Youth culture in rural Mozambique

A study of the significance of culture for young people in rural areas based on fieldwork in the districts of Nangade (Cabo Delgado), Mossurize (Manica) and Chókwe (Gaza)

Figure 1: Young man with bicycle, City of Chókwe, Aug. 2006
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Bettina Holzhausen
Zurich, 16 January 2007
Introduction

Young people all over the world go through a time of transition. The transformation from childhood to adulthood challenges young people enormously and brings along many physical and psychological insecurities and difficulties with it: The body of a teenager undergoes essential changes that are often not synchronised with their emotional development. Young people struggle with the dilemma of being dependent and at the same time having to take on new responsibilities. They look for their place in society and acceptance from their community. They try to define their social and cultural identity and to become economically independent.

Apart from such universal challenges, rural youth in Africa are in a special situation with regard to the following two situations. First, Erdheim says that in traditional societies the life of grandparents was almost identical to the life of their grandchildren. Such cultures live in cycles: from birth to childhood, adolescence and adulthood and death. Traditional societies accompany every phase of the life cycle with rites of passage. The faster people’s lives develop in modern times, the less the life of previous generations is applicable to the current one and cyclic time is transformed into linear time\(^1\). As a result, the adolescence of each generation becomes unique, depending on the political, economic, technological and cultural conditions. Rural youth in Mozambique are actually experiencing this transition from cyclic to linear time. Of course, human life still has a cyclic aspect, but nowadays the living conditions even in a remote African village are undergoing great changes and the cyclic aspect is losing ground. Conversations with older people in all the districts indicate that the life of the people has changed enormously over the past thirty years, in particular, over the last ten years.

This leads to the second situation: Traditional values and rules are in decline. Especially in the areas of growing up, sexuality and choosing a partner, traditions are going through great transformations. Though young people enjoy a personal freedom that previous generations did not have, they also suffer from a lack of guidance and support from the community. Traditional rules and values are not likely to come back once they are gone. I would argue that the ethical and cultural vacuum that young people experience today is putting them at risk of failing to find their place in society.

What is culture?

To start with, it seems important to define and discuss the term ‘culture’. I want to propose the definition put forth by UNESCO at the World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico 1982):

[Culture is] the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.\(^2\)

This definition of culture shows that it is intrinsically variable. It is certain though that culture is a fundamental element in the life of every individual and community; it is what we share with those who live around us, it is what forms our social being, what

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joins us to a group. Thus, the concern with culture provides insights into social life as a whole and leads to a ‘deeper understanding of the connection between things’\(^3\).

Culture is a means to express and communicate what is going on in people’s lives using spiritual, intellectual or emotional features. Whatever happens in or around a community will affect its culture. The transformation of a culture can occur alongside changes in the social-economic situation of a society, such as the growing urban shift and the subsequent urbanisation of former rural societies. Or, it can happen alongside economic or political changes, the improvement of education or the development of new technologies. New experiences and living situations might enlarge the modes of expression and boost the creativity of groups and individuals, but they might also lead people to forget or neglect techniques and activities that used to have great importance in their culture.

The dynamic of culture and its ability to adapt to new situations are crucial tools for people to make sense of their lives, find guidance, and control modes of expression. Especially as globalisation accelerates the processes of economic and technological change, culture has to be given the attention, the freedom and the means to develop alongside the changes\(^4\). Petrella argues that our societies need direction and that this fundamentally concerns cultural development. It is crucial though that cultural development not only concentrate on object culture (buildings, infrastructure and goods), but much more on subject culture, which is committed to making sense of things, to developing links and social skills between people and creating new forms of co-existence\(^5\).

**Youth and culture**

Young people are all the time expressing or attempting to express something about their actual or potential cultural significance.\(^6\)

The socialisation of young people is a complex process and various factors determine the successful integration into society. One of them is cultural expression. Young people seek a sense of stability to make up for the personal experience of change and a sense of self-esteem to compensate for the experience of powerlessness that they go through during adolescence. Youth culture is the result.\(^7\) One of its most important features is the code of conduct among young people. This entails a set of specific dress codes but also movement, postures, facial expressions and voice modulations that are considered ‘cool’ for a certain generation or group of young people. ‘Coolness’ determines the acceptance and popularity of a young man or woman in their peer group. Physical attractiveness therefore influences the adolescent’s sense of self-esteem, his or her personality development, and social relationships and behaviour and counts as one of the most important factors to be negotiated among young people.\(^8\)

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\(^6\) Willis, P. 1990. *Common culture: Symbolic work at play in the everyday cultures of the young*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, p. 1


Physical attractiveness and coolness have to be demonstrated, proved and negotiated. Two of the common modes of expression are music and dance. In Africa, music and dance play an essential role in traditional culture and are the most practiced art forms on the continent. Traditional dance in Africa has a functional orientation aimed at the realisation of social outcomes external to the context of performance. Traditional dance has a participatory nature with community members creating the dance arena and playing an active role in the performance. Consequently, dance contributes considerably to personal development, social integration, community values and ethnic identity. It also plays an essential role during all rites of passage (birth, initiation, marriage and death) and is deeply anchored in the cultural knowledge of African people.

All traditional art forms give young people access to the cultural heritage of their ethnic group and offer some notion of citizenship, within a larger context that entails rights, satisfactions and loyalties as well as duty and submission. They also help build identity and integrate young people into the community. However, many young people feel marginal in society and due to the decline of traditional life in general, they might not experience their own creativity and ownership in traditional art forms and therefore feel a great distance to it. Today, youth culture is very much influenced by global trends that penetrate even remote villages and affect clothing, music, dances and lifestyle. Yet again, it confronts today’s youth with a profound dilemma between conserving traditional art forms and values or transforming and creating their own cultural identity.

