?</i> | the female sex? |

Eu Sou Livre (I’m Free) by Enia Lipanga, performed by *Revolução Feminina*.¹²⁸

When they call for a feminine revolution, these young women are speaking as

¹²⁷ In the cases of both ‘Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life’ (*Ritmo, Arte, Poesia e Vida* (Lampião, 2018), and ‘Crossing Paths’ *Caminhos Cruzados* (Sive, 2018), women were named in the proposals but were conspicuously absent during production. At first the students told me that the women on their crew list were just unavailable for the meetings, or not around on that particular shooting day. I reassured them they didn’t need to go to these lengths, their proposals would have been accepted even had they been pitched as all-male productions, and that it was now up to them to assess and reflect on their representation of the women in their films from their male perspective.

¹²⁸ Watch *Revolução Feminina* perform *Eu Sou Livre* on stage at the Speak My Sister Gala in ‘The Music’ section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

much to the *Xingomana* and *Tufo* dancers of Bahule and Vitorino's films, to the women the Pita cousins grew up with in Zambézia, as they are to the men and women of hip hop and to the filmmakers themselves. For example, Guiggaz calls on women to become engineers, electricians and bricklayers in the film. Such skills were being taught to young women on the same campus as ISArC.¹²⁹ Growing up in rural Zambézia, Alexandre Pita, producer of *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*, had a very different experience of women's place in society. He was fascinated to see these women carving out their own path in traditionally male professions. He wanted to include images of these women learning these trades in the film to inspire young women from across the country.¹³⁰ I had been especially pleased to note the change in the three men behind *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*, as they had clearly struggled to work alongside women at the start.

Looking at our portrait films of women, it's clear we have two types of women in Mozambique, the rural woman and the urban woman... .. and the opportunities rural women and urban women have are very different. In the countryside where I was born, the woman wakes up in the morning, goes to the fields, cooks what she grows in the fields, and serves her husband, that's all, while urban women wake up, go to work, play sports, are involved in the arts, and much more. .. With our film we want the rural women to know that their place is not only with their children and their crops but that there are many more possibilities out there for them.

Alexandre Pita, Producer *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*

¹²⁹ ISArC share their campus in Machava with INEFP, The National Institute of Work and Professional Training, (Instituto Nacional do Emprego e Formação Profissional). This was intended to be a temporary solution while raising the funds to build their own installations, however, they have now been there for over a decade. There were 8 women training there as electricians, plumbers and carpenters when I conducted the research at ISArC. The young men making *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life* did not feel the need to speak to these women they filmed, content to include them in the film as unnamed women in boiler suits. I however returned to these women myself, curious to hear their stories and to offer them the opportunity to tell them.

¹³⁰ Alexander Pita's experience of 'women's place in Zambezia' was from the inland rural agricultural perspective and not coastal Zambezia, which is very different. His perspective on this can be seen in the film "*Behind Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*" in the '*Behind The Stories*' section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>. Zambezia is in the centre of the country at a meeting point between north and south and as such there is even great socio-cultural diversity between the coastal Muslim *Makhuwa* enclaves and the rural Christian interior communities. Initiation rituals happen throughout the province however, something that no longer happens in the south, but they are very different, promoting different cultural values around gender roles, for example, according to location. The provincial capital of Quelimane is different again. Here many women are entrepreneurs in their own right, and have traditionally male professions (selling coal, for instance), while men are more often employed as domestic staff.



Figure 5.1 Screenshots from the film *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life* (Lampião, 2018)
Photographer Lutegardo Lampião

Many of the women who did take part in *Speak My Sister* had found their first couple of years at ISArC challenging. They talked of their female colleagues who started the course but had dropped out. The majority of those still there admitted to seriously considering it. Some cited the challenges of the long and unsociable hours required in filmmaking. Those who had grown up in rural areas described how they were teased for their lack of experience. Unused to the reality of urban Maputo, where women held professional positions and expressed their opinions with confidence, they found themselves excluded due to their timidity and lack of self-confidence leaving them lonely and isolated. A positive recruitment drive to attract women on the course had been effective. However, the young male students, and the male staff members had gone unchallenged on their assumed gendered hierarchies of power. This had led those behind the film *Victorious Dancer* to try working as an all-women team, something they had not done in the four years they had studied at ISArC. During my first interview with the film's director, Alzira Guetza, she was clearly excited by the atmosphere of trust and understanding that was generated in this women's space they created and how that translates itself on screen.

Every story told through moving image has an impact. It can make people cry. It can make people angry. It can make people sad. It can motivate people to action. Every story has power, but when it's woman to woman, when a woman sits down and looks at the screen and sees another woman talking about something that for us are taboo subjects, one clear example is sexual violence. We've been stigmatised and we stay silent. We accept every type of bad treatment because we are always made to feel the guilty ones, so I believe that when Cristina's story is heard, or the story of any other woman, we, the women, will identify with it. That's the first thing, that we identify with the story, and secondly, that we see it's possible to pass through a trauma and overcome the difficulties and come back to life. It's important that we come back to life, and cinema has this power, the power to transform minds. We

might not think it's possible, but every time we hear a story, at the end we think; that woman in the film, that's how I'm going to live from now on.

Alzira Guitza, Director *Victorious Dancer*
 Filmed interview June 2018

The members of this crew were also excited that working in this all-female environment gave them access to try out the technical tools they often shied away from. Normally content to accept the group roles of managing the logistics and administration, the women were now also making decisions around the audiovisual language itself. They were holding a camera for the first time in four years. This brought not only a new perspective on the subject matter, but also on the visual language used to share it. During the choreographed rape scene, for example, Odette Mulungu used one continuous shot to lead the eye to both the physical and emotional points of violation. It lingers with uncomfortable attention to detail on Cristina's hands as they try to sooth the pain between her legs after the rape. Odette then forces the audience to keep looking at Cristina's face as she remains on the floor long after the immediate violence is over, as if to remind the audience that Cristina's trauma has only just begun. The intimacy of her camerawork has an unflinching sensitivity about it. She explained this commitment to the subject and her understanding of the role of her camerawork during her evaluation interview:

I found Christina's spontaneity fascinating. She is very open. I wouldn't have had her courage to express what happened to me in front of the camera as she did. I think it would be so interesting if more women had this courage to express their stories visually, cinematically, from the perspective of the camera, as it would encourage more women to be open about their experiences too, (but) filming the dance sequence was a great challenge. I had to follow the movement, hand-held, in one shot, but we worked on it together and I'm pleased with what I did.

Odette Mulungu, Camera *Victorious Dancer*
 Recorded evaluation interview August 2018

Surprisingly however, none of the five women in the group would choose to work in an all-female group in the future unless it was absolutely necessary for those in front of the camera. They felt that although it brought out a new confidence in their technical abilities and their capacity to tell stories in different ways, it also brought out the least

tolerant and more argumentative sides of their personalities and even risked the film not being completed at all.¹³¹

“Men are certainly *machistas* (she laughs). They don’t think we are capable of framing a good shot, making good camera movement. This was a good opportunity for me to take the camera and do something interesting. The other opportunities I have had making films in groups I was told ‘you’re a woman, you can help develop the project’. But when it came to the practice, I had to watch the men take hold of the camera and the sound, while I was responsible for the logistics. So *Speak My Sister* was a great opportunity for me to actually shoot my own film. (However) we did have some serious difficulties we had to over-come and we all had to learn how to put the word ‘patience’ into practice. It’s all very well saying you must learn to be patient. It’s another thing doing it. The problem was we all had different ideas. Each of us has a different way of being creative. We had our roles on camera, sound, production, but we all also wanted to direct! So, fitting all of our ideas into the film was not easy! (She laughs)”

Odette Mulungu, Camera *Victorious Dancer*
Recorded evaluation interview August 2018

Melva Ungwana, the producer of *Victorious Dancer* was keen to present her alternative experience of working with men. She had worked in a team of two men and two women in the production of a few short films and felt her male colleagues were respectful, listened to her and valued her opinion. Working in an all-women crew, however, was “different”, she diplomatically told me, after much laughter.

“Each one of us arrived on set with the problems we brought with us from home. Each had a different opinion and didn’t respect each other’s ideas. Sometimes this really got in the way of our work as a united film crew. But it was something we had decided to do, so we came together after many days talking about what it was we really wanted to do. We decided we were committed to making sure this film was made and so that’s what we did. But it was not easy. It was many sleepless nights and anxious days. I would fall asleep and dream of editing, Karen leaning over us telling us we must find a way to finish! (She laughs) In the end it was marvellous, a unique experience. We learned a lot. I personally learned a lot from my colleagues. They are super women. We were rewarded tenfold by the effort we put into this and each one of us gave everything we had to make sure we had a film, and we did! Even Karen had her doubts that we would actually finish, and this also motivated us. We decided we had to show her

¹³¹ To hear the women behind the film *Victorious Dancer* share some of their experiences, see the film *Behind Victorious Dancer* in the *Behind The Stories* section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

that we could do it, and that she could believe in us once she saw the finished film. We wanted to show that we women, a group just of women, we could make a film that would leave the public with their jaws dropped saying “How is it possible a group of women could do something as good as this!”. When we showed the film in the darkened cinema in Maputo I was glad the lights were out as I cried and cried! I couldn’t stop myself watching our film up there on the screen, I sensed the strong reaction of the public and cried.”

Melva Ungwana, Producer *Victorious Dancer*
Recorded evaluation interview August 2018

In the regular formal and informal conversations, I had during the training, production and work-in-progress screenings, I also encouraged the young men to reflect on their own gendered preconceptions and behaviours. They began to recognise the presumptions they were making about the people they were representing and the others in their cohort. Recognising their prejudice did not come easily to some and at first much assumed gendered authority passed by unnoticed. Even the long-established hierarchies of the student teacher relationship or respect for elders was superseded by the young mens’ assumed gendered authority over myself and my older female colleagues in the department. However, my position as an elder and as an outsider added authority. I used it along with light-hearted humour and encouragement, to stimulate curiosity and to challenge and provoke critical reflection on their gendered behaviour without judgement or criticism. “Is *Professora Angelica* on the uncomfortable seat in the middle again?!” I would joke to the men travelling with her. “I thought we agreed we’d take it in turns to sit by the window”. Or “Percia, if the sound has been compromised by those men talking over the interview, they will thank you later if you tell them now. They won’t bite your head off!”. Confirmation of the effectiveness of this approach was when others would then also joke about who got the window seat, or when I heard the timid voice of the female sound-recordists saying “Please can we do that last bit again and this time please don’t talk during the interview”. Often during training, I would find a circle of young men around me and would need to gently suggest the circle be widened so the excluded young women could join us. It reminded me of my own times as a young woman at film festivals, on the outside of the circles of men, who may have been happy to dance with me the night before, but when it came to developing their connections and making their deals, they stuck to their own sex.

I was struck how the patriarchal assumptions of the young men were not questioned, and sometimes not even noticed, by the women whose lifelong experiences of remaining silenced and invisible in similar situations normalised the experience.



Figures 5.2 & 5.3 Technical training workshop during international music festival AZGO (left) Lourdes Rubaine in the background with no camera as Narciso Lufagir, Stefan André and Isard Pindula practice camera technique (right) following my intervention, Lurdes Rubaine practicing with camera guided by colleague Claudio Naftal

Like a bent stick, the participants' behaviour had an elasticity that often returned to the comfortable familiar *habitus*¹³² of established gendered behaviour. Nevertheless, there was a curiosity and openness to change that led to a continuation of the questioning and slight shifts in behaviour over the months we worked together. During the final reflection, for example, it became clear that had I not stated at the outset that proposals from mixed crews would be looked upon favourably, the three mixed crews may not have been created. However, during the recorded focus group discussions, both male and female group members commented on how they felt their learning and overall experience was enriched by the presence of both men and women in their teams, some of the men noting how the experience had informed their new recognition of women's ability.

I think that both women and men, both have the ability to do anything. But women, in truth, have certain preferences..... I don't know if it's to do with ability or some other reason, but women do stick more to reading and paperwork, so when it's time to get their hands dirty and do the practical work things can get a little complicated, for some. ... but in working on *Speak My Sister*, I was working in a group along with two men and two women and there were some things that the women picked up quicker than the men. So I think that in fact people are exactly the same, both can learn the same things with the same facility.

Samo Mula, Director *Stella*. Filmed interview June 2018

¹³² See Bordieu (1977, p 86).

During the screenings both male and female members of the group were struck by the reaction of their audience members to the presence of women among the filmmakers. They sensed this in the comments of audience members after the screenings, especially those of the women.

We have never seen anything like this here. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Stay until morning, please, so you can play the films again!

Laurinda, resident of Metangula

Recorded during pop-up screening in Metangula, Niassa July 2018

Another revelation from the final evaluation was that more than anything, it was the musical theme of the research that attracted the men. Many of the men who had taken part in *Speak My Sister* felt they may not have taken part, had I asked the students to create portraits of women for a project of gender equality that hadn't had music and dance at its core. Musicking as a research method, then, played its part in my objective of promoting discussion around gender equality and even in changing hearts and minds of some of the future knowledge creators of Mozambique.

“When I showed my film in Niassa, there I really felt I was a filmmaker with a role to play in social intervention, because I was able to create and see a connection between the music of different regions. Mozambique has various cultures and I saw a lot of interest in what was being communicated in the films through the music. For me, they (the audience of Niassa) were the best kind of spectators because they weren't there to judge me or my work, they were there to reflect on what was in the film. They were simply curious to understand ‘What is this thing called *xingomana*?’ ‘What is the music of these people like?’. I was immersed in a very rich context in which I could see that I was with people who communicate the same way when it is done through music and differently when it is done through spoken language. I was able to understand the power of music in this context. So the *Speak My Sister* project opened up this space for reflection on what music can bring (to filmmaking in Mozambique) and how music can be a vehicle to tell our stories and a vehicle for change.”

André Bahule, Director *Xingomana – Dance of Generations*

Filmed interview, São Paulo, November 2019

5.4 The technological challenges of moving beyond the music video in audio visual musicking in Mozambique

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's important contribution to the ongoing discussion around the decolonisation of research methodologies (Smith, 1999, 2012) draws on the testimonies of those with experience of being researched to make a strong case for the legitimisation and validation of theories from 'elsewhere' when it comes to academic knowledge creation and dissemination.¹³³ However, even after the conceptual arguments of the likes of Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (1986), Tuhiwai Smith (1999), and Conquergood (2002) are accepted and embedded into the work of the western academy, there is still a long way to go before countries such as Mozambique can effectively contribute to the knowledge creation and dissemination about and for their country through film. The lasting economic legacy of colonialism remains in Mozambique long after the country gained its so-called independence. The economic resources available to Mozambicans limit the opportunities all researchers have to practice and develop their skills. This is especially true of those involved in moving image production. ISArC is still based at its temporary shared facilities of a technical training school in one of Maputo's industrial areas. Dedicated land awaited the time the bankrupt state allocated the finance, originally set aside to build the purpose-built campus according to the designs now gathering dust in the Ministry of Culture. In fact, the school is struggling to continue to run what is a relatively expensive course of film and audiovisual production. Costs are therefore kept to a minimum by maintaining a heavy emphasis on theory and offering little practice-led learning. ISArC shares the dream of the original National Film Institute: to eventually produce a new generation of filmmakers, and even expand the department into a state film school. For now, however, they are working with the kind of capital and human limitations that risk the eventual closure of the entire endeavour.

The ISArC film course was funded by international donors over the first two years. Experienced practitioners were invited to run specialised courses. However, when this start-up funding dried up, the course began to struggle. They could no longer afford to pay experienced staff or maintain the film equipment. When I first opened the

¹³³ See her forward to the second edition (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012, iv – xv) and the introduction (ibid 1-19) for a concise summary of her original argument and her continued thoughts on the same subject over a decade later).

cupboard storing the two working tripods, cameras, audio recorders, and accessories I had been promised, my heart sank. The only equipment in working order was one camera wrapped in a plastic bag with a very tired battery, and no important lens protection. I feared the plan I had been devising with the staff over the past few months was about to be halted in its tracks.

The students were unable to develop their filmmaking craft beyond that required for music videos, commercials and other simple promotional videos with the equipment available to them. Synchronised audio, for example, or steady shots on a long lens required the external microphones, recorders and tripods that lay broken in the cupboard. Productions that came out of the equipment in this cupboard were limited to those where hand-held shots could be edited together with non-synchronised sound and music. With only one tired battery, shooting styles had to be developed that could be paused regularly to return the camera and battery to a power supply to be charged. Locations away from an electricity supply were automatically eliminated. Commercials and corporate and promotional videos became a core part of their curriculum, as these could be made under these circumstances with narration and music added later. The five computers provided for editing had been reduced to three after a robbery and were placed in staff rooms for safekeeping. The one still allocated to students was shared between so many, there was only time to use it to apply the simplest editing techniques to the filmed material. There was one audiovisual genre that fast shooting and editing on a single camera and the one desktop computer lent itself to, however, and that was the music video.

The research participants were therefore experienced in working with musicians, often friends, and exploring and experimenting with the effect of different framing, camera angles and camera movements in a creative and collaborative environment where the images shot were at the service of the music. These videos often include musical performance to playback coming from the side of the camera on mobile phones. These were intercut with an array of creative responses to the narratives or themes of the tracks being performed. As the filmmaker developed, the narrative element of the music video was often taken beyond the abstract to the language of fiction. This was an important base from which to support the students take this musicking activity to the next level and include scenes with synchronised audio, including interviews, rehearsals and acoustic performances. To do this, they needed

access to audio-recorders, microphones, headphones and additional batteries and data storage.

I was keen not to fall into the trap of many a video training project and offer equipment on loan for the purposes of training without a sustainable plan for continued practice. I therefore asked the ISArC partner, the Filmmakers Association AMOCINE, to help create one working professional kit they could help ISArC administer in the future. AMOCINE President Gabriel Mondlane found and mended where necessary everything we needed. He was used to keeping broken equipment going through his years of experience during the war and the latter stages of State-sponsored production. With this, the students would now be able to continue to practice making films with audio and steady shots after my departure.¹³⁴ It was a little over-ambitious within our tight time schedule, however, to make six productions with one working kit, so I offered a second kit of my own with the same set-up.¹³⁵

During the month the films were being shot, schedules changed regularly and the filming plan and booking system we had put in place for six groups to share the two kits required constant adjustment. I spent my time collecting equipment from one crew who had just finished filming and delivering it to another, sometimes three times in one day. I had the use of a car and so was a useful intermediary. This suited me, too, as it enabled me to keep supporting each group without seeming like I was checking up on them or interfering. This was not possible for all productions. Some, such as *Crossing Paths* were filmed in small spaces where one more body would have been an inconvenience. Others, such as the two group portraits *Xingomana: A Dance of Generations* and *Tambourines of Mafalala* relied on the trust and intimacy of the

¹³⁴ It is another sad indictment of the economic legacy of colonialism that most of the missing accessories needed to bring the broken equipment back to life would have been simple and relatively cheap to purchase in the UK. However, in Mozambique the import duties can greatly increase the cost of electronic goods, if, that is, the one store in the country has them in stock. At a cost of under £500, I was able to purchase the necessary batteries, chargers, external drives, SD cards recorders and headphones the department needed to continue to work according to international standards of professionalism after my departure. With this small investment, the department is now able to work with two filming kits with good audio, lighting and continuous filming, all of which are necessary to move beyond the music videos and basic video production the department had until then been capable of.

¹³⁵ The Filming kits used to produce the film series were made up of 1 x DSLR Camera (Canon 60D or 70D), 1 x Tripod with fluid head in working order, 1 x Audio Recorder with input for external microphone (Zoom H4), 1 x Directional Microphone, (Sennheiser 416 with suspension mount, wind protection, boom pole and cable), 1 x Lapel Microphone (Sony ECM77), Noise cancelling headphones and Kit Bag).

deepening relationships around the camera. In these instances, I did not want my occasional presence to impact on that relationship, so I monitored and guided the process in meetings with group members outside of the research/filming environment. When I did witness the filming process, however, I was especially struck by the level of collaboration between everyone around the camera, not only between those studying film and cultural research and their subjects, but also with those from outside ISArC being represented.

5.5 Musicking as co-creation

The *Speak My Sister* filmmakers and the women they chose to portray were all attracted to the theme of music and dance as a starting point for their films. Only one of the six films, *Stella*, was making a film about the music itself and the challenges and obstacles a female musician such as Stela Alberto had to overcome to explore what she considered her God-given talent. The other five addressed themes such as migration (*Tambourines of Mafalala*), the impact of the revolution on rural women's lives (*Xingomana: The Dance of Generations*), women in work (*Rhythm, Art Poetry and Life*), creative relationships between men and women (*Crossing Paths*) and sexual violence (*Victorious Dancer*) through the language of music and dance. Looking at these themes through musicking was an inspiring way to represent their subjects, while also representing themselves. The decision to co-create their films with their subjects was a natural extension of this mutual love of music, dance and film. There was a shared recognition between filmmakers and subjects of the value of using the language of moving image to communicate the ideas they had to share through music and dance.

In the case of *Victorious Dancer* and *Stella*, the protagonists Stela Alberto and Cristina Soane overcame their own obstacles through dance and song, respectively, and used their own stories to inspire and provoke their eventual audience. Both were in the same boat as the filmmakers, studying on the same courses, living in the same cramped student living conditions. They had much in common. The ethnographic knowledge being shared in the films was part of a dialogue between the filmmakers and those friends they were studying with, and that was made more possible through the language of dance and song. These two films were both shot on campus and the process of filming also involved musicians and dancers from their cohort and

interested members of the university community, especially those living on campus. The musicking around the camera was an important element of the co-creative process. The filmmakers were excited to explore their friends' worlds of music and dance using their own language of moving image. The protagonists were also excited by the idea of working with the less available medium of moving image to take their music and their stories further afield. Music from the central province of Zambézia, for example, is still rarely heard in southern Mozambique. Many of those behind and in front of the camera of the film *Stella* were from Zambézia and keen to bring these melodies and rhythms of their province to wider audiences. Cristina was equally happy to share her traditional songs from Tete alongside the Gospel music she sings at church in Maputo. Taking her songs and her choreography as a starting point eased her into finding a way to also share her personal story, something she had not shared with her colleagues over the four years she had already been studying with them. The all-women crew was able to support their friend Cristina as she told her terrible story of sexual abuse by her own family members, a subject considered taboo across Mozambique. The women came together to draw on the non-verbal language of dance and the immediacy of film to express what words alone had failed to do.

Likewise, for the two hip hop crews behind *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life* and *Crossing Paths*, the films were an extension of the mutual passion for both music and moving image shared by all those around the camera, including the subjects. Both these films were directed by established hip hop artists Lutegardo Lampião and Castigo Sive. They knew the studio producers, the venue managers and experienced many of the same challenges as those experienced by their subjects. I noticed a similar quality in both these directors. Neither had confidence in the spoken word as Sive was quiet and shy and Lutegardo had a marked stammer; however, each came into their own when they rapped. Hip hop had given them a platform through which they were able to assert their voices in ways that were too challenging for them in everyday speech. In this world therefore, and when behind the camera, communicating through images, they had a confidence I hadn't seen at the meetings or discussion groups. The connection with hip hop that they shared with women they filmed also traversed any boundaries their gender may otherwise have created.

The last two groups, who made *Tambourines of Mafalala* and *Xingomana: The Dance of Generations*, did not know their subjects before filming. However, they grew up with the musical genres they were exploring and knew many women like those

they chose as their protagonists. These women may have started out as strangers; nonetheless, they invited the young filmmakers into their home and again, their shared love of music and dance brought them close during the filming process. I had envisaged the group working with the Tufo group would struggle developing this trust. Mafalala is a historical neighbourhood, known for its cultural diversity, and old houses made of wood and zinc. The musical group *Tufo da Mafalala* make a large part of their income offering tourists a concluding highlight to a popular walking tour of the neighbourhood. The tourists arrive through the maze of narrow lanes and step through a small doorway to find the warmth, energy, beauty and grace of what is described in the Mafalala Tours website as a ‘traditional dance house’ (Laranjeira and Laranjeira, 2017). The visitors come on an almost daily basis and are welcomed warmly, directed to a comfortable corner of the yard where they are included, not as spectators but as guests of the Tufo group. The women are painting one another’s faces with the now iconic *m’siro* mask and the skins of the Tufo frame drums are being warmed on an open fire until tuned to perfect pitch¹³⁶. Some of the visitors who have experienced this warm welcome are ethnographers hoping to develop a relationship of trust and conduct in-depth research with the group. However, they all find it difficult to cross the line from their roles as tourist to researcher. The group members remain polite and cordial, yet they continue to charge the researchers for performances and interviews and are selective about the parts of their lives and beliefs they choose to share.

When I heard Vitorino and his crew wanted to work with *Tufo da Mafalala*, I anticipated they would experience similar challenges. However, they weren’t asked to pay the usual \$100 fee per performance and were instead hosted with open arms and treated as extended members of the family. They talked little about the music or the women’s lives, instead they spent day after day in this Mafalala dance house, learning about the women and their music through participation and practice. By the time I was invited to join them in Mafalala, they were singing along comfortably with the songs and had developed close relationships with most of the group members. This stands in contrast to the ‘outsider’ analysis many researchers, including myself, might be tempted to do in such situations, and hints at the different, more experiential, sensory

¹³⁶ The Tufo frame drums are known collectively in portuguese as *Pandeiros*, translated into English as Tamborines in the film title. This title is strictly inaccurate however as tambourines generally have metal resonates attached, which is not the case of the Tufo drums.

and intimate films that might be produced in a truly decolonial Mozambican film culture. The filmmakers had felt no need to ask their subjects about the lyrics, or extract explanations, something I was tempted to do within hours of arriving. They instead followed their lead from the rest of the group, learning through their bodies.¹³⁷

The intimacy between the young visitors and their hosts apparent in the final film has continued beyond the films' completion and the community screenings developing into lasting relationships. The two young men from the north, director César Vitorino and Photographer Clemente Horácio both now consider Zaquia, the *rainha*, or queen of the group, as their second mother, her 'dance house' a home from home.



Figures 5.4 - 5.5. Members of the group 'Tufo da Mafalala' pose for the camera with *Tamborines of Mafalala* director Director César Vitorino (left) and Photographer Clemente Horácio (right)

While the crew of *Tamborines of Mafalala* lived close enough to *Mafalala* to visit the community on a regular basis and to develop a close relationship over time, the group portrayed in the film *Xigomana: The Dance of Generations* live in the neighbouring province of Gaza, three hours north of Maputo by car. As there was no way they could travel home at the end of the day, members of the *Xigomana* group invited the crew members to stay in their homes for an intensive four-day period of filming. Their hosts slept on the floor for the duration of their visitors' stay, a familiar experience for the visitors, who had either grown up or had spent holidays with their grandparents in similar environments. They spent their days and nights cooking, eating, sleeping, dancing and singing with the families they were representing in their film. Their in-depth research began over the first night, sharing the rare treat of

¹³⁷ To see the filmmakers discussing their experience and engagement with their hosts during the filmmaking see the film 'Behind Tamborines of Mafalala' in the 'Behind The Stories' section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

suckling pig that the filmmakers had spent most of their expenses budget on. Together they sat listening to story after story around a fire, sometimes singing, sometimes dancing. They were reminded of similar nights with their grandparents in what used to be called a Teka Teka or Karingana.¹³⁸ They did not take out the camera that night, but instead learned through conviviality, reverie, music and dance. The production challenges behind the identification, payment, transportation and cooking of that suckling pig would be worth a chapter of this thesis in itself. However, suffice to say that by the end of the first night, a strong bond had formed not only between the crew and their hosts, but among the individual crew members. Over the next four days André, Angelica, Jozine and Isard built on these relationships and the stories following a filming plan devised collaboratively with the community that night. Songs and dances also introduced to them that night formed the basis of the three planned and one additional unplanned portrait that are woven together in the film. All were performed for the cameras again by the community on their last night in the village, this time with the cameras and recorders capturing the moment for others to share.

In both these group portraits of strangers, although those behind the camera came from a university, some of them having grown up in an urban environment, most now living with running water and electricity, their proximity to the world they represent impacted their understanding and portrayal of those on screen. They too had collected water from the well, borehole or river at some point in their lives, some had studied by the light of paraffin lamps as children, some still as adults. The connection between them and those they researched was apparent from the moment the directors introduced themselves to their future hosts. Even before they had met the rest of the crew, or heard of the film they wanted to make, the Tufo dancers of Mafalala and Xingomana dancers of Gaza both were happy to welcome the curious visitors from the next generation into their home. Both commented on how young urban Mozambicans were losing touch with their roots and relished the opportunity to remind them of the values, traditions and culture they came from. They had so much knowledge to share, so many memories of histories not yet told, these young filmmakers began to recognise they were only at the start of a journey developing the skills to work with them and communities like them. Had I made these films, I imagine

¹³⁸ For more on this and a full lighthearted explanation from members of the Xigomana group from Nwajohane, see the film *Behind Xingomana* in the *Behind The Stories* section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

it would have taken me months to gain the level of trust and intimacy present in the films in the series. Yet the connection was almost instantaneous with the young Mozambicans, many of whom shared a mother-tongue with their hosts. Both the filmmakers and their subjects gained from the experience of sharing the knowledge that might previously have been passed on around the fire at the *Teka Teka* and *Karingana* the women of *Nwajohane* speak of in the behind-the-scenes film *Behind Xingomana (A Dance of Generations)*. This participatory and collaborative process of conducting audiovisual ethnographic research through ‘local musicking’ (Reiley & Brucker, 2020) is at the root of the methodology of *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* and *Speak My Sister*. Both engaging and bringing the filmmakers and their subjects together through the shared experience of music and dance.

5.6 *Speak My Sister* post-production - exploring local musicking through film construction

The process of musicking as research continued during the post-production of the *Speak My Sister* film series. This is the period in audiovisual research, documentary and ethnographic film production, where the filmed material can be analysed. It offers those who were behind the camera an opportunity to learn more from the material they recorded than was possible at the point of filming. It is during the review and analysis that the verbal and non-verbal process of sharing and creating ‘knowledge’ happens and meaning is constructed. As both producer and researcher, I supported each group as they constructed their films, while also observing and analysing the post-production process. This phase of the research was one of my most fertile sources of new understanding. I learned from the creative choices being made, as the filmmakers decided what to include and exclude from their material and in which order to present it. I also learned from observing the discussions between the filmmakers during this process.

These are not films ‘about’ the musical genre or about the women musicians portrayed. They are films motivated by a question about music and locality: How has *Xigomana* informed the sense of self of the women of Gaza? What can an imported women’s song and dance tradition from the north contribute to a poor migrant *bairro* (neighbourhood) of Maputo? Can a young couple in that same city break through

gendered stereotyping through composing hip hop rhymes together? Sometimes the question changes during the filming or editing. Sometimes there is more than one answer. Sometimes the focus has to shift, as plans can change throughout the filming process, sometimes on purpose, sometimes by accident. The planned filming of the live performances for each of the four portraits of the contemporary artists, for example, didn't deliver the desired results. The gig due to feature in the film *Stella* was cancelled. Permissions to film the hip hop bands were withdrawn at the last minute for different reasons. The sound didn't record on the first attempt to film Cristina performing for *Victorious Dancer*, and the light broke on the second. The problems seemed unresolvable, and the filmmakers had to find alternative ways to tell their story. Some filmed rehearsals, others recording sessions, others *a capella* performances to camera. Each group found ways to build a portrait of their characters and the portraits were enriched by these creative solutions.

Along with the disappointments can also come happy accidents. Spontaneous conversations with strangers not met on the first night revealed new information during filming in *Xingomana: The Dance of Generations*. *Crossing Paths* director Castigo Sive wanted to film both his protagonists at work to show alongside the lives they lead as hip hop artists in their spare time. Black Cross happened to be doing a carpentry job, sound-proofing a studio of a friend on the day set aside for filming. As their performance had fallen through, Sive was able to negotiate a recording session for his protagonists in that studio instead. In each of the films, the original vision the director had for their film had changed during filming. The directors were despondent. The editors didn't know where to start.¹³⁹ I encouraged them to return to their original research questions: questions inspired by music and told through music. Some had been tightly scripted, others more loosely planned, yet in the edit those questions kept coming and the answers found in the edit. As in the Cardoso film, made just after independence, more than being about music or musicians, these films were about the

¹³⁹ I was only able to support the editing of five of the six films. The sixth, *Stella* was edited off campus and unlike *Xingomana: Dance of Generations*, also edited off campus, I was not invited to join the team as they edited. The first cut was presented at an initial work-in-progress screening and, despite the good suggestions for improvement from the other filmmakers present, this one cut became the final film. The director and editor had received helpful feedback and suggestions at the screening, but didn't make the changes. They said they were happy with the results. In hindsight, I wonder if they had limited access to a borrowed computer and were not able to return to the friend who had helped them with their first cut.

way this music and these individuals were formed by this music in this context, in this locality. In other words, they were all ethnographic portraits of local musicking.

5.7 The alchemy of editing

I love the process of editing. Moments caught in time when played again in a new context reveal new insights. Individuals come alive on the screen and as you get to know them there, they share new depths. I especially love this experience of adding the translated words to the images of the people I spent time with without speaking their language. With sub-titles in place, I can start to get to know each member of a community with an intimacy I had not yet experienced in person. As I learn how to introduce the individuals I met to the viewer, I start to identify their individual character traits, and the relationships between family members. Sub-titling is the closest technique I know to the magic Babel fish (Adams, 1980), that author Douglas Adams created for his fictional character Arthur Dent as he hitchhiked around the galaxy, meeting strangers talking in different tongues. When I travelled, I often dreamt of having a Babel fish to put in my ear for simultaneous translations of all the people I couldn't communicate with. Playing music with those I could not communicate with verbally has often felt like the next best thing. It cuts through the barriers of spoken language and has helped me connect in real time with people from all over the world that I have not been able to speak to. I am reminded of the phrase quoted by Conquergood; 'What the map cuts up, the story cuts across' (Certeau 1984, 129). Certeau is referring to the power of stories to transcend or cut through physical borders between countries. The same could also apply for how music cuts through the borders imposed by lines drawn on maps: What the map cuts up, music cuts across.

Working alongside the *Speak My Sister* filmmakers as they edited their musical portraits, I was also able to cut through some of the limitations of the spoken word. The formal interviews and focus groups offered some insight into the motivations behind the films of these young filmmakers and their objectives behind them. Yet, when I began supporting and observing them as they juxtaposed moments and ideas on the timeline and constructed their films, my understanding deepened. I offered technical as opposed to conceptual solutions, encouraging them to question their own motivation and so get to the root of their research question. I shared my own wonder

at how filmed material can reveal new insights through the process of reviewing, cutting and joining moments, sounds, testimonies and songs together. They shared with me their discoveries as the research continued in the cutting room and they experienced the excitement of ‘finding’ the film in post-production. As a sculptor starts the creative process with a block of stone or wood and a painter, composer, choreographer or writer can start the creative process with an empty sheet, or empty space, the video editor begins with gigabytes of unedited data waiting for the questions to be asked. We hear of sculptors finding their work in the stone, as if it were already there. This can also be said of the process of film editing.

When I edit, I have learned to tune into the initial emotional response that hits me with its greatest force when I first review the material I have filmed. I then reflect on the original motivation behind my research. The alchemy takes place when I combine the two, bring together the emotions behind what I had been looking for and what I found. I shared this personal process with each group of young filmmakers as they reviewed their own material, supporting each as they found their own technique, creating the right conditions for this alchemy to take place. As the young filmmakers found their films in this similar way, one important ally in their creative process was the music, as was the case in my own filmmaking. When we met during their editing process, we discussed the effectiveness of their editing methodologies, the visual style and structure of their films. Eventually they learned to keep asking themselves questions in my absence. As I watched them edit the encounters and conversations they had during filming, I was finally able to understand a different side to these young filmmakers I was working with. I learned from their creative responses to what they had filmed. It reminded me of the revelation of sub-titles as a filmmakers’ alternative to Douglas Adam’s Babel fish. Through observing and sharing in the alchemy of editing that took place constructing the *Speak My Sister* films, I was able to recognise and respect the alternative perspectives of these young filmmakers and their relationship to the world they were making films about and for and I began to understand at an experiential level, the responsibility they felt towards both their subjects and their audience.

5.8 *Speak My Sister* films as provocations

During the post-production, I was often surprised by the choices made by the filmmakers as to what to include or exclude in their films. When present during filming, I observed the relationships around the camera. I noticed the gendered power dynamics, the collaboration and the excitement from all present at the thrill of being around a camera making a film. I was also fascinated by differences in approach to filming. I was often unable to distinguish how much these choices were informed by lack of experience or by design. During the post-production process, however, there was an opportunity to discuss the motives behind these choices and those new ones made, as the filmmakers constructed their films. The meaning the filmmakers gave to their material in the edit, and often the decisions made during shooting that I put down to inexperience, were indeed based on clear intentions. One intention commonly identified was that they did not want to present ‘happy endings’, another that it was important their protagonists didn’t appear as victims. The most common explanation was that their films are not there to set questions and give answers, they are there as ‘provocations’. Making films with women at their centre was in itself a provocation, and within these films there are also provocations, not perhaps as apparent for the global audience, but designed to provoke the Mozambican audiences for whom the films were made.

During the filming of *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life* for example, two of the women in the band shared their experiences of violence and the impact of these on their life decisions. One had grown up in an abusive environment; another had married into one. Neither testimony made it into the film. Instead, the female drummer, Tauzene, harshly criticises women who are ‘sitting at home with nothing to do and think that life is easy’ (Lampião, 2018). International audiences find Tauzene’s challenge uncomfortable. Tauzene’s position is not the victimised image of Mozambican women they are used to. Instead, the film is a home-grown message from young Mozambican women impatient for change.

From the outset, in the film’s opening, it is clear that Lampião did not want the audience to identify with the young women as victims of their violent and unhappy past. His fast-paced, minute-long pre-title sequence is built on a pumping bass and drum beat and a celebratory MC who calls the audience to attention in the local

language of *changana*. Guiggaz is introduced as she leaves her home on her way to work. She greets young girls playing in the street with smiles and kisses, before meeting her equally vibrant friend, Énia Lipanga. They walk through the sandy streets of Polana Caniço,¹⁴⁰ and into the recording studio. These are women with braids, shades and attitude. After the title sequence, a series of short, spoken introductions from the band members temporarily break with the music-video conventions before powerful free-style performances from Guiggaz and Énia Lipanga produce a musical introduction to their own feelings about gender inequality. The editing style has a youthful confidence that breaks every rule of continuity and narrative construction while conveying all the vitality and revolutionary power of these young women. The viewer never learns of the struggle it took each of these women to be in that studio; they instead see what is possible for their audience, if they can see beyond the struggle, and to the endless possibilities for them, if they can push through to the other side of those seemingly solid and impenetrable obstacles.



Figure 5.6 Screenshot from opening sequence of *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life* (Lampião, 2018)
Guiggaz (Right) and Énia Lipanga (Left) arrive at their recording studio in Polana Caniço,
Maputo. [Photographer Lutegardo Lampião](#)

I wanted to understand the position expressed by Tauzene in the film that there are many women in Maputo with nothing to do, thinking life is easy. I could not imagine a woman of her age living in my Maputo of the 90's and 00's holding such an opinion. Is this a result of the growing economic stability of the middle-classes? I decided to visit her as she recorded with her other all-women band and get to know her better. I was also keen to meet her band members and hear the music they were making. This

¹⁴⁰ Polana Caniço is one of the city's historically black urban residential neighbourhoods that grew up in Maputo during colonial times to house the workers of the white residential neighbourhood of 'Polana Cimento'. It now has houses made of cement, as opposed to the 'caniço' or thatch in the name, but still no paved roads.

young woman was in two all-women bands, the second, *Khanyisa*, made up of trained instrumentalists playing the kind of pop fusion I used to play in all-male bands in Maputo twenty years before. They reminded me of me, yet there were also notable differences I was eager to understand. Yet as we spoke at the studio, Tauzene revealed no more to me than she had shared in the filmed interview with Lampião; that too many women in Maputo ‘sit around doing nothing’. Watching the material back later, I sense impatience in my voice. I reminded Tauzene of those women she must also be aware of, who work from day to night to feed their children, or those juggling careers and motherhood. These women, I argued, may not be contributing to the feminine revolution because they are too busy surviving. She was unwavering. “I study, I go to church, I am in three bands”, she tells me, and later in the interview, she repeats her criticism “they do nothing!”¹⁴¹ She did not make a logical, well-argued case. She did not compare her activism to their apathy, I understood her to be saying that if things are to change, women must push themselves beyond their comfort zone to provoke that change, but she did not articulate her position in this way. We spent another day together as I filmed her rehearsing with *Khanyisa* and her church gospel group, and still I remained confused by her position. I was reminded of Édouard Glissant’s ideas around the ‘right to opacity’.¹⁴² I was eager to understand Tauzene’s perspective, but with each attempt, it seems, I found it more difficult because of my own experiences. I kept chasing her story, while she refused to clarify her critique in the ways I was hoping. However, even if the experiences that underscored her critical opinions of many urban women remained obscure, the film permitted her a platform through which to share a new perspective that seemed to be held by feminist youth in Maputo. For Tauzene, as important as the struggle to change male behaviour was, the need to shake her female urban contemporaries out of their apathy and complacency. Unlike Lampião, the director of *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*, I did not include Tauzene’s comments in my the behind-the-scenes film in the web documentary, perhaps because they did not reflect my own. In retrospect, I see this choice as a reminder of why there needs to be a space for more home-grown films to be made.