Existing art forms are the base for cultural transformation. But, as traditional cultures are progressively less attached to the everyday life, beliefs and habits of people, they are at risk of disappearing (see section: Dance and music). I believe that giving value and support to local cultures are the only strategies to save them. Therefore, it is

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essential that young people have access to traditional art forms, which will empower them to transform and create the traditional culture of the future. Indeed the tasks of symbolic work and creativity may include not only the attempt to retain identity in the face of the erosion of traditional value systems but also to forge new resistant, resilient and independent ones to survive in and find alternatives to the impoverished roles proffered by modern state bureaucracies and rationalized industry.  

Furthermore, creative activities strengthen civil society and provide alternative thinking models as a counterweight to state bureaucracies and other institutions. At the same time, the attitude of the government and local communities is crucial for facilitating the urgently needed process of cultural renewal and innovation.

**Youth in Mozambique**

The population in Mozambique, as in many developing countries is very young (an estimated 64 percent of the population in 2005 was younger than 24 years, 20.5 percent of those are 15-24 years old and the average age of the 19.8 million Mozambicans is around 18 years). Thus, young people are a significant group, not only in numbers but also because they are the generation that is going to determine the future political, economic, social and cultural development of the country. A large majority of Mozambicans remain in rural areas (around 65 percent) and live off subsistence agriculture. The majority of this rural population lives in absolute poverty, which leaves them very vulnerable to man-made or natural disasters. Many rural communities are still suffering from the economic and social consequences of the armed conflicts of the last decades. Moreover, the rapid transformation of Mozambican society, beginning with the new constitution adopted in 1990, which provided for a multi-party political system and a market-based economy, as well as the signing of the general peace accords between FRELIMO and RENAMO in 1992, changed and continues to change the lives of both urban and rural populations.

For young people in Mozambique, the historical changes of the last 15 years can certainly provide many opportunities and chances for a better future that previous generations could not even dream of: After around 30 years of armed conflict, today’s youth is the first generation to live in peace and political stability. They gain increasing access to information, technology, knowledge and goods. They live in a more mobile world with better transport facilities and communication tools. However, those opportunities are only accessible to people with some financial means and rural youth have great difficulties getting access to money.

Literature about youth in Africa talks frequently about young people suffering from the loss of basic traditional values, guidance and family support. Chigunta, for example, argues that the family as the key socialisation agent in Africa has collapsed due to a number of causal factors. These include general social change, poverty, the ‘feminisation’ of poverty, the phenomenon of teenage pregnancies and the loss of family members due to the AIDS pandemic. Community life is substantially affected by the decline of social networks, the disappearance of cultural values and, to a certain degree, growing violent and ruthless behaviour of people. Especially problematic for

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10 Willis, P. 1990. *Common culture: Symbolic work at play in the everyday cultures of the young*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, p. 14
young people are the poor quality of education, the high youth unemployment rates and the disastrous effects of the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS (estimates 2005: 16 percent of the adult population in Mozambique is HIV positive\textsuperscript{14}).

In comparison to urban youth, young people in rural areas are still in a weak position with very restricted opportunities. I would go so far as to say that the problems and needs of rural youth are largely neglected. Rural youth are exposed to a mixture of vulnerabilities that put them at high risk of failing to benefit of the progress that has been made over the last decade. Although young people represent a majority of the population, youth, especially in rural areas, have no access to adequate education, political or economic power. To successfully combat absolute poverty in Mozambique one has to make sure that young people gain access to their talents and capacities and are able to live with at least a minimum of dignity. This is the basis for young people to engage actively in the development of their communities.

Figure 3: Young farmers in Mossurize selling corn on the roadside, Sept. 2006

Aims and objectives
This qualitative study is an attempt to illuminate and understand the significance of culture for young people in rural areas of Mozambique. It is based on fieldwork done in the districts of Nangade (Cabo Delgado), Mossurize (Manica) and Chókwe (Gaza) (see Appendix 2). It includes a review of some of the literature on youth and youth culture in Africa in general.

The fieldwork was set up to investigate two areas in order to understand how they function together, complement or challenge each other: It looked at youth culture, especially dances and dance groups, and studied the socio-economical situation of youth in these districts.

By linking and analysing the findings from those two areas, the report explores the connections between the socio-economic situation and the cultural expression of youth.

\textsuperscript{14} WHO. 2006. Epidemiological Fact Sheets, on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections: Mozambique, update Aug. 2006
in the villages of Mozambique. The last part of the report makes some suggestions of how cultural interventions can provide a basis for improving the living situation of rural youth in Mozambique and at the same time enrich and strengthen the social and cultural life of village communities as a whole.

The two main research questions were:

- What is the importance and significance of cultural activities (especially dance and music) in the lives of young men and women (12-25 years) in rural areas of Mozambique and what kind of cultural influences (traditional, global) are they exposed to?

- What are the functions of cultural activities and expressions in the management of problems and conflicts of young people in rural Mozambique (generation conflict, identity problems, gender relationships and sexuality, education, unemployment, poverty and migration) and what opportunities do they offer?

For the choice of the fieldwork locations, I wanted to cover different regions of Mozambique and therefore selected a district in the north (Nangade, Province of Cabo Delgado), the centre (Mossurize, Province of Manica) and the south (Chókwe, Province of Gaza).

I also wanted to highlight the influence of neighbouring countries on the life of people in those areas by choosing districts that are close to the national borders with Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa. This choice was motivated by the conviction that today not only culture and lifestyle, but also economic development is more and more affected by the exchange of goods, information, fashion and other cultural factors over greater distances and through media images. Young people are naturally open to new information and technologies and I wondered how they would incorporate them into traditional culture, how this would influence its transformation or how it might feed into new modes of expression and cultural trends.

Research methods

Data collection and analysis

This research is based on fieldwork in the districts of Nangade, Mossurize and Chókwe. As described in the previous section, the districts were chosen as representatives of the three geographical zones of Mozambique (south, central, north) and are all either at or close to the border of another country. The review of existing research and other secondary resources helped assess the findings of the fieldwork and to understand them in a broader context. This is a qualitative study and is mainly based on the perception of young people themselves, their view of their culture, cultural and social identities and living situation.

The main research techniques were semi-structured interviews and focus groups discussions with young people and semi-structured interviews with additional informants such as representatives of the district administration, older people, teachers, leaders of cultural groups, pastors, etc. We stayed about two weeks in each district and participated and observed various activities of the community: rehearsals and performances of local dance and music groups, events on national and official holidays or other public presentations. These presentations gave a good insight of

the main political programs of the district administration, the mode of communication with the population and, most importantly an overview of the existing cultural groups in the area. Additionally, we also visited schools, hospitals, police stations and other public institutions, as well as local markets and other main meeting points.

The interviews were based on a list of topics concerning youth and youth culture. The same list of topics was adapted for interviews with other informants according to their fields and main area of expertise, e.g., police commander, teacher or health worker (see Appendix 1).

The interviews with young people involved 1-13 persons per interview or focus group discussion and were always separated into same sex groups. Additional informants were mostly interviewed alone with the exception of some focus group interviews with older people. In total, we interviewed 94 young people between the ages of 12 and 30 years, 25 additional informants and four groups of older people. My colleague and I conducted the interviews, sometimes in the presence of a local guide. Notes were taken as a record of the interviews.

In order to complete the information from interviews and observations, the district administrations supplied us with various documents such as maps, population statistics, historical, social and cultural reports, the latest school statistics and other useful information.

For the data analysis, all these different sources had to be considered and combined. Obviously, there would be a lot to say about each district and the locally specific situation of young people, but it is central for a study that claims to draw up nationally representative trends of youth and youth culture to look primarily at the common features of youth culture and the situation of youth in all three districts covered by the research. Therefore, notes of interviews with young people were first scanned for similarities and disparities between the three districts in order to identify trends.

The decision in favour of qualitative research was an obvious one: The available means and time would not allow carrying out substantial quantitative research about youth culture. Moreover, it was our aim to understand the significance of cultural activities for young people. Therefore, we wanted to hear the opinions of young people themselves while being aware of the personal character of their statements. The conversations on the same topics with many different people in each district revealed some common trends. I would argue that it is possible to draw a picture of the socio-cultural situation of youth in Mozambique, bearing in mind that this report is based on relatively short and sometimes superficial interactions with members of these communities.

**Description of the sample**

In each district, we set up a base in the first village or city; Nangade Sede (ca. 5’000 inhabitants), Espungabera (Mossurize) and the City of Chókwe (over 63’000 inhabitants)16. Due to a lack of transportation, a large majority of the interviews were carried out in these three locations.

We used three main methods to get in touch with young people in the districts. To start, we visited local schools. With the help of our local guides, the Técnicos da Cultura (Direcção Distrital de Educação e Cultura), we never met with any difficulties in getting permission to work with students - even during official school hours. Secondly,
we contacted dance or music groups in the districts, particularly groups with young members. Interviews with members of cultural groups started by gathering information about the group and its activities and continued into the area of general questions about youth. We also spoke to young men and women spontaneously on the street, at the market, in a bar or shop and asked for an interview with them. The experience in the three districts showed that during the first few days of our stay appointments with us were rarely kept. But the longer we stayed around, the more young men and women showed enough confidence and interest to talk to us. During our last days in Mossurize, for example, young people were literally queuing up for an interview.

Some special groups were still difficult to access, for example, teenage mothers or young people not in school living in extreme poverty, even more so if they were illiterate or living on their own at the margins of the community. They were too intimidated to talk to strangers and often told us that they could not imagine having anything relevant to say.

The choice of additional informants was to some extent determined in advance. We had decided to speak to representatives of the police and the Departments of Health, Education and Culture in each district as well as some older people of the community. Depending on the location and the specific problems and contacts we made during the fieldwork, we also spoke to other adults such as activists in the field of culture, sport or religion or adults who spontaneously showed interest in talking to us.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Difficulties of research and data collection}

The populations and administrations of the three districts gave us a very warm and open reception. It normally took a few days until people got used to our presence in the village. As soon as the village community had had some experience with us, they started to become very friendly and curious. Many teenagers were pleased to talk to us as it was usually the first time that they had ever had the opportunity to talk to adults about sensitive issues like love relationships and sexuality or their preferred activities and perspectives for the future.

Despite all these positive experiences, we did encounter difficulties in the following areas:

A large group of the interviewees were secondary school students. These interviews took place at school and the students proved to be very motivated and curious to talk to us. In contrast, meetings with young people not in school turned out to be a very sensitive and difficult issue. They often felt insecure, vulnerable and ‘too irrelevant’ to talk to strangers. Sometimes they were afraid that their peer group would not accept their contact to us and exclude or even harm them\textsuperscript{18}. Generally, girls were less open about talking to us. Many of these young people are busy making a living and therefore have little free time or they have difficulties committing at a set time because their lives are generally too unstructured. Girls mostly work at home and are not

\textsuperscript{17} Five interviews were conducted outside the districts: Two young men from Muidumbe and Mueda, (Muidumbe, 24 July 2006) / Associação Cultural Mashaka (dance group) (Bairro de Mafalala, Maputo, 15 Sept. 2006) / Four young men with special lives and dreams (Chimoio, 20 Sept. 2006) / Chefe do Departamento da Ação Cultural, Direção de Educação e Cultura de Manica, (Chimoio, 20 Sept. 2006) / Director da Casa Provincial da Cultura de Inhambane (Inhambane Cidade, 12 Oct. 2006).

\textsuperscript{18} We met a young man in Chókwe who worked as porter (tchova) at the market and the bus station. Tchovas are organised into a group and the oldest of the group controls prizes and work practice. After talking to us ‘whites’, he was excluded and consequently lost his income and livelihood. City of Chókwe, 23 Aug. 2006
allowed or do not want to meet in public places\textsuperscript{19}. To improve their accessibility would need more time than we had at our disposal.

Our opportunities to visit different villages of a district were very restricted because of the lack of transportation. Public transport is almost nonexistent and very time-consuming and private transport is very expensive. We tried our best hiring private cars for a day or two, renting bicycles or simply walking, but we definitely did not get around enough in the districts.