¹⁴¹ Taken from a recorded interview with Tauzene (Patricia) recorded in June 2018.

¹⁴² See Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997) and a useful 2019 analysis by Benjamin Davis, (2019) of applying this concept to decolonial work today.

Lampião gave Tauzene and her hip hop band a space to present their alternatives to the established humanitarian position of victimisation reinforced by externally produced media. In the opening sequence to Lampião's film, two band-members Guiggaz and Ênia are warm and empathetic to their neighbours. The songs these women write and perform also demonstrate an understanding of the difficulties women face. Yet they also want to show their indignation of the apathy of their young urban audience. "Wake Up!" the band's founder Guiggaz says direct to camera at the end of the film, "There are all sorts of activities men do that we can do, too. Let's do whatever we dream to do. There's something inside us all. I was born to do something and I know what it is. You have to discover what you were born to do" (Guiggaz, 2018).

Castigo Sive's *Crossing Paths* is designed to appeal to a different audience to those Lampião and his subjects had in mind. He wanted the Mozambican viewer critical of hip hop to engage with his film, especially hip hop performed by women. The director was clear from the start, he wanted to present a more 'feminine' image of women involved in hip hop and present a life off-stage that a mainstream national audience would find familiar and respect. "Just because they wear trousers and speak their mind, people think women in hip hop are all lesbians" he told me, on more than one occasion. I had to question my response to this, which was based on my life experience and decades of activism born of the homophobia in the UK in the 1980's. I was keen to direct Sive away from any potential homophobic implications that might slip into the film.

As Pooja Rangan reminds us, when you surrender authorship, 'there is no guarantee that the ideological messages, codes and conventions of documentary immediacy will find their mark' (Rangan 2017, 194). The 'trace of themselves' Rangan celebrates as being inscribed in works authored by 'the other' can lead to friction. 'Contradictions' can 'emerge from the liberating encounter with difference', she points out, and our temptation is to smooth them over with 'the ideological glue of humanism' (ibid, 17). Further conversations with Sive revealed his desire to challenge the sexualisation of female hip hop artists and not their perceived sexuality. He wanted to question the kind of perceptions of women that I remember challenging in my student films of the early 1980's. He wanted to counter women's sexual objectification in popular music culture with a married woman. Her sexuality was not in question; what was being questioned

was her right to autonomy, to creative expression, to work alongside men as a serious artist with things to say.

However, Sive uses his own reference points and his own understanding of his audience to do this. The portrait introduces F.t modestly dressed in the colourful cloth known as a *capulana*, the traditional working attire of women across Africa.¹⁴³ As the couple start their day at home F.t sweeps the yard, washes up and hands her husband his breakfast. This familiar delineation of gender roles is first challenged when the two then head out to work. Black Cross is a carpenter specialising in sound-proofing recording studios and F.t a hospital administrator. The portrait of the relationship is developed further when we see the couple come together again after work. They sit together on a sofa in a recording studio composing songs together. F.t works alongside her husband and together their music addresses questions of class, language and urban inequality. The theme of the song they are composing is important, but for many in the audience, just seeing the humble woman in the *capulana* transform into the self-confident woman in a recording studio alongside her husband is provocation enough.

The theme of the song is also addressing Mozambican concerns, although they are in fact not dissimilar to the concerns of Rouch's urban migrant tales of West Africa in *Moi un Noir* (1957) and *Jaguar* (1967). Sive wants to provoke their urban middle-class hip hop audience out of their complacency and preconceptions of the poor rural traders bringing their produce to the city. The song the couple are working on in the studio shames the young 'city boys' who 'sit and do nothing' as others suffer.

*Hey boy, help put this sack of cassava on my head to sell and stop the pretence,
because the rain is coming, and you city boys still sit and do nothing
You appear with your trendy clothes on television and say we have no vision,
but then you don't produce, you don't study, why?*

Extract from 'As formas de viver' (Ways of living) by F.t and Black Cross,
featured in *Crossing Paths* (Sive, 2018)

The woman writing songs with her husband on the sofa in the evening and working as a hospital administrator also had a difficult and violent past. Her first marriage was

¹⁴³ The *capulana*, the coloured cloth worn by Mozambican women around their waists, their shoulders or on their head and known by different names throughout Africa, has come to symbolise womanhood in Mozambican poetry and songs. Women use it for carrying children, water, firewood and belongings. Old ones are worn at work and new ones at social occasions. *Capulanas* are always part of a wedding dowry representing her preparedness for hard work and her feminine pride.

to a man who could not accept her as an artist and she suffered at his hand. However, as with the past of her colleagues in the band *Revolução Feminina*, this was not addressed in the film. Instead, the filmmakers wanted their video to present a positive image of men and women working together in a respectful relationship, while also contributing to making hip hop accessible for the more conservative mainstream audiences. The film ends with the couple carrying a heavy sack together across the busy street at the end of the day. It is as if the filmmakers want to remind the viewer that as they work together the couple share the burden of more than this heavy load they carry in their arms.



Figure 5.7. Screenshot from *Crossing Paths* (Sive, 2018). Composer and performer F.t (Célia Madime) records in the studio built by her partner Black Cross (Fermano General) as he watches on from the control room. Photographer Stefane Andrade

5.9 Nego-Feminism in *Speak My Sister*

The proactive attitudes associated with western feminism that are reflected in *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life* are not present in *Crossing Paths*. Instead, the film could be viewed within the decolonial discourse which Obioma Nnaemeka describes as *nego-feminism*. This is an African feminism where ‘nego’ stands for ‘negotiation’ and ‘no-ego’, based on the ‘shared values of African cultures’ of ‘give and take, compromise and balance’ (Nnaemeka 2004, 377). The *nego-feminists* Nnaemeka describes, who are both African women and young African men, know when, where and how to ‘detonate, or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts’ (ibid, 378). In the case of F.t and her self-representation in *Crossing Paths*, she is negotiating a patriarchy where women are criticized for wearing trousers, so she puts on her *capulana* and stands at the washing-up bowl before she reveals herself in a recording

studio. Then, when she speaks her mind about other aspects of intersectional inequality, such as the disconnect between rural and urban, she might be heard.

The *nego-feminism* of the Tufo dancers in *Tamborines of Mafalala* takes a different form. They choose to celebrate their beauty and autonomy through confident self-representation. Although the group's *rainha*, or 'Queen', Zaquia Rachid, explains how she was taken out of school to care for her father before she learned to read and write, she is more interested in sharing what she has achieved than her suffering along the way. This is reflected in Vitorino's montage sequence that weaves together beautifully shot images of the 16-piece dance group dressed in their colourful *capulanas* and head-dresses, proudly painting their faces with the traditional white *m'siro* masks and travelling to different political, community and touristic events around the town. The short interview clips of the husband-and-wife team behind the group reinforce this careful feminine negotiation of power, celebrating not only the women's beauty, but also the resilience and determination of all those who enrich the community through music.

5.10 Nego-Feminism and knowledge-sharing

One objective of *Speak My Sister* was to provide an opportunity for interdisciplinary ethnomusicological research between young cultural researchers and filmmakers. Interestingly, however, although the filmmakers learned a great deal during the production process about each of the musical genres they were researching, few chose to include conversations about the music itself in their films. One exception is in *Tambourines of Mafalala*, where both Zaquia and her husband Said touch on the historical and cultural significance of the dance. However, the information they choose to reveal, and how they choose to reveal it, is another example of the gendered negotiation that was constantly at play during the research and filming. Zaquia's husband Said is presented as a man of knowledge and experience with a challenge on his hands managing such a large group of women. He is given the role in the film of explaining some of the changes in the Tufo tradition, such as its transition from a male to a predominantly female genre, and presents the reason as being motivated by a desire to celebrate the beauty of women. Yet the story of Tufo is much more nuanced and complex than that presented in the film.



Figure 5.8 Screenshot from *Tamborines of Mafalala* (Vitorino, 2018)
The group *Tufo da Mafalala* dance in the kneeling position typical of Tufo
Photographer Clemente Horácio

Tufo is a much studied and celebrated dance from the north of Mozambique. Once a dance of male Arab traders in the mid-19th century, it is now rare to find men dancing Tufo. Instead, the dance became an iconic part of the nation's cultural heritage, a symbol of Mozambican women's beauty and a celebration of its rich and diverse cultural identity.¹⁴⁴ There is reference to this in the *Speak My Sister* portrait of the group *Tufo da Mafalala*. Zaquia, the *Rainha* or 'Queen' of the group and Said, her husband and group 'leader', both present the historical reasons for this shift from male to female performers to be based on notions of female beauty.

Zaquia

Tufo began on Mozambique Island long ago. At first it was the men who danced, but things have changed now. It's the women who dance now. The men play the drums. It changed when they realised that when the men danced, it wasn't as beautiful.

Said

I am responsible for the group *Tufo da Mafalala*. From my point of view, the women, the beautiful women, with the m'siro on their faces would be much better, because men didn't use m'siro, so choosing women with m'siro, well dressed in their uniforms, would be really beautiful. So, things changed.

Zaquia Rachid and Saíd Momad. Mafalala, June 2018.
From the film *Tamborines of Mafalala* (Vitorino, 2018)

In his statement, Momad is using a common Mozambican narrative device of retelling a story in the first person to add immediacy and increase the audience's affective response. His command of the Portuguese language introduces an element

¹⁴⁴ See Hebden (2020), Boswall (2019b), Arnfred (2011) for more on Tufo.

of ambiguity, however, and I took some time to grasp where Saíd sees himself in this decision. Mozambicans watching will know Tufo as a female dance and will assume he wasn't personally involved in the decision to make it that way. I, on the other hand, found even the inclusion of Saíd in the film as a kind of *nego-feminist* compromise. The continuation of the conversation reveals more of the complex negotiation between the men and the women filmmakers and researchers, and the married couple Saíd, the group's 'leader' and Zaquia the group's 'queen'. Saíd reminds the audience of the frailties of women, and Zaquia, of men.

Saíd

There's no end to the difficulties. I always had difficulties because imagine, a group like this with only one man is not easy!

Zaquia

We have many men wanting to join the women, but I wouldn't like that because, you know, a man comes to join a group that's well organised. And then, when the man arrives, he'll see the women as women, and he'll be flirting and making love with her, and tomorrow he'll leave her for another. That's why I don't want men, or that would be the end of my group.

Zaquia Rachid and Saíd Momad. Mafalala, June 2018.
From the film *Tamborines of Mafalala* (Vitorino, 2018)

Saíd's and Zaquia's responses to the question around the involvement of men in their, or any future Tufo group reveal a great deal about the patriarchal dominance of even the most celebrated female musical tradition and demonstrates Nnaemeka's *nego-feminism* in action. Zaquia and the director Vitorino were both negotiating with established masculine power, as are all the women in the group in their negotiations with Saíd and with the film's director Vitorino. It would have been an insult to Saíd's male authority had he not been presented as the leader of the group and given a 'voice' in the film. Vitorino, and all those who work with the group *Tufo da Mafalala*, know to defer to Saíd's authority, especially when the group is being represented to outsiders. While his wife writes the songs, rehearses the dancers, manages the community engagement and much of the finances, Saíd is the gatekeeper. No filming, talking or dancing can take place without his say-so. Zaquia, on the other hand, makes decisions quietly with no fanfare, ensuring her position, confidence and authority is reflected in the presence, beauty and body knowledge she brings as the leader and that she ensures are emanated by all members of her group. In contrast to the decision by

the filmmakers behind *Sing My Brother - Help Me To Sing*, who felt no need to interview the women in the communities they were portraying, or even credit them at the end of the film, Vitorino and Zaquia negotiated the representation of the queen's obvious female power, both on and off screen.

Although the film is not about this female power, it is implied throughout and described through the group's adaptability to the harsh circumstances they live in. This is also not a film about these harsh conditions; they too are implied. The audience understands the day-to-day challenges of life in the modern, cosmopolitan capital city through images of a torn plastic bag melting as it lights the charcoal stove, or the few coins received at the end of a performance for tourists or party-political campaigns, counted in candlelight at the end of the day. Vitorino juxtaposes the radiant smiles and laughter of the Tufo dancers with contrasting images that reveal the harsh conditions they live in. This is, then, a film about Tufo, about change, and about resilience. It makes a case for pragmatic adaptation for survival, be it the adaptation of this women's song and dance tradition or the adaptation of migrants finding a place for themselves away from home, just as the filmmakers themselves are doing.

"In the old days when we danced Tufo here in Maputo, people would say 'Ah that dance, that's for lazy people! You're always on your knees, rowing.' But Tufo isn't just rowing any more. We even sing rap now, rapping and singing Tufo!"

Zaquia Rachid. Mafalala, June 2018.

Vitorino chooses to end his film on Zaquia's reminder that Tufo is not a fixed tradition, it is alive, it serves a purpose. After a long musical sequence where we see a contemporary Tufo song where the Tufo tambourines or *panderos* interpret the rhythm of hip hop and the graceful women show their own contemporary 'sass' in their m'siro and beautiful uniforms Said has described as so important. The joy, strength and resilience they demonstrate in their dance needs no words, but just in case, Vitorino reasserts Tufo's relevance to his generation.

"Come and learn with us. I wait with open arms, so I can teach the girls. I have to have young people in the group".

Zaquia Rachid. Mafalala, June 2018.

From the film *Tamborines of Mafalala* (Vitorino, 2018) ¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ See: Tambourines of Mafalala (Vitorino 2018) in 'The Film Series' section of the web

5.11 Linearity and logic in the *Speak My Sister* film series

The structural decisions made by the filmmakers in post-production revealed more to me than I anticipated about the continued colonial impact on African narrative form. Most African filmmakers learn at some point to present their narratives within the basic framework of a three-act structure. I learnt about the accepted rules behind these, alongside filmmakers from South African Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique, when invited to take part in a number of training schemes designed to develop a new generation of Southern African film producers.¹⁴⁶ They took place in English in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Harare, and I joined the English-speaking producers in Mozambique, Sol de Carvalho and João Ribeiro as the third Mozambican director and producer on the scheme. During residential courses that spanned a year, we devoured the American and European models of cinematic narrative structure as defined in the seminal textbooks by Sid Field (1979) and Robert McKee (1998). Later, when producing films for European broadcasters, the commissioners would employ script doctors to ensure the inciting incidents and turning points taught in these books were incorporated into the structure of our documentaries.

Yet, when I surrendered authorship, I learned why such structures did not serve the filmmakers of *Speak My Sister*, and I didn't impose them, despite the impact this has clearly had for some global audiences to read the films. Over my years of long nights listening to Mozambicans telling stories, and over the decades slowly piecing together my husband's fascinating life story into a story with a structure and chronology, I have learned to enjoy and appreciate the Mozambican storyteller's non-linear approach to narrative. The emphasis is less on the cause and effect of the choices of individuals, and more on the situation, the humour and drama arising from given situations and the nature of the relationships revealed in those situations. I still struggle to follow these

documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

¹⁴⁶ The popular European producer training scheme EAVE (European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs) developed an African wing AVEA (Audiovisual Entrepreneurs of Africa) which ran year-long producers' training between 1997 and 2004. The importance of narrative structure was at the core of each module taught. Many of those trained are still some of the most respected producers in Southern Africa. I was in the last cohort in 2004 and was halfway through the one-year course when the funding dried up. The German broadcaster Deutsche Welle also ran annual screen-writing courses for African producers and writers (it was common to train us together). Another popular training programme for Southern African producers at the time was run by Steps for The Future. Intended to combine production with training, films on Southern Africans living with HIV were commissioned by European Broadcasters with a training and mentoring programme incorporated. This too put great emphasis on understanding narrative structure.

stories and the apparent refusal to recognise the narrative need for set-ups and conclusions. The stories can start and end at many given moments, and over the years of repetition the essence of the story seems to be imbued rather than understood. Jokes too, are not about the punch lines or the reveal. They are in that sense more like captured moments in time where the situation provides the humour, again not with the objective of understanding but feeling, and ideally, an occasion for shared laughter.

During the post-production of the *Speak My Sister* films, the experienced film editor Orlando Mesquita and myself both offered suggestions around structure and narrative that were rejected by the editors, many arguing that a conclusion to any story misses the point that life stories only conclude at death. Before that there are no resolutions. The resulting structure in the films produced, for example, a set-up, conflict and initial resolution in the first half of the film, explored and developed in the second half. Or ideas would be presented in a non-linear way, without a linear progression or ‘argument’, because life is non-linear, conversation is non-linear, and so, too, was the filmmakers’ reflection and representation of it.

When the women who made *Victorious Dancer* showed me the first cut of the film, for example, I was bursting with ideas as to how to ‘improve’ the structure. It opened with close-up shots of drums and feet before opening up to reveal a group of men and women in a dance class. Our attention is drawn to a smiling dancer with a spring in her step, and the sound of her voice is soon followed by her smiling face filling the frame.

I’m Cristina Daniel Soane, from Tete,, Cabora Bassa, Songo.
My life had been one long series of violations, ... sexual violations

Cristina Soane, Maputo, June 2018.
From the film *Victorious Dancer* (Guetza, 2018)

My first suggestion was that the revelation that Cristina was processing prolonged periods of childhood sexual abuse was postponed until later in the film - as a turning point or a reveal, and that Cristina’s character was first set up a little. Alzira had filmed Cristina’s colleagues talking of their relationships with this clearly still troubled woman and I suggested these would serve as great introductions to her character. It would demonstrate that she was talented, impulsive and emotional; the life and soul of the party, yet sometimes deadly serious and brooding. In the approach I had been

taught, the key to structure is to introduce questions in your audience that keeps them attentive and that you keep their attention with the promise of answers. I suggested bringing this introduction in at the start of the film to set up some questions such as Who is Cristina? Why do her friends talk of her this way? And using the film to reveal these answers.

There were five women around the laptop looking at this first edit with me and they were visibly deflated by my suggestions for changes. All remained silent as I asked questions designed to clarify the intentions behind their decisions. I was aware the group were not getting on and the material they had filmed was disappointing in relation to the original plan. Instead of the choreographed collaborative effort promised in early meetings, the dance in the film was an unstructured improvisation that seemed hastily thrown together outside the dance studio. This group had been the one I had stuck my neck out for. They had been rejected by the jury because they submitted a weak written proposal and I had believed in them. Now it seems they just wanted to join their material together as quickly as possible to finish the film. My disappointment was apparent; yet soon I realised I had been mistaken about the women's silence. This was not a silence of disinterest but of profound interest. These five apparently confident women who had mastered the art of feigning disinterest were visibly disappointed by my response to their film. I tried to rectify the situation. "The decisions you make in the edit are yours", I told them. "You can do anything you want with the material you filmed, but you have to know why. You have to be able to justify to yourselves every frame that you chose to include and exclude and when, why and how you introduce it to your viewer. As long as you know the reason you have done what you have done, you don't need to share this with me."¹⁴⁷

This provoked an impassioned defence of the decisions from the director Alzira. This was not a film about abuse, but of moving beyond abuse. This subject is taboo. Nobody talks about it. They wanted to stun their audiences into paying attention with this opening statement. They wanted, however, also to make the point that you never really get over experiences such as the ones Cristina had in her childhood. It is a constant struggle, but it is possible. Talking about it may help, so may dancing or singing, or as in Cristina's case, it might be religious faith that eventually offers the route out of the pain. They wanted this film to provoke their audiences out of their

¹⁴⁷ Taken from recordings of the meeting held at ISArC on July 12th 2018.

silence. This is why the film's structure is divided into two periods of struggle, one while she was being abused, and the next the daily struggle into adulthood of living with the abuse. The finished film remained much the same as the first cut I saw. I remained unconvinced until I witnessed the response to the film during the first moments of its first public screening during the festival. Verbalising such a taboo subject so openly at the outset commanded stunned attention from the audience. The mid-way transformation point, moving from the abuse to life beyond the abuse, regularly produced a tangible collective sigh of relief followed by focussed attention in the second half.

This film offered a second opportunity for me to learn from surrendered authorship while maintaining, or even improving on the 'quality' and the 'equality' (Bishop, 2012) of the end product. This time it was in relation to the soundtrack. Cristina is also a composer and singer, but the dance had been choreographed and performed without music. In the edited film, the synchronised sound of breath and feet on grass was replaced with an orchestral track downloaded from an American copyright free sound library. It pushed the scene into the kind of cheesy melodrama of Brazilian soap operas that use this kind of soundtrack and I suggested creating an original soundtrack with musicians on campus. Failing that, I suggested perhaps finding a slow Mozambican track and ask the musician for permission to use it. The filmmakers ignored my suggestion and kept the synthetic strings, and once again, at the first screening I understood why. This imported soundtrack made the rape scene more cinematic for the Mozambican viewer who grew up hearing these synthetic strings only in the Brazilian soaps. Using it removed Cristina's memory of the abuse into the world of fiction. The distinctly un-African and emotive synthesised strings and flute slow down the pace during the rape scenes and it becomes strangely disconnected from the person we see in front of us. The otherness of the 'wallpaper music' took the audience into the disconnected state that fear took Cristina into at the time. It helped the audience watch in discomfort while themselves experiencing this detachment. In retrospect, my preference for an African soundtrack may have come from my own aesthetic unconsciously rooted in what Edward Said named as orientalist; 'a western style for

dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Said 1978, 3), or in this case over Black Africa.¹⁴⁸

Watching the film in the public screenings, I understood the sonic significance of Alzira and her editor's creative choices. The sound of the deep, familiar, healing African drums during the rehearsal scenes, reflect life in the here and now, where Cristina has found her voice. The synthetic soundtrack provided for the dance reconstructions of the rape scenes takes the audience to the time Cristina had to detach her mind from her body. At each screening I attended, I could feel the atmosphere shift as the soundtrack triggered one sound memory and then another. The use of a culturally alienating musical form was inspired by the protagonist's relationship with the alienating experience of rape. It was also reinforced by the experiences of the five other women making the film, each of whom have their own experiences of living in fear of violent men to draw on.

I made one suggestion during that rich meeting around the laptop that had been accepted. It came not from the 'humanitarian impulse' Pooja Rangan writes of, but from a place of unfettered creativity and experience as a sound designer and composer and based on the understanding of the power of silence. It turned out the women had had the same idea but couldn't work out how to do it. The six of us sat around their small borrowed laptop as I showed them the necessary tools in the software. They were thrilled to discover it was possible to create a gap in a timeline and separate the past and the present at the end of the rape scene by a beat or two of silence. At screenings, this silence was filled by a different kind of silence; a stunned hiatus in the otherwise constant murmur from audiences watching the film. It forms a silent bridge between these two parts of Cristina's life, and a sonic bridge between the audience and the filmmakers. The return to the present is hailed by Cristina's own singing voice that bursts into the silence, light and cheerful and in stark contrast to the hollow and impersonal strings it had preceded. Cristina's resilience and determination are celebrated through her singing voice: first in a light, up-beat childlike tone and then in a richer, more spiritual gospel voice. Her relationship with the demons and guides that now accompany her as she rebuilds her life are shared with the audience through her

¹⁴⁸ When Edward Said's post-colonial theories around Orientalism are applied to the African continent, they are commonly referred to as 'Black Orientalism'. See, for example the writings the first to use the term in a film review in 2000, of the Kenyan scholar and documentary filmmaker Ali Mazrui (2000, 2005).

traditional and religious song choice. In creating that silence together, I recognised I had begun a different kind of creative collaboration, similar to the collaboration MacDougall describes as he offers technical assistance to the young Indian schoolboy Mayank Ved in the *Delwara Eleven Series* (2014). It felt better than the excitement I experienced from the powerful high ground of mentor. I learned that the secret to finding this creative connection was through silence, and through listening.

5.12 Lessons in Nego-Feminism and surrender from musicking as research

In the end, against all odds, all six films were completed telling six stories, each woven together into six short films of 8-13 minutes long, told through the music and dance that form part of their protagonists' identity. Each film in the series has its strengths and weaknesses, some technical, some structural, some conceptual. Yet despite the technical and structural criticisms that can be directed at each film, the young Mozambicans behind their production were over the moon at having completed their first film, and all being of a standard to be screened in Niassa during the National Festival. There is a fresh, young, Mozambican approach to the films, especially when watched as a series. There is a lightness and ease from the protagonists within the frame. The films capture the protagonists' wit, ingenuity, resilience, strength and creativity in a way that reflects the familiarity between those in front of and those behind the camera.

The filmmakers were drawing on the visual style of the music video they were familiar with, while expanding their audiovisual vocabulary through employing new methodologies introduced to them in the master classes, workshops and tutorials. By including long musical sequences in their films, the filmmakers were able to keep one foot still firmly in the music video genre they were familiar with, while exploring another. This removed some of the intimidation that can paralyse many first-time filmmakers. They were simply building on their existing knowledge while practicing the unfamiliar techniques of sound recording, interviewing and structuring a film, drawing on the familiar language of the music video to invite the viewer into questions around gender inequality. They had learned to build a music video around one song. Now they could make a film starting with a research question, their films' structure now built around a life story (*Stella and Victorious Dancer*), a relationship (*Crossing*

Paths), a series of events (*Tambourines of Mafalala*) or a series of songs, (*Xingomana: Dance of Generations* and *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*).

In each of the six films, there is an intimacy with the filmmakers that transfers to the screen: the looks to camera, the laughter and tears and the honesty of their self-representation. This comes from an understanding of the context, the audience and the subjects, an understanding that results in Nnaemeka's *nego-feminism* (2004) and the Collaborative Symbiosis between all involved in the production (MacDougall, 2020). This is not a series born out of the humanitarianism critiqued by Pooja Rangan (2017) or the consensus of participation critiqued by Markus Miessen (2010). It is born from a methodology based on local musicking (Reiley & Brucker, 2020). The musical genres portrayed in the six films range from women's traditional song and dance groups, through fused traditional and modern musical styles to contemporary hip hop. The women portrayed range from university educated young women living and working in Maputo in *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*, to illiterate migrant women living in the capital's historic poor migrant neighbourhood in *Tamborines of Mafalala*. The series represents Mozambican women from the north, centre and south of the country and from across the country's social and geographical divides. The 'artists' in these musical video portraits may not all consider themselves as artists, but all were performers. The job of the filmmakers was to encourage them to 'perform' themselves through their sense of self informed by place and by music and dance. Much like the series of ethnographic musical portraits by José Cardoso that *Speak My Sister* is responding to, the musicking informs the stylistic and creative choices made by the filmmakers. The films' intentions are communicated as much through music and image as through speech. This is a familiar language for the filmmakers, and also one familiar to their diverse audiences. It is a non-verbal language used widely across the vast, multi-lingual, multi-cultural young nation of Mozambique to transmit knowledge.



Interlude 6.

The passing of knowledge

Cardoso Portrait 6

Kanyembe players Rajabo Ibrahim and his wife
Aldeia Mandimba, Palma

Cabo Delgado Province

EXT. DAY. RAJABO IBRAHIM'S HOME, ALDEIA MANDIMBA. CABO DELGADO

Two men sit on a traditional bed by a house, one in shoes, jeans and a button-down shirt with a notebook on his knee. The other barefoot with light cotton clothes stained brown by the dust and an embroidered *kofió* (islamic skull cap) of the same colour on his head. A woman sits on the floor next to the bed. She looks curiously in our direction as she quietly nurses her child. The men speak to one another informally in *Maconde*, the language most spoken in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. A translation into Portuguese is provided by a female narrator.



VOICE OVER (FEMALE VOICE)

My name is Rajabo Ibrahim
I'm a peasant
Being an artist makes me respected
here in the village

The interviewer continues to speak to Rajabo Ibrahim in his language of *Maconde* as the camera zooms into the men deep in conversation. There is no translation this time. After some time, as the camera focusses on the man in the *kofió*, the sound of the conversation is replaced by the voice of a male narrator who provides information to the viewer in Portuguese.

VOICE OVER (MALE VOICE)

In this area
The passing of knowledge
is done through the *Kanhembe*
This brings dignity
Only the men,
and most of them old men,
played it

EXT. DAY. ALDEIA MANDIMBA, PALMA DISTRICT. CABO DELGADO

Three women stride through the village, one in front of the other, each with a large tin container filled with 20 litres of water on their head. A man carrying nothing walks towards them

VOICE OVER (MALE VOICE)

You, an artist,
you taught your wife
to play it with you
How much prejudice
you overcame by doing this



A crowd is gathered under the shade of a tree. The frenetic sounds of their call and response chanting and the high-pitched, fast rhythms of the wooden drums are carried to the corners of the village. Under the tree, young men are seated on the ground at the front of the crowd, beating out the rhythm onto the long straight branches in front of them. The man from the interview in the *kofió* is now dressed in a grass skirt and a headdress, as he was when filmed on stage in Maputo. As he dances, he reveals behind him a woman standing still, also playing the same bowed instrument. The singing stops, the drums drop in intensity and the woman continues to play. A green cloth covers her head, another is wrapped round her shoulder, holding a baby balanced on her back. The baby watches the proceedings quietly over his mother's shoulder. They are still but for the mother's right arm drawing the bow back and forth over the strings and her fingers moving with confidence as they bring out the melody of the haunting sound of her *Kanhembe*. Her husband spins and spins and spins and spins, he too plays from time to time responding to her call, caught in the frenzy of her music.



Chapter 6.

Speak My Sister Exhibition and Reception

6.1 Gendered speech, silence and the passing of knowledge through song, dance and film

The above scene is the fourth short musical portrait offered to the viewer of Cardoso's 1981 film *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*. In less than five minutes, it raises questions around the role of the artist in the passing of knowledge, the inclusion (and exclusion) of women in this respected social position, and the central role of music and dance in the knowledge transmission of the Makonde people.¹⁴⁹ The camera takes the viewer first to the home of a man they will later recognise as the musician and dancer in the feather headdress on the festival stage at the start of the film. Later, we see him in the same headdress and grass skirt, dancing now in the dust under the tree in the northern village of *Mandimba*, playing a duet with his wife. Both play the *Kanhembe*, an instrument traditionally played only by men. Although the themes of knowledge transmission through music and women's role in this are not developed or explored in the scene, the image, the music and the dance ask a question: If knowledge is transmitted in this village through this instrument, and Rajabo Ibrahim's wife is playing this instrument, then in this new post-colonial Mozambique, can women also now transmit knowledge to us all through music and dance?

The film will have been seen by men and women in screenings across the country. Most won't question the fact that knowledge can be transmitted through song and dance. However, after watching the scene described above, many Mozambican men and women will have been left questioning their existing beliefs about what women can and can't do. They will have heard the call of the villagers, singing their questions

¹⁴⁹ The Makonde people (also known as Simakonde, Kimakonde and Chinimakonde) are an ethnic group from the Mueda Plateau in northern Mozambique, also found in southeast Tanzania and Kenya. In Mozambique they are known for the use of facial and full body tattoos, in part historically to deter slavers, the lip plugs worn by women which stop them speaking, their strong magic and related Mapiko dance, costumes and masks, and their resistance to colonial power which culminated in a massacre of unarmed Mozambicans by the Portuguese in 1961, marking the beginning of armed resistance to the four-hundred-year colonial presence in Mozambique.

from behind the percussionists, seated community members playing the wooden poles placed around the couple. They will have felt their own energy levels raise as the clackety-clack of the high, fast polyrhythms raise in intensity. The man and wife sing and dance in the middle of the circle and give their response: Yes, women too can share knowledge through music and dance, even through the sacred *Kanyembe*. Most who saw Cardoso's film would never be able to go to the village of *Mandimba* in the far north of Mozambique. When the film was projected on screens across the country however, women like Rajabo Ibrahim's wife would see her there in the centre with her baby on her back and the instrument in her arms and take with them the questions asked and answered in that portrait, carrying the knowledge home with them after the film ends. These questions, raised in this scene only five years after independence, continue to be pertinent and still little explored, as the nation heads towards its fiftieth birthday.

The *Speak My Sister* web documentary asks the same questions about women's place at the centre of the circle of knowledge transmission and offer the same answer. 'Women can transmit knowledge. They can do this through their music and their dance, their stories, their ideas', they are saying 'and now they can do this through their films'. The *Speak My Sister* films are made by young Mozambicans born long after the baby on the nameless woman's back, yet they are still having to ask questions about the place of women as knowledge transmitters, women as artists and women as active members of society. As Cardoso's film before them, these six films continue to call for change in the recognition of who contributes to Mozambican culture and identity.

6.2 Speech, silence, body voice and power

Cardoso's portrait of Rajaboo Ibrahim and his wife also raises questions around subaltern speech and the language of silence and the female body voice. In the opening scene, the two men sit on the bed, the woman on the floor. We do not know her name, she doesn't speak, and she is not credited at the end of the film, yet we know through a subsequent narration that she is Ibrahim's wife. She is one of the many 'voiceless' women presented in the film; the subaltern women, denied their agency through speech. Documentary has often been seen as a way to give a voice to the voiceless. In

this instance, however, we do not hear this woman's spoken voice, instead Cardoso offers an opportunity for her body voice to be heard through her instrument.

Cecile Jackson argues that there are 'many different ways and places in which women communicate' including through silence and non-verbal 'bodily praxis', all of which should be 'listened to' alongside speech (Jackson 2012, 1002-1004).¹⁵⁰ Using this kind of 'listening' through observation, it is possible to see Ibrahim's wife slowly gain the confidence to express herself through the *Kanyembe*. This is all the more poignant as this is an instrument known as a transmitter of knowledge – and one normally only played by men. Sitting at her husband's feet, his wife expresses very little emotion as she assesses the crew and their equipment, apparently in her own world, with no expectation of being asked to speak. Later, accompanying her husband under the tree, alongside the percussionists and chorus from her community, her hunched body tucked in the shadows seems to come to life. As the lead percussionist increases the rhythmic intensity, and Ibrahim's body seems to take on the energy, she too starts to 'speak', her cries soon joining those of her instrument and those of her husband. She expresses a new, non-verbal confidence, a 'dancing wisdom' (Daniel, 2005), a 'body knowledge' (Meintjes, 2017) that communicates beyond speech. The *Speak My Sister* film series draws on these explorations of the non-verbal sharing of knowledge through music and dance alongside Cowan's analysis of the gendered 'body politic' (Cowan, 1986) to ensure the women in the films are heard in all the registers of their 'speech'; their songs, their dances, their spoken testimony and their silence.

6.3 Literacy, scriptocentrism, music, speech and body knowledge

Both men sitting on the bed are black and speak the same mother tongue, but one holds a notebook and a pen.¹⁵¹ The visitor seems comfortable in Ibrahim's home

¹⁵⁰ For more on speech, silence, gender and power, see also Meintjes, (2017), Parpart and Kabear (2010) and Parpart and Parashar (2020).

¹⁵¹ It is also of note that the researcher wears jeans and shoes. In colonial times, one of the factors that separated a *nativo* (native) or *indigeno* (indigenous) resident of Mozambique from an *assimilado* (assimilated person) - all terms common in the Portuguese colonial lexicon of what was then a part of Portugal, was the ability to speak and write Portuguese. Another was the footwear. Unlike in neighbouring South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia, it was these details and not race which distinguished between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Those without shoes and education were generally

environment and speaks the same language. His paper and pencil, however, have given him the power to take the knowledge from Rajabo Ibrahim and share it with the white men from Maputo, and, through their cameras, with the rest of the country, and the world.

Performance ethnographer Dwight Conquergood distinguishes between the two different domains of knowledge, one official, objective and abstract, the other practical, embodied and popular', describing literacy as part of 'a complex political economy of knowledge, power and the exclusion upon which privilege is based' (Conquergood 2002,148)¹⁵². He takes the language of an African-descended minority group in Belize to illustrate his point. In the language of the *Garifuna*, the urban middle classes are referred to as *gapencillitin* (people with pencil), and the rural and urban working class *mapencillitin*; (people without pencil). 'The pencil drawing the line' he explains 'between the haves and the have-nots' (ibid,145). In Mozambique, I have heard both the pen and paper to symbolise this same line of exclusion. When sub-titling a conversation I had filmed between Isard Pindula, the photographer of the film *Xingomana: A Dance of Generations*, and the *Xingomana* dancer Maria Mondlane, I was struck by Maria's excitement, as she speaks of the literary skills of the community chief's advisors and of the power those men had through being able to record and recall information using their pieces of paper.

"When the colonials were here and wanted to open a shop, they had to invite this group to come and dance at the shop to bless it.... Then women danced *Xingomana* and men danced other types of dance like *Ngalanga*, *Ndlhama* or *Xigubu* and they would write down on their paper all the different dances we did. They wrote it there on their paper! They wrote 'This group has this dance, this group has that dance, this group from here has this dance, this group from there has that dance' and the leaders of the community; our chiefs and their advisors well it was their advisors as they knew how to read, they would take the paper and tell us 'Now group x will dance, now group y' because they could see it on their paper! 'this group is from Musengue, and now it will be Ngalanga from Madzumani. Then, we didn't have timings, but they could read it all on their paper!'"

black, of course, but after over 400 years of Portuguese presence, and a policy of assimilation through education, there was also a growing educated black middle class. Many public buildings, including cinemas, used the presence or absence of shoes as a criterion for entry. I have heard many a well-told story of groups of friends who watched films during colonial times in shifts, with one pair of shoes between them, often borrowed. They would enter the cinema in the communal shoes, watch a part of the story, hand the shoes over to another member of the group and remain with the others outside and bring them up to date on the story until it was the next person's turn.

¹⁵² Performance Studies scholar Diana makes a similar argument, though distinguishes between these two types of knowledge as 'the archive' (essentially written, recorded knowledge stored in 'archives') and embodied knowledge (the repertoire) transmitted through performance. See Taylor (2003).

Extract from behind-the-scenes interview with Maria Mondlane, Nwajohane, June 2018¹⁵³

Conquergood talks not only of the inaccessibility of text for subaltern groups, something he describes as the ‘hallmark of Western Imperialism’, but also of the threat they represent as ‘instruments of control and displacement ...(to) oppressed people everywhere’, citing another of Michel de Certeau’s aphorisms:

‘Posted above the gates of modernity, this sign: “Here only what is written is understood”. Such is the internal law of that which has constituted itself as ‘Western’ [and ‘white’]’

(Certeau 1984,161 cited by Conquergood 2002, 147)

In Mozambique, and many colonised nations across Africa, it is hard to tell which imposition has been most effective as a colonial tool of power and exclusion, however: that of the domination of the written word or of the colonial language that came with it? A prerequisite of literacy across Mozambique has been the ability to speak the Portuguese language of the coloniser. In a country with 43 registered languages, reading and writing are still taught in Portuguese to this day. In rural contexts where Portuguese is not required for day-to-day business, often the first time a Mozambican is expected to engage with the world through the colonial language is when they learn to read and write. Yet, as the Kenyan decolonial thinker Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o is keen to point out, language is ‘the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history’ (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o 1986, 15). A prolific writer who first published in English and later only in his own language of Gikuyu, he describes how he personally gained his view of the world through the suggestive, magical power of the images, symbols and music of his language. The riddles, proverbs, transposition of syllables and the nonsensical musically arranged words and the songs, made language, he explains, not only a means of communication but also ‘a carrier of culture’ (ibid, 13). This is how Rajabo Ibraimo’s *Kanyembe* and his wife can transmit not only feeling, and command dignity and respect from those listening, it can also transmit knowledge.