Sometimes civil servants (local guides, teachers, policemen) tried to hide the difficulties and problems of young people by not translating certain statements of the interviewees or by interrupting conversations.

**Presentation of findings**

There is much to say about each district and the specific issues of local youth. The intention of this research however, is to compare three geographically and culturally very different districts and deduce the important features and nationally representative trends of youth and youth culture. In the following sections, I will summarise the findings of the research divided up into themes.

I will start with a brief description of the general conditions in the districts studied and list some of the most obvious differences. In addition to this, Appendices 2-5 present additional general information about each district.

**Comparison of the three districts**

In terms of the development of the infrastructure the three districts show the typical decline from the south to the north of Mozambique: The district of Chökwe in the south has electricity, mobile network and is connected with a tarmac road and frequent bus services to several bigger cities. Mossurize in Central Mozambique is partly electrified, has mobile network but is badly accessible especially with public transport. Nangade at the northern border has no electricity or telephone and the roads are extremely bad.

The main economic activity in all districts is agriculture and some more or less legal cross-border trade. In Chökwe district, there are some large farms producing vegetables for the City of Maputo and the busy City of Chökwe is developing visibly into a regional commercial centre. Mossurize is a ‘popular area’ for development projects, which bring some money and employment to the district. Both Mossurize and Chökwe have a long tradition of migrant workers to South Africa. In contrast, Nangade; apart from a small cashew nut factory, the population relies on subsistence agriculture only. Moreover, the shortage of water in the higher areas of Nangade oblige men and women to undertake time-consuming and exhausting walks or bicycle rides to fetch water.

During the last few decades, all three districts were hit by armed conflicts and natural disasters: Nangade was affected by the independence war with refugee movements and destruction of infrastructure. Mossurize was severely affected by several wars in the region, especially the armed conflict between RENAMO and FRELIMO. A large part of the population fled to Zimbabwe and only returned after the peace accord in 1992. Chökwe recently had to overcome the disastrous consequences of the floods in southern Mozambique in 2000. The northern half of the district along the Limpopo

\textsuperscript{19} We normally made interviews in our guesthouse or in a quiet bar or restaurant.
River was 2-6 m under water with the result that large parts of the infrastructure had to be rebuilt.

The spreading of religious groups and faiths is very distinct in the different parts of the country. In the Province of Cabo Delgado, there are over seventy percent Moslems. On the *Plano Alto* although, for historical reasons, only about half of the population belong to Islam\(^\text{20}\). Our observations in Nangade suggest that only a minority of young Moslems there practice their faith regularly. In contrast, the young Christian minority is much more involved, especially members of new churches like the Assembleia de Deus Africano. A significant part of the population does not belong to any religion. The picture in Mossurize is a bit different as there are no Moslems at all, and a majority of people are Christians, most of them Catholic, but there is a growing movement of various smaller churches that actively recruit new members, especially among young people. But despite the missionaries in the region, a large part of the young people do not belong to any church. In Chókwe, almost everybody, especially young people, belong to one of the numerous churches. They are a very important factor in community life and occupy a lot of time in many young people’s lives. However, no matter how strong the position of religion in the different districts is, people always pay tribute to their ancestors and carry out the required traditional rituals and sacrifices.

The district of Chókwe is closest to the capital Maputo and the life of people is much more influenced by modern goods, urban lifestyle and media images than in Nangade. But, the decline of the significance of traditions for the younger generation in Chókwe is more advanced than in the other districts. Although the population of Mossurize has growing access to mass media and communication technologies (a mobile phone network) people’s personal experiences with modern life are still minimal. It happens more in the imaginative realm.

The quick reduction of traditional culture in the last 15 years\(^\text{22}\) that we observed during the fieldwork is difficult to explain. It could be the result of the large population movements during the war, lost community connections – and according to some older people in the community – to progress in education and democracy. At first sight, people in Nangade still live a very traditional life but the decline of traditional values is progressing there too. Older people complain incessantly of how difficult and disrespectful the youth of today are. Obviously, the regression of traditions and the rejection of long-established values by the young generation is in different states of development in the three districts. Interesting for this study is how it influences the situation of youth and how this is expressed through youth culture today.

Of the three districts we visited, Nangade is by far the poorest, with the least access to communication and transport. It is also the only district without telephones or electricity and has an especially difficult situation in the education and employment for young people. It is also the district with the largest variety of traditional dances and many people with high proficiency in dance and music.

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\(^{20}\) Plateau in the north of the Province of Cabo Delgado including the districts Mueda, Muidumbe and Nangade.
\(^{22}\) Example: The number of dance groups in Mossurize and in Chókwe have significantly reduced over the last 15 years. (various interviews in Mossurize and Chókwe 2006)
Free time activities and entertainment

The first section of the interviews with young people was dedicated to their leisure activities. It was an easy and somehow innocent field to talk about and provided us with a lot of information about conviviality and the interests of local youth.

Youth culture is particularly associated with leisure activities. [...] Because it's in their free time that young people most visibly behave independently, express non-adult tastes and values. Leisure is therefore the most accessible site for research into youth behaviour.  

All young interviewees stated that most of the time they were ‘hanging around’, ‘doing nothing’ or ‘meeting friends’. This applies to all the districts and to girls and boys alike. Analogously, many young people told us that one of the biggest problems was the lack of entertainment and things to do. This is a universal problem of rural youth suggesting that in the countryside in general there is not much or nothing really interesting to do. High unemployment among young people intensifies this feeling even more. We were told that this was the reason for many men to drink excessively, to smoke marijuana or to get in conflict with the law. Young women sometimes seem to think that a baby would fill the emptiness they feel. Almost the only available form of entertainment in rural areas is sex. In times of disappearing traditional values and taboos and under the risk of HIV/AIDS this can cause serious problems.