¹⁵³ Watch Maria see the films “*Xingomana – Dance of generations*”, “*Behind Xingomana*” and *Screening Xingomana* in the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

Cardoso's film translates very little of the conversation conducted in Makonde between Ibrahim and the researcher. Instead, we are offered not a literal translation, but more an explanation from the male narrator: "The passing of knowledge is generally done through the *Kanhembe*, which brings dignity". This invites the audience to question the role of language in this large, linguistically and culturally diverse post-colonial society and enter the non-verbal language of song and dance. Those who don't speak *Makonde* are left on the outside, listening to the sounds of the language, experiencing the conversation between the two men as many Mozambicans do when engaging with those in power who only speak Portuguese.

Cardoso lets us listen to the music and rhythm of the speech of other Mozambican languages in four of the portraits, covering important languages of the south, centre and north of the country. It may have been simply due to the lack of subtitling equipment available at the National Film Institute, but I like to think this decision was also informed by an understanding of the importance of sound and image as opposed to words and text in the context this film would be viewed. When watching it, I feel a sense of relief when the speech I do not understand is replaced with music. Rajabo Ibrahim presents himself as a peasant, respected in the village because he is an artist. The film places the artist as a person of importance and dignity, reminding us the role of the artist in a community is not only the prerogative of urban intellectuals but of all Mozambicans. Watching it, it is as if I am being offered an experiential understanding of the 'dignity' of the artist in these illiterate and multi-lingual contexts, when I am finally offered the uninterrupted performance of a whole song in which I can immerse myself into the musical and corporeal language of the husband and wife as they sing and dance among their community.

6.4 Collective knowledge sharing through song, dance and film

Cardoso's portrait also reminds us that it is not just those in the circle, but also the community members calling, clapping, and listening, who are an important part of the collaborative experience of knowledge sharing through music and dance: as important as the musicians. In this form of local musicking, those behind the cameras are participants, as are those who watch the material they film, even when, as in the case

of Cardoso's film, those musicking events are separated by many years and many miles.

When David MacDougall attempts to divide and define different types of collaboration in ethnographic film production, he is keen to remind us in his conclusion that it is the collaboration between filmmaker and film viewer that matters most. This, he argues, does not happen automatically. The film must 'create a context for its own viewing', in effect establishing the rules of the game for our viewing of it (MacDougall 2020, 15-16). This collaborative relationship between the filmmaker, their subject and the viewer was also an essential element of the research methodology of *Speak My Sister*.

While it was beyond the limits of this research to make a detailed reception analysis of the *Speak My Sister* films, it was important to give the filmmakers an opportunity to witness and experience the relationship that develops between their subjects and their viewers, and to offer them the opportunity to become a part of this collective knowledge sharing through the exhibition of their films. Through the screenings in Niassa, Gaza and Maputo, the filmmakers were able to make an empirical, if not scientific analysis of the response of urban and rural audiences of northern and southern Mozambique. I also observed the audience reactions during and after the screenings to assess both the response to the creative decisions discussed above and to the non-verbal and musical knowledge shared in the films. Through screening their films to Portuguese speaking and non-Portuguese speaking audiences across Mozambique, the *Speak My Sister* filmmakers had an opportunity to register how each public responded to the spoken and non-spoken scenes in their films and reflect upon the role music and dance plays in traversing these gendered and linguistic boundaries.

One provocation around the relationship between music and dance in African films and decolonisation of African cinema, written in 1979, hit a raw nerve when I read it nearly forty years later. It was written by the French film critic Serge Daney in a review of the work of one of the most celebrated filmmakers to come out of post-independent West Africa, Ousmane Sembène, and his celebrated anti-colonial film *Ceddo* (1977).¹⁵⁴ Serge Daney argues that speech, not music, is at the heart of the way African

¹⁵⁴ *Ceddo* (Sembène, 1976), also known as *The Outsiders*, is set at a time before direct French colonial administration was imposed in West Africa, during the early years of the slave trade, when Islam and Christianity were starting to be imposed. The 'Outsiders' are the non-Muslims, fighting to

stories are ‘told otherwise’ through film and that the oral culture of storytelling is the ‘real value and originality’ of African cinema (Daney 1979, 53). He accuses white people of ‘habitual laziness and racism’ in their ‘division of labour’ between logical thought and body language, arguing that ‘Whites always thought that emancipated and decolonised black Africa would give birth to a dancing and singing cinema of liberation’ (ibid).

Watching the *Speak My Sister* films alongside urban and rural Mozambican audiences, I wanted to test my analysis of the importance of music and dance in Mozambican cinema. Could it be that I too was being ‘lazy’ in valuing it over speech and this was indeed another form of cultural *immediation* (Rangan, 2017)? Nearly half a century after Daney’s criticism of white people’s ‘habitual laziness and racism’, the Black Lives Matter movement continues to ask white people to question their unconscious racial bias and privilege and to recognise the institutional racism that has its tentacles in every aspect of society, from policing, health care and housing to music, the arts and cinematic representation. My long relationship with Mozambique, my recognition in the country as a Mozambican filmmaker, my inter-racial marriage and four decades as a musician in multi-racial bands and film collectives do not make me immune to the values embedded in the society I grew up in. I needed to reflect on my own position in relation to those ‘whites’ Daney challenged all those years ago, who lazily associate the emancipation and decolonisation of black Africa with ‘a dancing and singing cinema of liberation’. Although my research is more concerned with the decolonisation of production, it was important, therefore, to observe the reception of the *Speak My Sister* films on different local audiences and to assess the impact of exploring the language of music and dance on the young Mozambican filmmakers I was working with.

An analysis of Sembène’s own relationship with his audience, the spoken and written word, and his use of music helps put Daney’s review of *Ceddo* (1977) into context. Sembene started his professional life as a novelist publishing five novels and five short story anthologies. He had fought in the French army in the second world war and lived in France between 1948 and 1960, where he began to write, first in French, and later in Wolof, the language most widely spoken in Senegal and

preserve their cultural identity. In it, the written word is celebrated, and it is not the writing, but the language used that Sembène is challenging in his film.

neighbouring Mali and Mauritania. He eventually decided however, that with the widespread illiteracy in Africa, the written word had its limitations in its ‘potential to influence society’ (ibid, XIII), so he moved to Moscow to study film in 1961 before returning to Senegal in 1963 to ‘influence society’ through his films.

‘One can also write with speech’ Daney argues, and it is not surprising, considering Sembène’s creative and political journey, that words and speech were precious and important tools for him. Sembène has even been described as ‘indifferent to the medium of music’ (Busch & Annas 2008, XVI). Nevertheless, he chose to commission some of the greats of West African popular music to score his films. Cameroonian saxophonist and composer Manu Dibango was based in Paris at the time and his ‘Afrobeat-like soundtrack’ is described as ‘having the power to unconditionally underline the victims’ pain’ (ibid, XVI), while fellow Senegalese Ismaël Lô’s score to *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988) is described as inseparably linking ‘the memory of the image to the music and vice versa’ (ibid). Sembène does not therefore seem indifferent to the power of music; however, with Wolof as the native language of 40% of Senegal’s population and an estimated ten million people speaking Wolof, his challenges to reach his audience are different to those of countries such as Mozambique, with no African language commonly spoken by more than 10% of the population and still high rates of illiteracy which preclude the use of subtitles or dubbing films as viable options.¹⁵⁵

Sembène always underlined the universalist potential of cinema and has also argued that a film’s meaning changes according to the spectators’ identity and the context in which the films are screened¹⁵⁶. Yet one criticism of West African cinema, and particularly the work of Sembène, is that it had a more effective distribution in France and amongst European intellectuals than in Africa. This challenge of finding an appropriate aesthetic for African audiences is integrally connected to the historical economic models of global cinematic production and exhibition and has been facing African filmmakers for as long as Africans began making their own films. Africans began to fight the Franco-American monopoly of film production, distribution and exhibition from the time of Algerian and Tunisian independence in the late 50’s and

¹⁵⁵ Statistics provided by ethnologue.com.

¹⁵⁶ See the collection of interviews Sembène gave over his life edited by Annett Busch and Max Annas (2008).

early 60's.¹⁵⁷ In 1970, the FEPACI (Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes) was formed to encourage the creation of national cinemas and to put pressure on newly independent African governments to nationalise film distribution and exhibition, so that African films could be seen in African theatres. Mozambique's National Film Institute was, in fact, the first national institute to fully realise this dream. While West African film remained economically, aesthetically and politically dependent on their French distributors and exhibitors, Mozambique nationalised its urban cinemas and even rolled out a national model for rural 'pop-up' cinemas. Their solution became part of the discussion around the use of the cheaper models of production and the implications this had on the quality of the product. The form and aesthetics of film production, too, had been political from the outset. In 1970, the FEPACI congress agreed to use 'semi-documentary forms to denounce colonialism and to use didactic fictional forms to denounce the alienation of countries that were politically independent, but culturally and economically dependent on the West' (Diawara p40). They saw film as a weapon as well as a means of expression, and this required artistic and aesthetic compromise. By the second congress of the FEPACI in 1975, it was concluded that film needed to be 'at the service of life' ahead of 'art for art's sake', and that 'new ways to film African realities' needed to be found, both for 'the development of the critical senses of the masses' and 'in ways that could not be absorbed by the dominant cinema' (Hennebelle 1978 cited by Diawara 1992, 42).

Mozambique's solution to putting film at the service of life was not an easy one, especially for some of the more creatively adventurous filmmakers, who were restricted to working with black and white stock to maintain autonomous processing. The discussion around the economic factor in film production that came out of Third Cinema and alternative cinema in Latin America informed their response. Part of this discussion was that the total liberation of African cinema depended on integrating economic solutions into the ideology of the struggle. Such an approach was not embraced by the likes of Sembène. He worked with 35mm colour stock processed in France, justifying his decision on the fact that he already had a 35mm camera (Busch & Annas 2008, xix). Alternative approaches offered by the 'stylistic and economic breakthroughs' of Jean Rouch with his 16mm camera and the films of Solanas and

¹⁵⁷ Tunisia was the first African country to gain Independence from the French, in 1956, followed by Ghana in 1957 and Algeria in 1962.

Gettino in Latin America, who used even cheaper and more practical solutions (Diawara, 1992, 50), such as the previously derided video format. The discussion around format and cost informed many of the institutional and creative decisions over the first decade of independent Mozambican audiovisual production.

The choice to produce two films out of Mozambique's National Festival of Song and Dance in 1980/81 was part of an ongoing pragmatic response to this discussion. The government recognised the importance of using cinema to establish and maintain international solidarity and employing a cinematic language that appealed to global audiences, while also wanting their films to resonate with African sensibilities and explore an African aesthetic through using the stylistic models of 'semi-documentary, didactic fiction and film research' that developed out of the liberationist movement (ibid, 46). The concert film made by the Portuguese team had more of an internationalist and pan-African vision, appreciated by Mozambicans, but largely with the international audience in mind. At the same time, the intimate ethnographic film of *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing* was produced by José Cardoso and his colleagues. This may have had less widespread appeal to the international audience but resonated with the interests and sensibilities of urban and rural Mozambicans. *Speak My Sister* continues this discussion around how best to respond to this still ongoing struggle for the 'liberation' and 'decolonisation' of films by all Africans for all Africans. The film series responds to these questions, while adding a conscious critical analysis, largely lacking in the 1970's and 80's, as to how gender also informs answers to these questions, not only around production but also exhibition and reception.

6.5 *Speak My Sister* exhibition: Mobile cinema as local musicking

I had been continuously evaluating the experience of the participants, from their initial response to the invitation, through their evaluations of the different ethnographic approaches employed, and their response to the ethnomusicological research conducted. In this third phase of the research, I could now assess the reception of diverse audiences across Mozambique to the variety of Mozambican women on the screens. I could also observe their responses to the young Mozambican filmmakers

and the young filmmakers' responses to their audiences. How did the somatic, visual and sonic language employed communicate with those present during the exhibition phase of *Speak My Sister*? Did it affect men and women differently? Was there a difference between rural and urban reception, or between the communities of the north or south? The filmmakers were largely asking these questions of their own films during their screenings, while I had an opportunity to assess the impact of the series as a whole.

Researching and filming six films in time for the Festival in July 2018 was an ambitious objective.¹⁵⁸ The logistical and technical challenges that beset any film production were exacerbated by the harsh conditions of filming in Mozambique. Nonetheless, five of the six films were completed in time for the festival and accompanied by their director, or, in the case of *Crossing Paths*, their editor, to Niassa.



¹⁵⁸ The National Festival of Culture was due to take place in Niassa in July 2018. As the partnership with ISArC was only confirmed in December 2017 and the academic year begins in Mozambique in late February, the timescale of the project was tighter than ideal. It began in March and terminated in August 2018 with a final Gala performance in Maputo on August 8th, followed by evaluation and presentations of certificates a week later.



Figures 6.1-6.3. Directors Samo Mula, André Bahule and Alzira Guetza filming at the opening gala of the 10th National Festival of Culture in Lichinga, Niassa. July 2018
Photos by the author

During the five days of the festival, we managed to create the opportunities for three community screenings. The first was in the rural setting of Lipende, where only a handful of the village residents spoke Portuguese and there was just this one building, once a colonial shop and now the home of the village chief or '*régulo*' which served as the cinema.



Figure 6.4. Before a community screening in Lipende, Niassa¹⁵⁹
Photo by author

The second screening was in the lakeside town of Metangula, a fishing and trading community overlooking Malawi on the other side of the great lake.

¹⁵⁹ Material from the screening in Lipende can be seen illustrating a radio round table discussion in the film "Speak Mozambique in 'The Ideas' section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.



Figure 6.5 During a community screening in Metangula, Niassa
 . Screenshot from material shot behind the scenes. Photographer Samo Mula

The large urban screening in the town of Lichinga, planned as the climax of the three screenings, was also cancelled at the last minute and replaced with a screening for visiting artists camped out in a large secondary school on the edge of town. While we were in Niassa, the remainder of the thirty students involved in *Speak My Sister* continued to plan the exhibition for the south. This included an urban gala performance in a downtown theatre in Maputo.



Figures 6.6-6.7 ISArC students of cultural managements work with film and audiovisual students
 behind the scenes of the Gala Performance of films and musical performances
 Teatro Gilberto Mendes, Maputo, August 2018¹⁶⁰ Photographer Domingos Morais

¹⁶⁰ Watch four live musical performances from the Gala launch of the *Speak My Sister* film series in 'The Music' section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.



Figure 6.8 *Speak My Sister* filmmakers on stage at the Gala Performance of films and musical performances Teatro Gilberto Mendes, Maputo, August 2018. Photographer Domingos Morais

André Bahule and his team screened the film *Xingomana: Dance of Generations* for the community of Nwajohane, in Gaza, where it had been filmed, and following my departure, the Speak My Sister Exhibition Team continued to screen their films in a number of urban, peri-urban and rural screenings in Gaza and Maputo.



Figure 6.9 The *Speak My Sister* filmmakers take *Tamborines of Mafalala* to the community of Bairro Mafalala, Maputo, where it was filmed. From right to left: Angélica Novela (Director of ISArC Film Department), Alice Cunha (Sound Recordist) César Vitorino (Director) Photographer Isard Pindula



Figure 6.10. Setting up the projector in Bairro Mafalala, Maputo.
From right to left: André Bahule, Narciso Lufagir, Clemente Horácio, Alice Cunha
Photographer Emídio Jozine

I also encouraged the filmmakers to give interviews to different radio and television channels about *Speak My Sister* during different phases of the process and gave some myself. In all, during the course of the research, I observed five students as they screened their films during the festival in Niassa, four in Gaza and eight in Mafalala, and all thirty of the filmmakers were present at the Gala screening in the popular downtown theatre in Maputo.

6.6 The impact of the screenings on the young filmmakers

Although not within the scope of this research to make a detailed reception analysis during the film screenings, I was able to assess the impact of the screenings and the audience feedback on the young filmmakers. Whether their films were projected onto the side of the crumbling wall in Niassa or against the black curtains of a downtown theatre in Maputo, the filmmakers were able to join their audiences watching their film on the big screen. Afterwards they were able to talk about their films with them. The feedback they received gave them confidence in themselves as filmmakers and in their contribution to the continued efforts towards women's equality.

Comments and conversations after the screenings were generally conducted in the language of the people watching and translated by the few audience members who

also spoke Portuguese. However, during the film, the filmmakers were not relying on speech to assess which parts of the film resonated with the audience. Some moments rendered them silent and attentive, some provoked laughter and others tears, while some left them talking animatedly amongst themselves. Occasionally, verbal testimony from the audience was able to provide reinforcement of the understanding of the impact of the films on their target audience.

“You showed us that nowadays a girl is worth something, a woman too. Now women have a voice. In our time, women weren’t respected. I’m so happy thinking about the film ..., because I’ve never seen anything like it before ... I thank you so much.”

Comment in changana from audience member Cecilia after screening feedback
Nwajohane, Gaza, Mozambique
(Translated from changana into Portuguese by Cítia Simbine)

Mostly though, words failed the audience members asked to describe their response to the films. Later however, the filmmakers were able to share the impact screening the films and witnessing the audience response had on them.

“I was in a context with people who communicate in the same way when it comes to music but communicate in a different way when it comes to language. *Speak My Sister* showed me that music had a power. It opened up a place where I could reflect on how music can function as a vehicle to tell stories and to bring about change.”

André Bahule, Director *Xingomana – Dance of Generations*
Filmed Interview, São Paulo, November 2019

When ISArC Associate Director Dr Isáu Meneses spoke to the audience and the filmmakers at the end of the Gala performance, he summed up the significance of this experience on the next generation of Mozambican filmmakers, on their subjects and on the future of practice-led research within the decolonial context of Mozambican higher education.

It takes talent to make Art. It takes vocation to make Art. It also takes science and research to make Art. What we witnessed here is science applied to art or, if you like, art united with science. The filmmakers did their research. They found the people with the ability to do all that we just saw on the screen and on the stage. We took the university to the

community, and we brought the community to the university. Theory was extended into practice, and practice to theory. This is the first product of these young students of cinema who took the lead with this work, and we want to go much further. Each one of you in the audience brought a warmth and affection today that's offered important motivation to all those who were involved in the production. Art is not made without inspiration and you are our source of inspiration. Women are strong.

Isáu Meneses,
Associate Director of ISArC (The University of Art and Culture)
Teatro Gilberto Mendes, Maputo. August 2018

Part 3.

CONCLUSION

EXT. DAY.CESAR.TETE PROVINCE

A haunting sound echoes across the landscape. It is the sound of men playing hollowed twisted horns. Large tracts of dry earth lie unattended, planted and awaiting the rain. The earth is red. Rocky mountains rise up in the distance.

Women's voices sing an opening syncopated melody - they are joined by male voices answering their call. Skeletal cattle are herded through the village past homes made of grass.



The singers stand in two lines on an open grassy plain, women standing behind the men who hold twisted cow horns in their hands as they all move in unison silently marking the beat with their bodies the same melodic pattern repeated four times and then the men lift their horns to their lips and the magic happens. The sounds of the horns sing out an improvised conversation, like an avant-garde jazz improvisation, their echo returning from a distant land and back across the plains of Tete.



EXT. DAY. MAPUTO WATERFRONT

The director, JOSÉ CARDOSO and his crew sit on a fence looking out at the water.



VOICE OVER (MALE VOICE)

*The journey was at its end.
It felt as if we had been
around the world
And it was a country
A country that fights and
fights
For a life that it can call
its own
And of a different quality*

*Your gesture will be here in
the future
brother
As a symbol of a people is
born
In truth, what we see in your
gesture
will lose the mystic
significance
it has now*

*In the meantime
You sing*

*In the meantime
You teach*

And you help us to sing

In the darkness forms of men can be made out, and
flickering flames as they play their drums around a
fire

End credits with the sound of those horns echoing
across the plains in a surprisingly jazzy
improvisation with a drum and vocalist

Credits Roll

Chapter 7.

After Speak My Sister

7.1 The contribution of this research towards inclusive representation in Mozambique and the continued role of music, dance and film in this

In this thesis, I have explored how the language of music and dance served the earlier objectives of the founders of Mozambican cinema and how it contributed to the overall objectives of this research. I have analysed the use of music and image during the revolutionary ‘heyday’ of Mozambican cinema, through its subsequent ‘reinvention’ (Azevedo, 2017) at around the time I first arrived in Mozambique in the 1990’s and later for the ‘music video’ generation of the 2000’s. I looked at the role the audiovisual language of the music video played in the making of and the reception of the *Speak My Sister* film series within the historical context of local audiovisual production in Mozambique. I made my analysis from the perspective of my own position in Mozambican film and music/music video production, contextualising my approach to the methodology behind the *Speak My Sister* film series in the light of this. I looked at the creative choices made by the filmmakers and the lessons learned by studying the reception of these films. Such a musical approach to the decolonisation and gendering of contemporary audiovisual research, production and distribution in Mozambique was in response to the same revolutionary decolonial questions of language, literacy and gender that the National Film Institute set out to address decades earlier. As was studied and understood by the first generation of Mozambican filmmakers, *Speak My Sister* has shown that in a country with as many languages as Mozambique, one language that the women and men will always find effective for sharing a part of themselves with others, is the universal language of music.