![Figure 4: Table football in Espungabera (Mossurize), Sept. 2006](image)

The types of leisure activities that young people participate in depend first of all on what is actually available and possible in terms of existing infrastructure, equipment or institutions in the communities. Young people in the countryside have little on offer but they have some choices and normally choose activities based on their personal tastes and what their peer group regards as cool. Despite the restricted options and a general widespread boredom, their activities show independent behaviour and preferences. Girls’ and young women’s free time is generally more limited than that of young men. They have to help in the fields and household and look after smaller siblings or their own children. Young men have to help too but often they earn money working (providing material for construction, fetching water or helping on the market). Young

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23 Frith, S. 1984. The sociology of youth, Causeway Press Ltd., Lancashire, p. 3-4
women definitely spend more time at home and tend to show up less in public places. Typical male meeting points are the market or bars and bus stops, whereas girls tend to meet friends at home.

Unorganised activities of young people are playing games, from children’s games to gambling with money. At the market of Nangade Sede, for example, there is a busy meeting point for young men playing cards. Some told us that when failing to find an occasional job, they would spend the morning playing cards and the afternoon playing football24. Another typical male activity is going into the bush to hunt or fish. ‘Spending time in the bush is wonderful, it makes you feel very free and happy!’25 In a semi-urban environment like the City of Chókwe, only a few boys still go to the bush. Rarely did we met young people who declared that they did things alone like reading, playing an instrument, writing poetry, knitting, sewing or woodcarving.

In districts with electricity, a ‘new’ activity is taking over more and more: watching TV. In Chókwe, where TV is common, a majority of interviewees say that they spend time watching tele novelas and music videos. TV has a strong impact on youth culture especially in fashion and music. In Mossurize, TV consumption is growing, but as only a few households have TV, people watch in bars and shops. Listening to the radio and music cassettes is common all over the country. That is what solar panels and car batteries are mainly used for.

Figure 5: Watching TV at a bar in the City of Chókwe, Aug. 2006

Cultural activities are very widespread; mainly dancing, singing and music but also theatre groups and, influenced by TV, playback singing and copying dance moves from video clips (see following section).

The most popular, and often the only, sport in all three districts is football and this for both boys and girls. Every village has a football field and most of them have local teams. The popularity of football in Mossurize though is unique: Espungabera alone has nine football teams and every Sunday afternoon a large crowd gathers around the field to watch several matches. Girls play at school and sometimes with neighbours in

24 Interview with two young men, Nangade Sede, 20 July 2006
25 Interview with two young men, Muatide (Muidumbe), 24 July 2006
the yard, though teams of young women are rare. Bicycles are numerous in all districts and mainly used for transport of goods. Recently, bicycle races are becoming more popular in hilly areas of the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Manica and possibly other regions as well.

Organised activities can be found in the areas of sport, culture, religion or social commitment. In Nangade, dance groups are the almost only form of organised activity. There is not even a proper football team. In Chókwe and Mossurize, schools increasingly provide cultural activities such as dance and theatre groups and replace the gradually disappearing traditional cultural groups.

In Nangade, only a few young people are involved in church groups or the Islamic community. In Chókwe, where a high percentage of people belong to a church, the young Christians all go to Mass on Sunday morning and many are involved in other activities such as choir, a dance group or social work. In their work, churches like the Assembleia de Deus Africano give priority to the moral education of young people and try to get them to refrain from drinking, smoking, socialising in bars and discotheques and claim to save girls from prostitution.

In Chókwe, activist groups such as the Geração BIZ have been established for a while already and several young people we met became involved. Also in Mossurize, we met a number of teenagers who stated that they were NGO activists. In Nangade, PSSRAJ (Programa de Saude Sexual e Reprodutiva de Adolescente e Jovem) had started to recruit activists just months ago. It is the first such group in the district. The commitment of activists normally does not last very long, and considering the hesitation and dissatisfaction that we felt in the interviews, these organisations must have growing difficulties in finding activists. Activist groups attract mainly teenagers at school and conduct most events at schools. In my opinion, the neglect of youth who are not in school is a weak point of the youth activist movement against HIV/AIDS.

Organização da Juventude Moçambicana OJM, the national youth organisation (directed by Ministerio de Juventude e Desporto), is of marginal importance to young people in the three districts. In Nangade, it is simply nonexistent, and in Mossurize, the representative of Juventude e Desporto tried to initiate a local OJM group but without success. The regional OJM in Chókwe struggles to keep going. It has some members, but not many programs. OJM charges membership fees but without activities there is not much interest for young people to join. Overall, it seems clear that the more access young people have to dance or theatre groups as well as football teams, activist groups or youth organisations, the more they will get involved.

Entertainment for adolescents doesn’t just happen during the day, but at night as well. Many, especially young men, start to go out independently, some earlier, some later depending on permission of parents, on their friends and, of course, financial resources. Many villages have discotheques and video clubs, which are very popular among young people.

The discotheque is a backyard in the middle of the village. People call it ‘discoteca poeira’ because of the dust that raises when people dance. The generator for the two light bulbs and the sound system makes almost more noise than the music. There are a lot of young people but also adults and even children, fewer women than men. Some adult women sell traditional alcohol, ‘lipa’, and after a while many people are very drunk dancing and jumping around wildly. The atmosphere is rather rough. Young men often violently pull a girl close to them to

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26 Interview with pastor of Assembleia de Deus Africano, Nangade Sede, 13 July 2006
27 Largest activist movement against HIV/AIDS in Mozambique
28 5 MTN a month (youth without income), 10 MTN a month (youth with income). Interview with the secretary of OJM in Chókwe, City of Chókwe, 28 Aug. 2006
dance. She then discretely tries to mark distance avoiding to provoke him. Some girls carry their babies on the back while dancing crazily. They wear skirts and short tops, some of them even pants. At the end of the evening the ambience becomes more and more aggressive among the young men and we were told that it is quite frequent that the discotheque has to close because of brawls.29

![Image of person dancing]

Figure 6: Dancing in a barraca in the City of Chókwe, Aug. 2006

Many girls told us that they never go to the discotheque because it is too dangerous and only careless and irresponsible parents would allow their daughters to go there. We often heard that it was a place for simple, uncivilised young people without education. Nevertheless, the discotheques were always packed on Friday and Saturday and people even paid entrance.30

At least at first sight, the atmosphere in the city of Chókwe was not as wild as in the villages of Nangade. It reminded me more of a Saturday evening in a small town in Europe: girls and boys showing off in their newest clothes, playing with their mobile phones and chatting. The scene is animated but rather peaceful. It seems though that this is just the surface. The tough part like fights and coerced interactions with girls happens less in public but rather in the early morning on the way home. Espungabera has several bars in the centre of the village playing loud music in the evenings. Some of them have a back room with ambient lighting and a local DJ for dancing. People circulate between the different bars and dance a bit everywhere.

Video clubs are very popular among young people as well. They normally show Bollywood films, action movies and music video clips. They are open on weekdays as well and are much cheaper than the discotheque. In the City of Chókwe, TV is gradually replacing the video clubs. In conversations, young people told us that the movie was not the main reason to go there; it is generally a good place to meet a boy or girl and touch and kiss each other in the dark. Many girls insisted that they would never go to the video club because it was a very immoral and dangerous place to go.

29 Field notes Nangade, 14 July 2006
30 Nangade: 2.50 MTN, City of Chókwe: 50 MTN, Xilembene (Chókwe): 35 MTN
Local authorities in all three districts told us that they were thinking of closing the local discotheque because it causes too many problems and disturbs the public order. In Nangade Sed, the director of the school wants to force the owner of the discotheque to introduce a minimum age limit of fourteen years.

Dance and music

Cultural activities are widespread among young people in the districts, in particular dancing and playing music. Especially high is the number of young people active in dance groups in Nangade. In Mossurize and Chókwe, many young people are members of dance groups or choirs at school, church or other organisations, whereas only a few young people are active in independent groups. Groups attached to institutions normally have only young members and thus miss out on the interesting generational mix of traditional dance groups. It seems that the number of groups and dances in Nangade is stable or even growing, while dance groups in Mossurize and Chókwe are about to disappear. The number of groups and dances is a difficult measure because the ethnic groups in the south never had the abundance of dances and masquerades as the people in the north. The people of Mossurize are very attracted to spiritual dances, while Muchungoio, a particularly athletic and acrobatic dance of young men, is a bit ‘out of fashion’ as it needs a lot of skills, strength and practice. Young men in Mossurize today prefer football.

I would argue that more the local community (the adults) practise traditional art forms themselves, the more young people would get involved in cultural activities and the more likely they are to acquire proficiency in dancing, playing music, pottery or wood carving. Although girls and boys, mainly in Mossurize and Chókwe, often expressed their wish to join a dance group, they encountered difficulties in finding a group in their area. De Fletter comes to comparable results in his study about Mozambican youth from 1999:

One of the more interesting findings arising from the study is the high level of priority given by youth from all three districts to culturally linked activities such as painting, sculpture, theatre, dancing etc but are prevented from doing so due to the lack of facilities.  

In all the districts, there are young people who are trying out new forms of dance and music, usually inspired by video clips and pop-music (copying dance from clips, playback singing, rapping and mixing music). These new trends of cultural expression are related to global youth culture. Conservative traditional artists might look at it as degenerate, inferior culture and despise young people for their ignorance, but it is an expression of their time and the contradictions they have to deal with. I strongly believe that it would be important to give such new trends more attention and support.

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Nangade

Traditional culture in Nangade is very rich; dance and music are naturally a part of life. Nangade has an incredible variety of dances and dance groups and includes dances from most ethnic groups from northern Mozambique (see Appendix 6)\(^\text{32}\). Furthermore, there are several choirs and a number of musicians who play traditional instruments (Kauyembe, Bango, Shiyatyta and Dimbila). Carving wood sculptures and masks is highly developed in the region as well.

Most dance groups have a heterogeneous age structure, gathering young and old. Generally, one can distinguish dances common for old and young alike, such as Mapiko, Utamaduni, Lingundumbwe, N'sope or Likomba, from dances for young people, such as the Makusanya, Mashawona, Matara, Mapiko Na Upanga, Chingualanguanya, Chinguengue or Valeoleo. Most villages count several dance groups, which gather a good number of dancers and musicians.

A majority of the dances of the young generation appeared more or less recently: Mashawona (ca. 10 years ago), Mapiko Na Upanga (ca. 6 years ago), and Valeoleo (1 year ago), but there are also trendy dances with some history like Chinguengue (originally from Tanzania and introduced in northern Mozambique ca. 30 years ago). Many of those danças novas were created by small groups of young dancers who felt the urge to create something new. The dancers and musicians of danças novas modify and recreate their material continuously. These dances are often copied in the region and in short time a dance can spread out to the whole Plano Alto\(^\text{33}\). Such young groups enjoy an enormous freedom in transforming their dances that do not yet have a fixed form and traditional meaning as do other traditional dances. None of these groups are linked to schools, institutions or organisations. This independence allows a free flow of ideas and channels the creativity and energy of their members. Young men seem to be more active and outgoing in this process as most of those dances are exclusively for young men.

\(^{32}\) Most local groups in villages and cities practice one dance only. Their members normally have the same ethnicity and cultural background even though this does not seem to be compulsory. These groups are the main actors in fostering and transforming traditional dance. In Holzhausen, B. 2005. Traditional Dance in Transformation: Opportunities for Development in Mozambique, MA Dissertation, University of Leeds, accessible: <http://www.nestcepas.ch/aktuell/dissertation.pdf>, p. 36

\(^{33}\) Mapiko Na Upanga was created in 2000 by a small group of boys in Muatide (Muidumbe) and has spread out tremendously in the last six years, in Nangade alone there are at least three groups today.
Initiation rites are common for all the ethnic groups in Nangade. Therefore, learning traditional arts is ‘institutionalised’ for the younger generation and every young person has a minimal knowledge of traditional artistic skills (songs, dances, rhythms and stories). This common knowledge of cultural forms seems to provide a good foundation for the development of new forms in music and dance.