From the decision as to how to respond to the theme of the film series, through the research period, during production and, importantly, through continued analysis of distribution and reception, one important key to the success of *Speak My Sister* was the project’s acknowledgement of the role of music. Analysed through the theoretical lens of what Suzel Reiley and Katherine Brucker have described as ‘Local Musicking’ (Reiley & Brucker, 2020), this research has demonstrated how the sense of place and

identity of those portrayed is informed by and represented in the music they produce. This research also contributed to discussions around the future of local film production. In the context of a multi-lingual and largely illiterate population, this research has demonstrated the importance of understanding of the role of music and dance in Mozambicans' sense of place and identity.

Sing My Brother - Help me to Sing was a revolutionary form of local musicking. The filmmakers, their subjects and their audiences engaged in questions of place, identity and the revolutionary version of what became known as 'sustainable development' through musicking. Through the themes of the 2018 National Festival, 'Culture Promoting Women, Identity and Sustainable Development' *Speak My Sister*, the questions first raised in *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing*, nearly forty years earlier, were once again addressed. In both, Mozambicans' lived experience was explored through music and dance during the research, the filming, the editing and as the films were shared with others in the subsequent local and international screenings. In both, local musicking was at the core of the exploration of Mozambican culture, identity and knowledge creation. This time, however, the answers to those questions were presented through a feminist lens.

The musical content of the films not only attracted and captivated the audiences, it was also an attractive creative entry-point for young filmmakers into the initial theme of the festival. Those who decided to accept the challenge to make a film with so little time and money could imagine a film with music at its core. It was not too much of a leap from the music videos most had already made, their production having become a common training ground for many aspiring young filmmakers and often the first opportunity many Mozambicans have to see people like themselves represented on screen. Music and dance also connect family members, communities and even strangers and forms part of the essential human process of self-identification in Mozambique. It plays an important role not only in connecting place and belonging to essential questions of national and cultural identity, but also to an individual's sense of gendered identity and how they engage with society as a man or a woman. Those women unused to being listened to are also more able to find their voice when asked to give testimony and share their lives and experiences through the familiar experience of musicking. Those unused to listening to women are also often more responsive to the medium of music than speech.

The *Speak My Sister* filmmakers followed their interest in music and dance, and this led them to find creative ways to explore issues of gender inequality in their society, both in terms of their own attitudes and behaviour and that of their subjects. It also led them to explore new methods of representation, new recording and editing techniques and gave them an opportunity to start exploring their own creative voices. During the production, the filmmakers were also able to reflect upon the power relations between the men and women in front of (and behind) the camera and the power between the researcher and the researched. During the exhibition of the films, they could reflect upon the role music and dance plays in traversing the geographical, linguistic and gendered boundaries that challenge the nation's development. Presenting their films to diverse audiences, the filmmakers were able to learn for themselves the impact the audiovisual language of image, sound, speech and music and dance had on their audience, as those who had analysed the reception of the revolutionary films had a generation before. All were surprised by how much they had been able to achieve within the financial and temporal limitations of the project and inspired to continue adopting the principles and methods explored during the project.

Each film in the series was based on unique and appropriately designed research methodology that built on the familiarity and intimacy of the methodological entry-points of song and dances to discuss other aspects of women's lives. Likewise, each film engaged an audiovisual language and aesthetic that the filmmakers felt best expressed the distinct ethnomusicological research behind their film. The personal perspectives and understandings of the different Mozambican audiences impacted not only the content but also the audiovisual language and aesthetic of each film. In evaluations made during the focus group discussions during and after the research, these young filmmakers and researchers shared how important the language of music and dance was in their relationships with their subjects. These filmmakers drew on the cultural references, languages and historical experiences they had in common with their subjects through musicking, while also reflecting upon these inequalities with them. Music became the language they used to translate their research into films that Mozambican men and women from different backgrounds and different parts of the country could engage with.

After the country's independence from Portugal in 1975, the first generation of Mozambican filmmakers focused on ensuring Mozambicans saw other Mozambicans on the screen. They found music to be instrumental in that process. *Speak My Sister*

shared these same objectives, while also redirecting the focus to ensuring the intersectional inequalities based on gender, race and rural/urban origins, still prevalent in Mozambique, were also being addressed. The films in the series not only represent the social, cultural and regional diversity of the country, but those in front of and behind the camera were women. Coming from different rural and urban backgrounds, many of the filmmakers were also from the first literate generation in their community. Through partnering with an established institution committed to the decolonization and inclusivity of knowledge creation and artistic production, this research supported diverse approaches to representation through the production of the series, while also offering methods for this to be replicated in the future by this generation of Mozambican filmmakers. As such, the *Speak My Sister* films offer the same promise Cardoso made in his final scene, of carrying the wisdom and voices of Mozambicans into the future through the language of music. This time that wisdom is also female wisdom and those voices are of both men and women.

7.2 Lessons on the role of embodied and spoken language in *Speak My Sister*

Much like Cardoso's ethnographic musical portraits in *Sing My Brother*, the six films of *Speak My Sister* drew on five very different musical genres from across the country to reflect on the lives of the people behind the music. The verbal testimonies absent from the women in Cardoso's *Sing My Brother* are now present in the *Speak My Sister* film series. They add important voices to the nation's slow process of building a sense of Mozambican identity that includes the often unvoiced experience of women *and* men. In this series music and dance is not introduced into the films as an exotic interlude that drives the speech and testimony. Rather, it drives the meaning, content and even the aesthetic of each film, giving it local and national validity and meaning. In 1979, Serge Daney proposed that the role of music in films made in Africa was the result of habitual laziness and racism of white filmmakers who make a 'division of labour' (Daney 1979, 53) between logical thought of the white filmmakers and audiences and the body language of the black film subjects. The *Speak My Sister* film series challenges this position, positioning music from a black, Mozambican perspective and demonstrating that music informs and enriches the arguments a film can make and the stories it can tell. Music and dance can give the film context,

meaning and added value. This is especially important for Mozambique's culturally, linguistically and educationally diverse audiences.

In exploring the language of music, however, this research also looks at how speech informs national and gendered identity in Mozambique. With 46 identified language groups in Mozambique, filming in any language risks excluding audiences in the parts of the country where the population are less likely able to read subtitles.¹⁶¹ We found that music certainly transcends the barriers, however, that within the limitations of the spoken word to cross linguistic and literacy borders, speech and testimony also play an important role in calling out injustice and setting the historical record straight, especially when it comes to women's testimony so often historically undervalued or even ignored. *Xingomana, A Dance of Generations*, for example, the one film in the series to be made in a language other than the most widely spoken colonial language of Portuguese, has since been screened all over the south of Mozambique where the protagonists' language of *Changana* is widely spoken. Speakers of minor variations of the language stretch across provincial and even national borders into Zimbabwe and South Africa. Yet few films have been made in this language. André Bahule's longer edit of his film *Xingomana, A Dance of Generations* has had a strong impact among the Tsonga speakers of the region.¹⁶² The Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) CIC Batá used the film in screenings across the province of Gaza to provoke discussion around women's empowerment, and estimates that tens of thousands of *changana* speakers have now seen the film in community screenings. They noted that in the communities they work, where few women and children speak Portuguese and where people are unused to hearing their own language or, for that matter, seeing women like themselves as protagonists in film, the impact was 'immediate and lasting'.¹⁶³ They had never seen their own activities of working with reeds and dancing *xingomana* valued as they were in the film. The experience during the screening of the series during the festival in Niassa also demonstrated that for those who don't speak or read Portuguese, song and dance

¹⁶¹ For more on the importance of the role of the vernacular tongue within the context of social structure and the historical, military, and economic interdependence of language, religion, and state in what Ivan Illich describes as 'Vernacula Values' see Illich (1979) and for a fascinating contemporary reading of this in the use of youtube videos during the Arab Spring, see Snowden (2014)

¹⁶² The 26-minute version of Bahule's film is entitled *Nhenha*, a word for women's strength used with subtle variations across the Tsonga language group.

¹⁶³ Javier Portal, a Spanish volunteer who managed community screenings of the film, provided these estimates in unrecorded and subsequently written testimonials.

offers a universal language that can transmit all of Mozambican women's *Nhenha* or *strength*.

Beyond this research project, it is hoped the methodology of *Speak My Sister* can be employed to produce more musical film portraits across the country, where the protagonists communicate their knowledge not only through song and dance, but also through some of Mozambique's more widely spoken indigenous languages. The partner institution ISArC and the young filmmakers, who have now graduated and are finding their place in Mozambican society as media professionals, plan to build on these lessons. They hope to build further on the methodological and production models explored in the research, combining the language of music and dance and of spoken language having witnessed the impact of films such as *Nhenha*, where women are offered the opportunity to share their embodied knowledge through music and dance, while also giving spoken testimony in ways they can be heard and valued. For the Portuguese speaking audience too, Cristina's personal testimonies of sexual abuse in *Victorious Dancer*, and Guiggaz's provocations to women who don't believe in their abilities beyond those of the home in *Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life*, are also communicated through the spoken word.

7.3 Decolonisation of ethnographic film

Struggles for the decolonization of indigenous or, more specifically, African film have borne some fruit over the past half-century. But in a time where even the word 'decolonisation' has been reduced to a metaphor within the western academy for other things we want to do to reduce racism in our societies and educational institutions,¹⁶⁴ what practical steps can be taken to realize some of the historic attempts to actually change the status quo? Although inspired by the work of the early pioneers of Mozambican cinema, my decision to support Mozambican filmmakers in the production of *Speak My Sister*, was also in response to a wider discourse around representation, found at the heart of the study and practice of ethnographic, African and indigenous film. This discourse emerged as soon as it was possible for people to represent themselves and others through moving image. Colonised people were seen

¹⁶⁴ See Tuck and Yang, 2012.

by the world through the eyes of those who had the cameras, the post-production facilities and controlled distribution. Until African countries began to gain their independence in the 1950's, this was invariably the colonisers. Then in North Africa, later West Africa and eventually Southern Africa, indigenous filmmakers negotiated different approaches to exercising their right to self-representation through the moving image. However, at the time the *Speak My Sister films* were being made, over forty years after the country began its own national film production, most men and women were still being represented in moving image by foreigners or members of the intellectual elite, many still often white.

My own evolution as a white, British ethnographic filmmaker has followed a trajectory similar to that of the genre itself.¹⁶⁵ My first film was a study of the impact of the Sandinista revolution on Nicaraguan men and women in 1984. I combined observation and impromptu conversation with structured interviews and poetic visual and music sequences and thought I was making a contribution to knowledge of the Nicaraguan experience through my film. Looking back, however, I was working with two white male colleagues and none of us questioned the effect of our positionality, either as white people or as outsiders, on the film we made, or the privilege of representing a people and a context we had only studied in books before spending a month travelling around Nicaragua with a guide from the new Sandinista government. The film, *Nicaragua: A Question of Democracy?* (Boswall, Taylor and Wilson, 1984) was broadcast on Channel 4 and launched my career as a filmmaker.

Yet it wasn't until I began working on Mozambican films made by the first generation of Mozambican filmmakers, a decade later, that I began questioning my own methods in the representation of others not from my own culture or milieu. Since then, I have developed an increasingly close working relationship with my subjects over each film I have made. With the opportunity to explore new methods of decolonial film production as a researcher and not a professional filmmaker, I could take this evolution one step further and, instead of authoring a film in collaboration with my subjects, I could support Mozambican filmmakers to research, film and distribute six of their own.

I was no longer the author; I didn't accompany the filmmakers during their research, or when they filmed. I only occasionally sat with them as they edited. I could

¹⁶⁵ See De Groof, (2013 :110).

see my influence here and there. Most notably, this appeared in the emphasis on women's stories, in the films' musicality and creative use of sound. It was also present in the ethnographic methods used and in the role of music as a methodological tool. My fascination in the role of music and dance in the formation of local and national community identity inspired those taking part in *Speak My Sister* to address larger issues of gender representation while also recognising and celebrating the role music plays in communicating beyond the barriers of language and literacy. Yet, these were not my films, as the filmmakers proudly noted at the screening described in the prologue of this thesis. These were "Mozambican films, by Mozambicans, for Mozambicans", a dream of the decolonial knowledge makers of the revolution.

As early as 1993, visual anthropologist Peter Loizos argued that the 'logical outcome' of reflexivity in ethnographic film was 'films made by the people themselves' (Loizos 1993, 13). The same argument had been made by the French anthropologist and visual ethnographer Jean Rouch, in 1961. 'When all is said and done, neither Rogosin, Graham or I will ever be Africans and the films that we make will always be African films by strangers it's time for succession' (Ruelle 2005, 77)¹⁶⁶. *Speak My Sister* joined the many attempts over the past half century to respond to this call for succession.

Burkinabe director Idrissa Ouedraogo commented in the 1990's that 'each African film made is a miracle, since its individual story of production with all the organisational and financial problems is almost impossible to measure' (Busch and Annas 2008, xiv). The films he talked of were those shot using similar methodologies to those of their wealthier and more dominant competitors in Hollywood and Bollywood. Producing the series *Speak My Sister* with affordable technology, in a form that did not demand a large expenses budget, contributed to the ongoing conversation around how to finally realise this succession of the next generation of Mozambican filmmakers so that in the future, each film made in Mozambique by

¹⁶⁶ Rouch is speaking of Lionel Rogosin, the American filmmaker who produced and directed the 1959 film 'Come Back Africa' in the historical multi-racial township of Sophiatown in South Africa, and Sean Graham, the English filmmaker that headed up the Gold Coast film unit, a colonial film 'school of instruction', set up to train local 'film workers' in Accra in order to form 'the nucleus of production units in West Africa' (Colonial Cinema. December 1948, p80), cited by Tom Rice, June 2010. See <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/production-company/gold-coast-film-unit>. This interview was first published in a UNESCO publication with a publication date of 1961-1962 (p10-15). Out of print, it was made available again in the collection 'l'Afrique entre en sce'ne. In Afrique 50, singularites d'un cinema pluriel' (Ruelle et al 2005, 71-78).

Mozambicans does not seem a rare miracle produced against the odds, but one film of many that can tell a diverse array of stories together, in as many aesthetic styles from a variety of perspectives.

7.4 Decolonising production methods

The independent production and distribution of *Sing My Brother - Help Me to Sing*, in 1981, enabled José Cardoso and his creative team from the National Film Institute to control the type of stories they told and the cinematic language they used to tell them. One important lesson of this research that resonates with those of the ‘heyday’ generation, relates to the importance of adapting to the changing formats and circumstances around audiovisual production. In 1976, the National Film Institute chose to film on black and white 16mm film stock and so keep all laboratory processing and post-production in-house. The filmmakers were keen to film in colour or to shoot on the 35mm stock required for many international film festivals. Yet by opting to use and develop their own black and white film stock, they were able to maintain editorial control of their own footage and distribute their films beyond the cinemas of the international distributors. They were free to expand the reach of their local productions beyond the old colonial cinemas of the provincial capitals, reaching audiences who had never had access to cinema before. *Speak My Sister* returns to these revolutionary, anti-colonial aspirations of the first generation, and also adopts methodologies that prioritise the potential of autonomous production and distribution over the higher budget production values of other international film productions.¹⁶⁷ There remains the challenge of competing in international markets for international

¹⁶⁷ It is worth noting that this is still a highly contested position. In comparing some of the early initiatives of decolonial autonomous production by the first nations people of Northern Canada, North America, Australia and Brazil, it is interesting to note that the large amounts of government funding on the part of Canada’s National Film Board, for example, enabled fully financed 35mm film productions to successfully launch Inuit cinema into the international mainstream, with Inuit films such as Zacharias Kunuk’s *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001) and *One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk* (2019) winning awards at large international film festivals. The *Video na Aldeia* (Video in the Villages Project: see Aufderheide 2008) initiative in Brazil, however, which began in the 1980’s and continues to this day, has focussed more on lower budget film production for local audiences. Indigenous filmmakers who continue to develop their craft as a result of this initiative continue to make their films on smaller budgets, distributing them locally often through Bluetooth on mobile phones, yet among the indigenous communities, these filmmakers are highly respected and I have seen them greeted as superstars among their communities, their films important references to the young indigenous population of Brazil.

finance and international audiences. However, this research offers an approach that can satisfy the immediate and pressing needs of Mozambicans, creating a strong national foundation upon which Mozambicans can engage in global audiovisual representation with embedded values of gender equity. Through the use of small DSLR cameras and accessories, affordable directional and personal microphones and portable digital audio recorders in production and standard domestic computers with free editing software¹⁶⁸ in post-production, *Speak My Sister* offers an approach for the continuation of the training and practice of young male and female filmmakers around the country. More films such as those produced during *Speak My Sister* can continue to be made at the low costs¹⁶⁹ necessary for continued and socially representative autonomous production which can in turn contribute to positive social change.

We discovered, through *Speak My Sister*, that without money we can make movies. With a small partnership here and there, it's enough. There are many stories to tell. Stories about women, which are many. Only in Niassa, I have a year's worth of films to make. And that's just the Niassa I set foot in. From just Lichinga and Metangula, I have a year of films about people; about those children who do not go to school, about how, in the city, children do not speak Portuguese, and far from the city, as we have seen, children speak Portuguese very well. These are stories to tell, we have so many stories. We just need cameras and to go there, record these stories, look after these stories and show the world that there is a Mozambique that speaks Nyao, that speaks Maconde, that speaks Njanja, that speaks other languages besides Portuguese. We are not exploring Mozambique. We are not discovering these Mozambican histories: our diversity of culture. As a woman I can contribute. It's easier for a woman to tell another woman's story because a woman opens up more easily to another woman. And those stories are there! We are sitting here without seeing those stories. I've seen this now. With *Speak My Sister*, we went to see Niassa and saw that there are stories we need to tell. Our generation just needs to stop thinking that cinema is financing, and just produce what we can and tell them!

Alzira Guetza, Director *Victorious Dancer* Filmed interview August 2018¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ The software used for editing the films was sourced by each group, some used Premiere Pro installed on the one ISArC computer, which was shared between three of the groups (Crossing Paths, Rhythm, Art, Poetry and Life and Tambourines of Mafalala). The other three groups used personal laptops of one of the group members, all of whom also had Premiere Pro installed, although it is likely these were unlicensed copies or 'creks' as they are referred to amongst the students. Free open access editing software is not yet as fast, versatile and user-friendly as the software filmmakers in the developing world quickly find ways to 'creck', but things are improving, and soon breaking copyright laws will not be necessary for those unable to afford or have the on-line access suitable for the professional software currently available.

¹⁶⁹ If *Speak My Sister* were rolled out using similar technology in the future, the capital investment, should it be necessary, would remain under £2,500.00 per film. With an ongoing institutional partnership, this would be dramatically reduced to simple maintenance following the first year.

¹⁷⁰ This conversation provoked me to invite Alzira to work with me in a film about the women of Niassa as told through their films. This film is currently in post-production.

There is still a long way to go. Only in making films and trying out new techniques can the next generation find their individual cinematic language, creative voice and realise this dream of truly intersectional succession. Although this was a small study and much more could be done to expand this research, *Speak My Sister* has demonstrated that there are ways, even with limited time and resources, that the next generation of Mozambican filmmakers can develop their audiovisual language in a sustainable and affordable way, in a way that addresses the inequalities of class, race and gender in their country. *Speak My Sister* also demonstrated through its community screening plan, as Cardoso's film and its subsequent screenings had brought to light in 1981, that in a country with as many languages as Mozambique, one language that those interested in using moving image to tell stories to others will find effective throughout the country, is the language of music.