**Mossurize**

The Ndau in central Mozambique are known for having a strong traditional culture. There are about 25 dance groups in the district of Mossurize. The exact number of groups is unknown because the Técnico da Cultura of the area has not been able to visit certain villages for many years now. Surprisingly, the variety of dances is rather small, unlike Nangade. Basically, three types of dances can be found: *Muchungoio* (a very demanding and acrobatic dance for young men), *Makwayela* (a typical dance of southern Mozambique) and spiritual dances. Many *Muchungoio* groups are ‘family-groups’: the sons, daughters and wives of the chief form the majority of members. The number of groups is shrinking and if there are not enough young men practising
Muchungoio, there is serious concern that it will disappear in a generation.\textsuperscript{34} Makwayela, or rather a dance resembling it, is practiced by school groups in a lesser quality. The children simply call it ‘cultura’\textsuperscript{35}.

![Muchungoio-group in Espungabera (Mossurize), Oct. 2006](image)

The only vital type of dance that attracts new members easily and is performed regularly is spiritual dance. These groups gather on weekends and carry out long and demanding rituals of 24 to 48 hours. Such rituals are commissioned by a family or community to resolve a specific spiritual problem. During the ritual, the spirits of the Ndau talk through the dancers who are in a trance. The spiritual dances seem to provide guidance and orientation for a large group of people. As most of the spirits who appear are related to one of the past armed conflicts in the region, this practice has something of a post-war trauma processing nature and is part of the traditional beliefs of the Ndau.

![Spiritual dance, Espungabera (Mossurize), Oct. 2006](image)

\textsuperscript{34} Muchungoio has lost many groups and active dancers over the past 15 years. It depends on strong leaders. Today, most of them are older men and it is questionable if the groups will survive after their withdrawal. Interview with Ganhane Samuel, 4 Oct. 2006

A number of older musicians still play traditional instruments (Mbira, Ximazambi, Ximwandigoda, Ximatende, Ximadangari, Guerure or Damba). Previously, every young man or woman learned to play one of those instruments during their teenage years. Hearing them play reminded the adults that the young person was about to grow up. Today, this custom has disappeared.

Apart from the traditional dance and music, there are two theatre groups at schools in Espungabera, a local band that plays music from Zimbabwe and one or two local DJs.

**Chókwe**

Traditional music and dance exists in the form of dance groups, choirs, Canto Choral, and a number of musicians who play the traditional instruments of southern Mozambique (Xigovia, Xipendane, Xitende and bamboo flute). The number and types of groups, grupos culturais, in the district is unknown, but in comparison to Nangade or even Mossurize, they are few. We were told that there are four to five dances: Makwaya, Makwayela, Xingombela, Xingomane and Massesse. However, we only came across Makwayela, Massesse and Makwaya. Most members of dance groups and choirs today are older people (over 40 years old). The lack of young people practising traditional art forms might lead to their disappearance in a generation from now.

![Figure 12: Physically handicapped dancer of Makwaya group, City of Chókwe, Aug. 2006](image)

A number of schools in the district offer dancing or singing as an extra-curricular activity, but those school groups often lack stability and competent instructors (interviewees mentioned that the group they belonged to had ceased to exist or was a new one).

There are some theatre groups in the district producing mostly pieces about HIV/AIDS and other development-related subjects. Some of them are part of the activist groups of Geração BIZ or ESH (Escola sem HIV/SIDA). The aim of these groups is mainly to
transfer a message to the audience and not to support and develop the artistic and creative capacities of young people.

In the area of rock and pop music, young people increasingly form new small groups but innovative work is rare. Most of these young groups copy existing music, sing playback and imitate dance moves from video clips. They frequently complain that they lack the necessary equipment and instruments. I believe though, that it would be more important to give them some form of coaching and teaching to develop what they do. The initiative of Geraldo Norte and Belmiro Sosa36, who founded a network of young people’s theatre and dance groups and intervene as facilitators on request, is a very interesting proposal to strengthen such groups.

The City of Chókwe presently has no space for culture at all (cultural centre, cinema or theatre), not even a big hall for events. The former cinema was seriously damaged during the floods in 2000 and nobody has had the money to renovate and run a huge venue like this. Lately, the foundation of a new Casa da Cultura in the city is under discussion but apparently it has not progressed very far yet. To sum up, the city does not provide room for groups and individuals to develop and share their creative expression, be it traditional or contemporary.

**Youth culture, coolness and codes**

Typical visible features of youth culture are clothes and hairstyles, in combination with behaviour and language. Youth identities are very much about looking right and impressing peers. In the eyes of certain adults, these might be deviant, tasteless or dirty, but it is an expression of young people’s sense of difference from adult society.

In terms of visible features such as clothing and hairstyle, the differences in the three districts were smaller than I expected. There are regional differences because the clothes, accessories, make-up, pictures and gadgets come from the closest source: in Nangade from Tanzania, in Mossurize from Beira and in Chókwe from Maputo and South Africa. All imported products are in high demand and successively change the look of young people. Together with the clothes, come music, video clips, language and lifestyle. The accessibility of products is important; the more remote and poor a village, the fewer clothes and gadgets are for sale. Of course, the financial means of the young person limits his or her possibilities. One very important aspect of coolness for them is that one does not see the poverty: A majority of young people point out how important it is to be washed, brush their teeth and wear clean clothes. Teenagers from the upper part of Nangade complained often that due to the water problems in their village they had no possibility to take a bath and wear freshly washed clothes every day. ‘Everyone, literally the whole village, smells bad and this is embarrassing.’37

Young men wear T-shirts with images of international music and film stars or football teams. They usually dream of having a new pair of jeans, sunglasses and a baseball cap. Young girls wear skirts, pants and short tops showing their bellies instead of the traditional capulanas38. On special occasions, they put on make-up and high-heels. Some daring girls in Nangade are now starting to wear pants instead of skirts and capulanas. Adults comment on this as an aberrant and provoking outfit that does not suit a respectable girl. Young people in Mossurize are attracted by the city fashions that they see on the frequent visitors from Chimoio, Beira or returning migrants from