7.5 Decolonising research methods

Another similarity with the lessons learned by the revolutionary filmmakers of the previous generation was the importance of collaborative and participatory methodologies. Where one methodological approach was used for each of the portraits in *Sing My Brother*, the filmmakers behind *Speak My Sister* explored different research methodologies for each film. Participation and reflexivity were tentatively explored in *Sing My Brother -Help Me to Sing* and expanded upon in the subsequent films of Licínio Azevedo and Sol de Carvalho that I worked on in the 1990's. The filmmakers of *Speak My Sister* took these notions further, each drawing on different principles and approaches to participation, co-creation and collaboration to creatively represent and reflect on their portrayal of those in front of the camera. The approaches they came up with sit somewhere between what anthropologists describe with Rouchian terms, such as 'shared anthropology' and 'ethnofiction', and western documentary producers might call 'co-creations'.¹⁷¹

Although the notion of ethnographic research and audiovisual representation was conceived in the 1960's, 70's and 80's by those who had access to the means of production and distribution at the time, the questions raised around the ethics and the

¹⁷¹ See Rose (2017), for an analysis of the use of co-creation in the BBC series 'Video-nation' and a reflection of the legacy of this approach and other collaborative methodologies in contemporary i-docs.

need for reflexivity and the use of that technology in the representation of the ‘other’ remains relevant to all audiovisual representation. Even when those behind the camera are representing people from the same culture, language group, community, race, age, class or gender, the collaborative and participatory ethnographic approaches to film production can still be helpful and relevant. As young filmmakers, the directors, producers and technicians behind the *Speak My Sister* films, recognised the inequalities still present in the representation of women, and in the representation of the rural poor. They did this in crews where men and women worked alongside one another behind and in front of the camera. Some teamed up with young cultural researchers, others with dancers and contemporary artists, each developing their own approach to best hear from and represent Mozambican women from different regions, cultures and backgrounds. A recognition of different intersectional inequalities and a creative response to finding the appropriate methodology and cinematic language to reflect them is essential, if the audiovisual practice and research of the next generation is to be truly inclusive and effective.

7.6 Collaboration and the surrender of authorship

In light of this commitment to the decolonisation of ethnographic film, one of the objectives of this research was to explore the nature and impact of effective, respectful and ethical relationships between research subject and researcher through the different phases of the practice. There were regular opportunities for critical reflection on the collaborative and participatory research and production methods used both by myself and the young Mozambicans in their different research contexts. How, for example, were the participatory methodologies informed by the power dynamics present in each collaborative relationship? How does supporting individual authorship in these contexts differ from the participatory creative methodologies that result in collective authorship? Can collaborative and participatory methodological models established by the revolutionary filmmakers of the National Film Institute in the 1970’s and ’80’s and their independent continuation in the ’90’s, productively inform the contemporary Mozambican ethnographic film production of the 2020’s? Is there a way an experienced filmmaker can support those with less (or no) experience to find their own voice, without manipulating or impacting their core creative decisions that reflect their

perspective and inform audience reception? Where does collaboration end and co-authorship begin? Is there a way both inexperienced and experienced practitioners can author their work in parallel, both producing their own creative output informed by the experience, while learning from one another? Could such parallel authorship be a more honest and equitable form of collaboration? The films in the *Speak My Sister* web documentary were produced as a way of answering these questions through practice.

My initial intention for the practical output of this research, was a collaboratively produced and co-authored single linear film, perhaps a series of films, where I could explore ideas of what I called parallel authorship. I would create the conditions for young Mozambicans to make their own authored films, and I would weave these films into a piece where I could also explore my own creative expression of the experience and lessons learned. In his 2020 article on collaboration, David MacDougall articulates the argument behind this kind of collaboration.

“Any form of collaboration requires compromise, but when there is a considerable gap between the backgrounds and interests of the filmmaker and subject, the compromises may result in a kind of double negation, so that the interests of neither are properly expressed, or else remain blurred. It may be impossible to know whose perspective the film finally represents. My experience of collaborating with film subjects, which initially I embraced, has convinced me that the resulting ambiguity often constrains both parties. It may be far better to create the conditions in which each can make their own films, or failing this, construct films (such as by alternating scenes) to show their two different perspectives. This stance retains and reaffirms the value of individual authorship’. (MacDougall 2020, 10).

Instead of MacDougall’s suggestion of ‘alternating scenes’ however, I intended to embed parts of scenes from the six films in the series into a musical odyssey, with a linear narrative, that united the music and stories behind the production of each film, by following their exhibition in the communities. This would be my personal response to the research. I wanted to share some of the rich sonic and visual textures of the little-known country of Mozambique with an international audience I felt the first films of these young Mozambicans may be unlikely to reach. I wanted this parallel-co-authored piece to make the argument I have subsequently used words to make in these chapters. I wanted to transport a new audience to the cinematic, musical and decolonial cinematic and musical history of Mozambique. Like Cardoso’s film, my

film would have portraits of the musicians in their home environment, but these would be researched, filmed and edited by the young Mozambicans. I knew from all my years in Mozambique that many extraordinary stories would be told on the way, by the film subjects and their audiences, but also by the young Mozambicans on their journey to becoming filmmakers.

However, after working on this edit for over a year, that magical process of the alchemy of editing, described in Chapter 5, surprised me by leading me towards a different form of parallel authorship, not in a linear film, but in an audiovisual dialogue. It seemed the film I had envisaged at the beginning of this journey didn't want to be 'found' in the edit. Instead, I found an alternative and perhaps more democratic and contemporary audiovisual form; the i-doc, transmedia, multi-modal website, that I have chosen to call the *Speak My Sister* 'web documentary'. This was perhaps one of the least expected discoveries of this practice-led research that had begun to take form at that first memorable meeting in March 2018. In taking on the role of commissioning editor on behalf of the festival organisers and subsequently series producer, trainer, facilitator and mentor to the young Mozambicans, I realised that this initial idea of a feature-length documentary from my more personal perspective served my own needs, but was not necessarily serving the research objectives or the continuation of the *Speak My Sister* project.

At the end of Pooja Rangan's challenging critique of the award-winning formulas of participatory documentary, she makes a case for a 'non-interventionist approach'. Experienced filmmakers from their western film schools may satisfy the sensibilities and needs of the western audience, however, she argues those filmmakers need to reflect on the impulse behind their creative and ethical choices. She calls this their 'humanitarian impulse' (Rangan 2017, 1-22), and argues that it informs a tendency to impose imported values and aesthetics on those that the humanitarian documentary filmmakers represent. Rangan connects the process of non-intervention to what she describes as 'mimetic surrender' (ibid, 177). Surrendering authorship, she argues, can lead to 'new vistas of relationality' (ibid, 194).

Surrender is a strong word, but it seems appropriate when describing my own challenge of putting my creativity at the service of another, wider objective. This didn't come naturally to me. A voice inside me would sometimes scream "I'm an artist! I too want to present this knowledge and experience from my perspective". I was so determined to realise my own creative vision it took me the three years of the

research process to eventually let go of my initial idea. During the six months working with the young filmmakers, I used my spare waking moments desperately trying to develop new partnerships with organisations who could contribute to my vision with vehicles, screens, projectors and generators, to make the road trip I had in mind for the film screening a reality. I believed in this as a necessary third phase of the project, but also wanted it to happen so I could shoot my road movie. I wanted to have the experienced staff of the film production and distribution association AMOCINE on board, so I could be relieved of the duties of producer and once again be a filmmaker and artist.

There were times when it seemed any plans to screen the films at the festival would be thwarted and the young filmmakers would not have the opportunity to study the reception of their films beyond the southern audiences of Maputo and Gaza. I wanted the filmmakers to learn from a variety of diverse audiences, both about their lives and their relationship to song and dance but also to how they responded to their films. I knew from my own experience that this would not only give them confidence in their own creative voice, it would help them refine and define this voice in the light of this experience. A running joke developed amongst the *Speak My Sister* team as plan 'a' became plan 'b', then plan 'c', 'd', 'e', and eventually plan 'z'. After we ran out of the alphabet, every plan became a 'plan z'. In the end, when we were coming to the end of the alphabet with our plans, we managed to find a way for a small number of the filmmakers to make it to the Festival in Niassa, and I had to focus most of my energies on ensuring they at least had the experience of seeing their films and reflecting upon them in that context. Together with the help of my husband who came on board at the last minute to help relieve some of the pressure on me, we managed to generate the barest minimum of screening experience: one rural screening for a largely female rural audience, a peri-urban screening and a more high-profile urban screening in the provincial capital Lichinga. These three rural, peri-urban and urban audiences were also reached in and around Maputo in the south. This took so much focussed determination, time and energy, that I couldn't also ensure I had filmed the necessary elements for the film I had wanted to make.

Letting go of my musical road movie celebrating women's music, film and storytelling through this approach of parallel authorship was like a second act of surrender. The first had come when I made my initial decision to support Mozambicans to make the films I had often envisaged making myself looking at

women's lives through their *Xingomana*, *Tufo*, hip hop and popular fusion.¹⁷² I clung onto my vision for a musical feature documentary, even as I worked with the material back in the UK. Even knowing I had not filmed what I had imagined was necessary for the musical odyssey, I pushed on for months in search of a creative solution. I wanted to explore these ideas of parallel authorship and build a narrative structure around it. Another 'plan z' was to structure the film around the gala event in Maputo. Here the films were screened alongside live musical performances, and I worked with the inexperienced students and young professionals still learning about live lighting and sound with a view to filming a performance like those in the films *Chicago* (Marshall, 2002) and *Cabaret* (Fosse, 1972) which are also used as springboards to back-story and personal narratives.¹⁷³ When that didn't work, I made one last attempt to build a workable narrative device, intertwining the edited films and the behind-the-scenes material with the various media appearances of the participants on national television and radio. I can see each of these linear films in my mind's eye, but that is where it has had to remain.

The idea to present the material in a web documentary was, in truth, the result of a reluctant act of surrender. However, I now see it as the most creatively adventurous and ethically appropriate solution to an exploration of continuing the decolonisation of Mozambican audiovisual production. Six first films were produced by young Mozambicans during the *Speak My Sister* research. At the same time, as an early career academic, more used to being an artist and filmmaker than a researcher, I learned from each of the collaborative methodologies during the research planning, training, production, post-production and eventually exhibition of the six films. It may have felt counter-intuitive at times, but I have been rewarded with many of the 'new vistas' Rangan argues this 'practice of surrender' behind the 'non-interventionist', less 'mediated' or '*immediated*' (Rangan 2017, 178) approach can result in. The films may have been different to those I would have made, but they seemed to reach the audience

¹⁷² There is a narrative inconvenience to this story of surrender, in that I did actually author a short film on the female appropriation of a male warrior dance popular in southern Mozambique called *Xigubu*. Filming this, despite the huge demands the production, editing and exhibition of the student's six films was making on my time, is another example of the resistance I had to surrendering authorship. The material sat in a hard drive for over a year, crying out to be edited, which I eventually did in 'stolen' moments of my 'spare' time, while on a research placement in Brazil. This film has not yet been released but is available with a password on <https://vimeo.com/382097197> (Password: Maputo).

¹⁷³ Watch four live performances from this Gala launch of the film series, introduced by two of the *Speak My Sister* filmmakers, Alzira Guetza and Narciso Lufagir (Anakanga), in 'The Music' section of the web documentary <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>.

more effectively than mine might have done.¹⁷⁴ When I devised the collaborative methodology, I had not anticipated the level of logistical, emotional and technical support that would be required of me in the research, production and exhibition of the six films in the series. It felt like failure that I was unable to follow my own creative vision and make a feature documentary with the creative solution to parallel authorship I had envisaged. And yet, out of this perceived failure, I not only supported thirty young filmmakers in their own creative journey, I also produced a more interactive, non-linear web documentary that put the authored work of the young Mozambicans centre stage.

7.7 Practice-led research and polyphony

This was practice-led research. I was exploring my own creative practice within the boundaries I set myself. I had wanted to work ethically and collaboratively with my Mozambican research partners and ensure I did not take more from the research experience than I gave. By pushing on through the perceived failures, I found a new form of authorship within the non-linear, multi-modal form of web documentary.¹⁷⁵ Here, the additional material filmed behind the scenes during the production and exhibition, the concerts and television and radio interviews are divided into separate ‘tabs’ or pathways on the website. Each contributes to the viewer experience of immersion into the context of the production of the six films produced. The films are in dialogue with one another and the viewer is active in that conversation. They are not being told or guided by me and, in that sense, this is a decolonial response to my research objectives.

This research was conducted in a country that fought colonialism and, for a brief time at least, had one of the most successful autonomous film production and

¹⁷⁴ This thesis does not explore the experience of assessing the reception of my own authored film *Her Xigubu*, which I edited long after the *Speak My Sister* series

had been screened in Niassa and Maputo. The reception has been extremely positive among international audiences, and yet the association to whom I gave the film to reach the Mozambicans I had in mind as my target audience have not used it for local purposes, choosing instead to use it as a tool for advocacy to reach international funders and policy makers.

¹⁷⁵ This non-linear, immersive, interactive, multi-vocal, multi-media, transmedia documentary, is still in the early stages of being theorised among the i-doc community, where notions of polyphony interactivity, immersion and dialogue are under scrutiny. For now, there is still no singular term recognised among the broader community producing non-fiction content in various web-based formats. I have chosen to use the broadest of these terms: web documentary.

distribution models in post-colonial Africa. Making my own film about Mozambican women making films and music may have served my own creative needs and my career, yet I would have remained in the position of the knowledge transmitter, and thus, still following the colonial model of maintaining an assumed ownership of the knowledge. I would have been replicating the colonial models I was trying to contest. The web-doc may be put together and so ‘authored’ by me, but the material I shot and edited are the ‘bonus extras’. I remember how I used to hungrily consume every audio-commentary and behind the scenes film offered on the DVD’s I used to take back to my wooden house on the outskirts of Maputo in the early 2000’s, powered by the car battery I would have charged during the day. Now, as the faster internet speeds and widespread access begins to reach Mozambique, a new generation can experience the wonder of navigating a network of stories and songs. As such, I have curated this web-doc in a non-linear structure that is in service of the films and the people behind them. While there are internal narratives within the short films I have edited to offer curated contextualisation of the production and exhibition of the *Speak My Sister* series, there is no imposed narrative between them. The visitor is invited to construct this for themselves, through their own navigation. This reflects a less colonial imposition of narrative and attempts to mirror the non-linear experience of story I learned to embrace when listening to the stories shared by my Mozambican family, friends and colleagues.¹⁷⁶

The *Speak My Sister* web documentary is populated with the individuals, events, stories and the ethnomusicological research that refused to be constrained by the linear narrative form. The multi-vocal nature of the audiovisual research lends itself to the inter-modal, interdisciplinary, interactive, intertwining, or as the American philosopher, sociologist and pioneer of information technology Ted Nelson called it, ‘intertwingling’¹⁷⁷ nature of on-line knowledge creation and sharing. Nelson prosed this term as a way of expressing “the complexity of interrelatedness of human knowledge” as encountered through new digital technology (Nelson, 1987). As the web-based digital viewing experience becomes equally accessible throughout the

¹⁷⁶ As described in the abstract to this thesis, the website submitted is in English and was produced out of and for Anglophone visitors, especially scholars and the international English speaking community working towards social inclusion and indigenous representation among the poorer nations. I hope to produce a Portuguese version of this web-doc to serve the Mozambican and the lusophone academy and wider society in the future.

¹⁷⁷ See Aston and Odorico (2018) on the relationship between the IT pioneer Ted Nelson’s concept of ‘intertwingularity’ and Polyphonic Documentary.

world, such interactive approaches to knowledge sharing can take their place alongside the established linear forms. This also opens up new possibilities for some of the alternative ways knowledge can be shared.

The writings of the Russian philosopher, literary critic and scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) offer a helpful theoretical framing for this new form of multi-vocal, interactive and immersive documentary known as the web-doc or i-doc. His exploration of dialogism and polyphony became popular in the 1980's and has recently been revisited by Judith Aston & Stephano Odorico to offer a theoretical framing for the i-doc (Aston & Odorico, 2018). Their use of the Bakhtian term of 'polyphony' helps place the questions of voice, authorship and collaboration at the heart of many i-docs within a wider philosophical discussion about inclusion and the ethics of discourse and dialogue.

My eventual decision to present *Speak My Sister* as a polyphonic documentary was my own response to the need for the multivocality of Bakhtin heteroglossia. Aston and Odorico talk of the 'multiplicity of aesthetics; multiplicity of narratives; multiplicity of authors; multiplicity of realities; and multiplicity of screens' (ibid, 74). The *Speak My Sister* web documentary and the methodology behind it embraces such multiplicity. While it doesn't offer entirely 'unmerged' voices, as the behind-the-scenes films do merge voices internally, I do not impose meaning on those voices as I would have done in a linear feature documentary. When the 'voices' or elements of an i-doc, especially interviews, are included unmerged, I confess to finding myself overwhelmed with choice. I become impatient with the time it can take to find the meaningful dialogues among the connecting threads and digital links offered; my combination of merged and unmerged voices is my creative solution to this response. In the *Speak My Sister* web documentary, I have woven together some of those internal dialogues within the overall dialogue of the website through music, sound and moving image, as I would in my previous linear documentaries. Each individual who engages with the website can, however, encounter new meaning in the dialogic relationship between this assemblage of merged voices and the performances, stories and records of events.

The website <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister> was built using a simple pre-designed 'off-the-shelf' website template. While not possible within the limitations of this doctoral research, this could be taken further in the future using more tailored software and with more technical skill to maximise the interactive

experience of discovering the interrelationship between the short films in each section. In fact, using either term i-doc or polyphonic documentary for this website may be stretching their definitions. There are now some extraordinary multi-vocal pieces of work being distributed that take this polyphonic intention much further than <https://kboswall.wixsite.com/speakmysister>, in beautifully crafted, interactive interfaces that are often the result of years of work and rich creative collaboration between digital web designers and filmmakers.¹⁷⁸

However, taking Aston and Odorico's definition of the i-doc as "any project that starts with the intention to engage with the real, and that uses digital interactive technology to realize this intention" (ibid), I see the *Speak My Sister* web documentary as a humble sister to some of these. Like many filmmakers exploring this new technology, I continue to be transported by the magic of cinema, the excitement of sitting in a darkened space with others about to be led on a journey, trusting the guidance of the filmmaker to entrance and inform, to move and provoke me. I may even one day return to the challenge of telling the story of *Speak My Sister* in a linear form, so that it too can transport others in such a way. However, the polyphonic documentary, or i-doc, is now part of my multi-media vocabulary and one I will continue to embrace as part of my ongoing exploration of shared authorship and collaboration.

7.8 The anxiety of authorship – a feminist concern?

There were times during this research, when I wondered whether *Speak My Sister* was a personal response to my own burden of the privilege of authorship (Behar 1995, 7) and whether the root of my decision to look for viable ways to enable Mozambican authorship came from what Ruth Behar describes as 'women's anxiety of authorship'

¹⁷⁸ See for example Alisa Lebow's interactive project *Filming Revolution* (<https://www.filmingrevolution.org/>) (Lebow, 2018 - 2021), described on the opening page as 'a platform to think alongside the people making films in the thick of the unrest (in Egypt after the 2011 revolution) and afterwards', Chris Johnson et al's *Question Bridge* (Johnson, 1996 – 2021), described on the opening page as 'an innovative transmedia project that facilitates a dialogue between black men from diverse and contending backgrounds and creates a platform for them to represent and redefine black male identity in America' (<http://questionbridge.com>, accessed June 2021), and the many interactive documentaries promoted by Canada's National Film Board (NFB) since the late 2000's, for example the 'multi-year, many-media, collaborative documentary *Highrise*' (<http://highrise.nfb.ca>) and the many subsequent interactive documentaries shared by the NFB on <https://www.nfb.ca/interactive>,

(ibid, 16). “We struggle to make ourselves heard and to convince ourselves that our writing in a time of increasing poverty, racism, inequality, xenophobia and warfare still somehow matters” (ibid). My own personal difficulty in surrendering authorship testifies to the conflict inherent in the burden of my own privilege as a white, western, educated filmmaker, and the anxieties produced by other aspects of my position as a woman and an artist with a desire both to create and to support the creativity of others. As I reach the end of this doctoral research, and what I hope to be the beginning of another chapter in the story of *Speak My Sister*, I see nonetheless two sides to this anxiety of authorship.

My perspective as a woman has certainly informed my commitment to contribute to a more gender-conscious representation of Mozambicans by Mozambicans. I also recognise aspects of myself in Behar’s analysis of her own concerns as a woman writer. I have experienced moments during my time as a filmmaker in Mozambique where I have felt this burden of privilege of authorship and have seen this less present, or indeed absent, in many male colleagues. However, my anxiety as a woman over how much my own perspective matters is overshadowed by my deep experiential understanding of the need to challenge the exclusion of certain voices from the public discourse. My search for an appropriate methodological response to the need for a Mozambican perspective, male and female, to be reflected in moving image, is in response to the still ever-increasing poverty, intersectional inequality and rise of xenophobia, misogyny and now, gender violence as an act of warfare in Mozambique.

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Only through supporting more Mozambican audiovisual authorship by men and women from all over the country can the experience of people like those in Palma,

¹⁷⁹ There has been increasing violence in the northern province of Cabo Delgado that began the year I started my doctoral research in the north in 2017. Despite keeping the area closed to journalists and researchers the news of the decapitation of women and children and the horrendous human rights abuses, especially towards women and children, eventually made it into the mainstream international press in 2021 following a harshly critical report published by Amnesty International in March 2021 entitled ‘What I saw is death’

(See: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4135452021ENGLISH.PDF>) The centre of this rising sectarian violence by a group Mozambicans first called Boko Haram, then Al Shabab, now being referred to as ISIS Mozambique, is one example of this. (For a discussion on the apparently fake claims that this group is linked to IS see Mozambique News Reports & Clippings, Issues 533, 2 April 2021 bit.ly/mozamb Accessed June 17 2021)

It has taken international journalists to bring this situation to the world’s attention. Perhaps when more Mozambicans in places like Cabo Delgado have the tools and techniques to tell their own stories, this situation may have been less able to escalate unmonitored for the past four years.

Cabo Delgado cease to go unnoticed.¹⁸⁰ *Speak My Sister*, is a feminist response to this need. The collaborative methodologies made this an African feminist or *nego-feminist* (Nnaemeka, 2004) response, one where negotiation and understanding between men and women was able to bring women's stories and perspectives to a wider audience. If this was born out of an evolving anxiety of authorship informed by my own perspective as a woman, it was done so within the context of my own female perspective of the long struggle for the decolonisation of African representation.¹⁸¹ At a time when the succession of the next generation of Mozambican filmmakers is long overdue, *Speak My Sister* has offered a methodological model for others in Mozambique working towards this shared goal of the benefits of a more inclusive, diverse, *nego-feminist* approach to this succession.

Over the three years since the memorable meeting with the young filmmakers in the classroom at ISArC, many small Mozambican on-line broadcasters have been established. They focus mostly on seated conversations in home studios but over the past year this has expanded into increasingly more professional recordings of musical performances as part of the 'covid 'stay at home' message.¹⁸² This has offered the young generation a new route into media production and training while opening up new opportunities for Mozambican self-representation and holds great hope for the promise of Mozambican stories being told by Mozambicans to Mozambicans. Such transformation in local production and exhibition warrants a comprehensive study on

¹⁸⁰ The portrait of the Kanhembe player Rajabo Ibrahim and his wife was filmed in the district of Palma, now ravaged by the brutality of sectarian violence with women and children still being raped and beheaded as I complete this thesis. For more on this see Mozambique News Reports & Clippings, Issues 525, 527, 531-543, March – May 2021 [bit.ly/mozamb](https://www.open.ac.uk/technology/mozambique/news-reports-clippings-2021) Accessed June 17 2021

These are reports articles collated by Joseph Hanlon and published between March and May 2021 available on the Open University website <https://www.open.ac.uk/technology/mozambique/news-reports-clippings-2021>.

¹⁸¹ Throughout this thesis I have made more of my privilege of education and nationality than race. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the racial element to the privilege and authority I held and continue to hold in Mozambique despite my gender. The global effects of the racialized division and privilege born out of colonization and imperialism, that is yet to be recognized by many, is present in every aspect of my research, my life and the lives of all global citizens, and any oversight in making this clear throughout the thesis was born of my desire to write a thesis about creativity, art and gender, despite a commitment to recognizing the privilege of race.

¹⁸² Some examples of Live shows supported by Mozambique's Ministry of Tourism and culture and a number of private sponsors and broadcast live during the pandemic by Mozambican terrestrial and on-line broadcasters STV and Marrabenta TV LIVE

<https://www.facebook.com/marrabentaLIVEtv/videos/201853885123376> (Timbila Muzimba)

<https://www.facebook.com/micultur.gov.mz/videos/292667998593192> (Mozambican showcase for 45 Years of Independence celebrations)

<https://www.facebook.com/marrabentaLIVEtv/videos/337613344094758> (Festival Marrabenta) and Arte no quintal <https://www.facebook.com/micultur.gov.mz/videos/554833762068352>.

the production methods and impact this is having on the Mozambican audience, new career progression routes and on the nature of the content being produced. Needless to say, I believe such a study needs to take the female audience and female career progression routes into account, and to include gendered analysis of the content. Without such a study and from purely anecdotal and empirical analysis, on the whole it seems these new channels are still populated largely by male technicians and male directors, and the difference between the content and presentation style of the male and female presenters indicates a reinforcement, rather than a reassessment of gender stereotypes in this new media form.

The gendered focus of the *Speak My Sister* research objectives, offered the young filmmakers new, creative ways to explore issues of gender inequality in their society and to reflect this in their methodologies and in the six films they produced. They also refined their methods of representation, their recording and editing techniques and found ways to apply these skills to communicate with others through music and dance. Their search for stories around the festival themes of women, identity and sustainable development led them to share stories of extraordinary women they may otherwise not have considered. Through their familiarity with the music video, they were able to find an entry point for this research. By the time of the final group evaluation, they were able to reflect on their own perception of women's representation and gender equality, while also being able to start calling themselves filmmakers and look toward their next films with this in mind.

“Speak My Sister came at the right time, because we young people, we want to be able to tell our own stories and this experience woke us up to the fact that we can. Now we can say ‘I’ve made a film’ ‘Would you like to see my film?’ Mozambicans should be able to tell our own stories, and stories that we identify with as Mozambicans. To the uncles and grandfathers of cinema, we can now say we have arrived, we are coming with all we’ve got, so open the door and let us in!”

André Bahule, Director Xigomana – Dance of Generations
Filmed Interview, São Paulo, November 2019

7.9 The long arc of the moral universe

During the final stages of the liberation struggle in 1973, Samora Machel declared ‘the liberation of women’ as a “*fundamental necessity for the revolution, a guarantee of its continuity and a precondition of its victory*” (Machel, 1973). Yet, despite years of persistent national and international efforts to reduce the trend, levels of gender inequality have been increasing rather than decreasing¹⁸³, especially between the educated elite of the Mozambican cities and the rural, less-educated population who live off the land. Likewise, the historical prejudices between the people from the south and north the country have if anything been amplified over the past decade. Cardoso’s film addressed these divisions lovingly and effectively through a sensitive portrayal of the rural poor of the north and south and the cultural wealth they offer the nation. This intention to address some of the internal prejudices within Mozambique through film and music was also at the core of *Speak My Sister*, focussing this time on the gulf of inequality between men and women, a prejudice that continues to impact the development of Mozambique, and arguably the whole world. The symbolism of the women dancing behind the men in the final scene of the film, carries with it a ‘gesture’ also carried into the future. It is of a country of brothers who continue to call out their messages across the valleys as they build a future modelled on the patriarchy of the past. It shows the sisters supporting them from the rear, singing and dancing, but without the beautiful, loud and prized cow horns to amplify their message. *Speak My Sister* not only puts the Mozambican ‘sister’ on the screen, it addresses some of the obstacles to putting her behind the camera, too. Taking its cue from the women who communicate their concerns through music and dance in the films, it too found a musical approach to this next all-important challenge.

Some might argue that the ‘brother’ in Cardoso’s title, and the ‘men of cinema’ identified at the start of the film, referred to ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ alike; that the term ‘brother’ was a semantic synecdoche if you like. However, from my perspective as a

¹⁸³ Mozambique continues to slip down the list of the bottom 20 countries on the Gender Inequality Index of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This is a composite measure reflecting inequality between women and men in three different dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation. In 2015 Mozambique was 135th out of 155 countries, and in 2019 it dropped to 139th (see UN Women 2019). Economic studies have also noted a marked increase in inequalities between Mozambique’s urban and rural population since the beginning of the country’s economic boom in 2007 (See Gradín and Tarp, 2019). One area in which Mozambique has been seen to excel, however, is the number of women holding elected positions of governance in parliament. In 2020, 41.2% of parliamentary seats were held by women in Mozambique as opposed to 28.9 in the UK.

woman, and I expect that of most women, the masculinisation of language has never been purely semantic. When cameramen, soundmen, chairmen and even God continue to be presented to me in their male form, the onus still on me to translate this to a more gender-neutral term to include myself, I may understand the argument of inclusion, but I still feel excluded. Cardoso's film not only reflects the patriarchal tendencies of the time in its title and narration, it continues to do so in the choice of which musicians and individuals are represented in the film and how. The only female spoken voice in the film is that of one of the narrators, and her voice is the one who takes us into the abstract with poetic translations of the lyrics and interviews, a woman, transmitting the words of men. Women are visible in the film, one even seems to be a part of the crew, one plays the *Kanyembe* alongside her husband in Cabo Delgado, but unlike the men, we don't know their names and we don't know their stories.

The *Speak My Sister* research looks for ways that women like those in Cardoso's film can redress the balance in the future he envisioned at the end of his film. It sought to address questions around the role of women in Mozambican audiovisual production, both behind and in front of the camera. In many ways this is perhaps the greatest challenge to the next generation, as there is a larger leap that needs to be made from the work of those who came before them. In Cardoso's film, for example, despite sustained efforts and noble intentions, women are not seen or treated on equal terms to the men. Questions of power, poverty, class, education and cultural identity were addressed in Mozambique's revolutionary films and a cinematic language was developed to bridge some of these divides, but still, the films were made by men, and the representation of Mozambican women was offered from their male perspective, if at all. In the 1970's and 80's, institutional sexism and institutional racism went unchallenged in Mozambican society despite the socialist principles of equality promoted by the new government.

Over the past year, institutional racism and sexism in the UK and the US has been brought to global attention, turning the spotlight on similar contradictions in the self-representation of these nations who prefer to be associated with democracy and egalitarianism. In such countries, much of whose current wealth was built on the subordination and slavery of those black and minority ethnic peoples, and the institutional subordination of women, there is also a long way to go for this history to be reflected and for the stories of women and people of colour to be told. Despite notable efforts recently being made, the film and television output of Europe, North

America, Australia and New-Zealand are still dominated by the white male colonial perspective. In this context, this research is part of a much broader, slow global push for long-awaited and much-necessary change.

In 1968, Martin Luther King famously spoke of the ‘long arc of the moral universe’ and its slow progression towards justice.¹⁸⁴ Sometimes this arc can seem so long its tip seems to circle back to the past rather than stretch into the future. Revisiting the dreams of the past through Cardoso’s film led me to the now iconic writings not only of Samora Machel, but of those elsewhere in the world, such as Franz Fanon (1961) and Audre Lorde (1984), Chinua Achebe (1958) and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o (1986). The challenges they made to sexism, racism and the long-term impacts of colonisation in their writing and actions, can, like those made by many calling for change at the time Cardoso made his film, seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Reading these works from the perspective of the future Cardoso spoke of in the last scene of his film, I recognise the same essential arguments as those now being made by young contemporary pan-africanists in Africa and in the global media presence of the contemporary anti-racist and anti-sexist movements such as ‘Black Lives Matter’ and ‘Me Too’.

The pioneers of Mozambican audiovisual self-representation were optimistically celebrating their early successes in the early 80’s¹⁸⁵. They continued to dedicate their lives to the same dream, with perhaps a lesser degree of optimism, when I worked alongside them in the 90’s and 00’s. However, their position can seem even more peripheral in the 2020’s than it was in the 1980’s. African filmmakers seem to be competing for an even smaller share of the global film finance, their productions once again dominated by those who determine the market and therefore the content and aesthetic of their films. For many of my colleagues who honed their craft at Mozambique’s National Film Institute, decades of disappointments seem to have drained them of their hope and enthusiasm for change. It was their resignation and

¹⁸⁴ In the speech ‘Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution’, given at the National Cathedral, March 31, 1968, Martin Luther King said: “We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice”. In 2011, President Barak Obama re-popularised this concept of slow progress, as he struggled to bring about the change he promised during his presidency.

¹⁸⁵ See interview Pedro Pimenta gave to the journal *Jump Cut* on a tour of America with fellow filmmaker Camilo de Sousa in 1983. De Sousa fought in the Independence wars in Mozambique and was responsible for creating the first network of ‘popular information correspondents’ in Cabo Delgado and taking mobile cinema to all the districts. In his most recent film *Sonhâmos um País* (We Dreamed a Country), de Sousa shares much of his disappointment with fellow comrades. Pimenta has not been as public about his own disappointments, but that’s largely because he’s been busy surviving as an independent African film producer and distributor.

eroded aspirations that angered me to action and the set of questions that began my doctoral research journey. After a decade back in the UK, I had had a chance to refresh my resolve and optimism and recover from the onslaught of disappointments that had become an expected part of my life after nearly 20 years in Mozambique. I hoped that with this research I could make a fresh contribution to the ‘long arc of change’ in Mozambican self-representation. I would also be adding my still rare female positionality, female voices, female sensitivities and female endurance into the mix.

Women do drive tractors in Cardoso’s film, they even play the *Kanyembe*, the sacred *Makonde* instrument of knowledge sharing formerly taboo for women. Four of Cardoso’s eleven musical portraits do include women’s voices in song. However, there are reminders in the lyrics of the struggle these women have ahead of them before they can ensure their own stories are told and their own needs met. Two brothers in Cabo Delgado, for example, accompany themselves on the *Pankwé*¹⁸⁶ and shakers and sing

“We already know the women on *Nacululu*.
 You only love your husbands
 if they dress in good trousers.
 The women of *Pululo*
 only love their husbands
 if they bring home cane.
 Women of this village
 FRELIMO waits for you
 And you will find the husbands you are looking for”.¹⁸⁷

While this song calls out to the women of the village to join FRELIMO, it seems the women may still be needed more as wives than equal colleagues to work alongside the men in the realization of their dreams for a country. As if aware of the contradiction, the filmmakers tell us after the song that the *Pankwé* is an instrument that accompanies criticism and jokes.

“And the *Pankwé* is sounding out
 The *Pankwé* is criticising, playing
 How old is your brother, to play like this?”

Extract from the film *Sing My Brother – Help Me to Sing* (Cardoso, 1981)

¹⁸⁶ The *Pankwé* is a stringed instrument made of a wooden fretboard and strings much like the guitar, with gourds as resonators and played in front, in the musician’s lap, much like a West African Kora.

¹⁸⁷ Taken from a short musical portrait of Guilherme Saude on the *Pankwé* and Constantino Malique on the shakers in the village of Nacololo in Ancuabe district in Tete. (49’ into the film *Sing My Brother, Help Me to Sing*). See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdCnsYIDK8s> for full film in Portuguese.

Most of the revolutionary songs sung at this time were adaptations of existing songs already passed on for generations, the lyrics being changed accordingly. It is likely the joke about the husbands of Nacululu and Pululu needing good trousers came to the region long before FRELIMO had been formed. Is Cardoso reminding the potential intellectual critic not to take this light-hearted call to the women to join the party too seriously? If so, watching forty years later, I still feel a certain discomfort from the tone of the joke shared through the Pankwé. It is an indication of the kind of FRELIMO the women were being called to join; one where the trousers, and the power, remained with the men.

These songs, like the male gaze from behind the camera, reflect the bias still present in Mozambican songs and films today. The absence of black filmmakers in Mozambique is arguably less due to racism than the impacts of colonialism on the black population. The absence of women's names in most of the credits rolling at the end of Mozambican films, is, however, less easy to explain away. Much like the institutional racism being called out during the Covid pandemic of 2020, men (and women) in Mozambique have yet to address the institutional sexism that is often also rooted in unconscious prejudice. This deep and entrenched bias led to the kind of representation of women seen in Cardoso's film. It is based on generations of assumptions about women's ability and power created through the deliberate maintenance of systems that support and sustain male privilege and power. *Speak My Sister* is part of a widespread global effort to challenge those assumption, not only in the series of films produced, but also in the research and production methodologies used. Cardoso leaves us contemplating the future at the end of his film. This research reflects a different gaze of the brothers and sisters of this future he dreamed of.

7.10 Looking to a more inclusive future while building on the past

Cardoso's journey came to its end in Tete, offering the audience the most extraordinary musical experience of the film. The sound of the horns echoing back from the mountains sounds more like an *avant-garde* jazz improvisation than the music often associated with the musical traditions of rural Africa. The narration leaves those who can follow it in no doubt as to the symbolic 'mystical' significance of this scene and of the film as a whole. The narrator reminds us that this film is 'a symbol

of a people', and that through the film, the brothers can continue teaching the nation through their song. Their 'gesture' is captured in perpetuity so that in the future people like the young filmmakers taking up the mantle from Cardoso can continue to learn from them. Cardoso and his team will leave their life on the road and return to their urban lives in Maputo. They have, however, been changed by the experience of travelling around the newly independent Mozambique as it 'fights and fights for a life that it can call its own'. In the meantime, those portrayed remain behind, still fighting and singing their contribution to the future.

Epilogue

As I conclude this written reflection on the research conducted in 2018, I think back to my last night sitting on the wall in Maputo's fading light with the founder of the hip hop band *Revolução Feminina*, Guiggaz. At 26, the age of Guiggaz when we had that conversation, I had already been given the opportunity to find my creative voice as a painter, a photographer, a print maker and a sculptor, before studying an interdisciplinary creative arts degree. There I found ways to combine sound, poetry, music and art to express my ideas and my emotions. I had already exhibited my talking sculptures and multi-media installations in galleries before eventually discovering the 'seventh art'; the creative language of film. I remember the excitement as I began to explore how sound, music, moving image, poetry, and stories could come together in one art form. I was 21 when I made my first film. I collaborated with dancers, actors, designers, performers and composers in a musical film that attempted to translate my experience of living in urban Britain in the early 80's as a young woman into live music, sound and moving image. My university provided me with the cameras, the film stock, the editing equipment, and even a mobile recording studio so I could record the soundtrack with my musicians on location.

What would Guiggaz, and other Mozambicans like her, be able to share about their experiences as young women in Mozambique, if she had had the same type of opportunities? We talk of white privilege, and there is no doubt, the colour of my skin has afforded me much privilege over my life, but when we talk of the difference in opportunity between myself and Guiggaz, there is more than our race that divides us. It is all those opportunities I had in the country that built its relative current political and economic stability on the back of an exploitation of the likes of Guiggaz's parents and grandparents. Yet, on that last evening on the wall in Maputo, it was not division and difference marked by race, age, nationality and opportunity, it was our perspective as creative women that united us.

We laughed that evening as we shared common moments of discovery, when each discovered the secret to increasing our opportunities as women in the male worlds we had each fought to become a part of, in order to express ourselves creatively. This, we had both discovered, involved suppressing our femininity in order to be accepted in

the male world we wanted to enter. We had both resorted to cutting our hair short and dressing in masculine clothes. It worked, but at what cost? I spent decades hiding my feminine side and so being accepted as ‘one of the boys’ or at best ‘a sister to us all’. Guiggaz chose to form a band with the name ‘Feminine Revolution’ not ‘Women’s revolution’ or liberation. Her gesture of defiance is to flaunt her femininity, her female power and sensuality, because she had hidden it for so long. Both Guiggaz and I grappled to find our place in the world as women, riling against what society said we should or shouldn’t do or say, at how people looked at us, how they thought of us.

Sitting there on that wall with Guiggaz in the fading light, I remembered the Karen Boswall of those days. I too had swapped my own name for one more gender neutral. I was Boz, and like Guiggaz, I was going to change the world. Is Guiggaz braver than I? She certainly seems more fearless. She’s an activist, a revolutionary feminist. I never considered myself an activist, I knew I wanted the opportunities I saw the men around me had, I wanted to be heard as they were heard, but I didn’t want my world to be rocked too much. Instead, I benefitted from the work of those activists who came before me and carved out a path for women in film in the UK. I was in an all-women band, too, worked in all-women film crews, yet I never used the word feminist to describe myself. Guiggaz, on the other hand, sees her group as rooted in feminism. She has a fight in her soul. She sees herself poised at the beginning of a contemporary revolutionary feminist movement that will spread first throughout Mozambique, and then join with those of Lusophone Africa, Brazil, and eventually the rest of the Global South.

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