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36 Interview 17 Aug. 2006, City of Chókwe: *Rede de Movimento Juvenil*
37 Interview with Makusanya group in Nyanga (Nangade), 17 July 2006
38 Mozambican expression for the typical African women’ outfit; a piece of cloth wrapped around the waist.
South Africa. The *Madjonidjon*39 usually come back with the newest clothes, hairstyles and gadgets from Johannesburg. They frequently sell a part of their belongings after being at home a while because they need cash to buy tickets to go back to South Africa. Fashion in Chókwe is marked by its proximity to the capital Maputo and South Africa. Young people see the newest clothes on returning migrants from South Africa and some have already had the chance to visit Maputo themselves. Girls in Chókwe tend to wear shorter skirts, lower pants, more audacious tops and higher shoes than the girls in Mossurize and Nangade. In poor villages, girls dream of long braids of artificial hair and in Chókwe the braids have to be in line with the latest fashion from Maputo. The coolest young men in Chókwe start to grow rasta-hair and are regularly banned from school because of that.

An interesting trend can be found on the Plano Alto: Some young men wear up to three pairs of jeans at the same time and usually several T-shirts as well. It is a fashion from southern Tanzania and is linked to the lifestyle of those young men: The family clans are spread out in many different villages on both sides of the border and young men often travel between villages to visit friends and family or in search for a job. In their eyes, carrying a bag is not cool and could be stolen, so instead they wear several outfits at the same time and change them when the top one is too dirty. They feel much more versatile, free and special like that.

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39 Slang word for Mozambican workers in South Africa: Ma- = Bantu prefix indicating plural, Johnny = English name
There are regional differences as a lot of music comes over the borders: In Nangade, people listen to Tanzanian pop music in Kiswahili, whereas in Mossurize they prefer music from Zimbabwe.

In Nangade and Mossurize, young men dream of having their own bicycle, in Chókwe it is already a motorbike or even a car. Wherever mobile phone networks arrive, most people, young and old, would like to have a phone. Similar to urban areas, a kind of SMS communication culture starts to replace oral or written communication: In Nangade young people told us that they would write love letters, whereas in Chókwe young couples send an SMS.

Nangade Sede is a melting pot of ethnic groups from northern Mozambique and southern Tanzania. Eight languages are spoken in the village: Kiswahili, Makonde, Ndonde, Ngoni, Yao, Makuwa, Mwuani and a little Portuguese. This affluence of cultures and languages has led to the development of a local slang that mixes expressions and words from the various languages. We did not hear of any other explicit slang in the other districts. It seems common though that people in regions with several local languages start to mix them and use words and expressions of one language in another.

Money is definitely very high on the scale of coolness: ‘To be cool you need to have money in your pocket, that makes you feel strong.’ Young people stated many times that today’s world makes it hard for them, as someone who has no money is a complete nobody. The trendy clothes and gadgets, the discotheque and video clubs, drinking and, for young men, relationships with girls, cost money. Their opportunities to earn money are very limited and there is a lot of frustration around that. Today, even in remote villages money is the measure of everything. Young men complained often that girls are attracted only by money; they would prefer to be with a complete idiot who has money than stay with a nice but poor young man (see also section: Gender relationships, love and sex).

Another important ‘coolness’ factor is education. They argued that a good education would give them better opportunities to earn money and secondary school students are visibly very proud of their ‘academic level’. They hope of course that it will help them climb up in society.

In terms of behaviour, girls often suggest that it is important to be social and talkative. To impress boys you have to look good but also mandar de stilo (behave with style) and mecher o corpo (shake up the body). In Nangade Sede, young men emphasised that you have to be respectful and keep out of trouble, referring to a group of violent men in the village. ‘There are two groups here: Malandros (scamps) and decent people. Our motto is: respect people, do not talk bad about others, be cool, no stealing, no violence, no drinking – this is our style.’

Obviously, modern clothing provokes the older generation a great deal. Especially the look of girls nowadays is subject to sharp comments from older people. Traditionally in Africa a woman’s underpants should never be seen in public. In areas like Nangade, where women have not worn pants until now, to see a woman in jeans is almost like seeing her naked. The girls themselves are careful about wearing pants because ‘trabalha as cabeças dos homens (it makes men’s heads turn), pants are to impress people’. In Chókwe, a group of older ladies criticised the clothes of young girls by saying: ‘Look at them, they show their legs, bellies and lower backs! Are they not

40 Interview with two young men, Espungabera, 30 Sept. 2006
41 Interview with six girls from secondary school, City of Chókwe, 15 Aug. 2006
42 Interview with two young men, Nangade Sede, 20 July 2006
43 Interview with four young girls, Nangade Sede, 15 July 2006
embarrassed to walk around like this! They told us that a parent’s word is not respected anymore. The peer group decides what is in and out, if one does not follow the rules, she or he is excluded from the group and everyone will laugh at them. The girls, on the other hand, defend themselves and their outfits: ‘I do not care what other people think of me. I am a free person – this is a democracy!’

**Adolescence – how to become an adult member of society**

There are a number of ethnic groups in Mozambique that practice initiation rites: Makuwa, Makonde, Mandonde, Mwuan, Masena, Manhanja (girls and boys) and Machope, Malomoe and Mandau (girls only). The initiation is an important milestone in the life of a young person because only an initiated young man or woman is accepted as an adult member of the community and has access to the privileges of adults, including taboos like sexuality or drinking. The initiation formally determines when a young person transforms from a child to a young adult.

![Figure 15: Entrance to the initiation camp in Namaua (Mueda/Cabo Delgado), Dec. 05](image)

In Nangade, all ethnic groups practice initiation rites. The rites have undergone various changes over the last few decades. Today they are shorter (one month instead of four) in order not to keep the children away from school and the children are initiated at a much younger age than before (with 4-10 years old today in comparison to 12-16 years old earlier). For previous generations, the completion of the initiation rites showed the community that a young person was ready to get married. But due to the early initiation, young men and women today spend many years without being married but with the community’s permission to access adult taboos. Considering that sex is an easily available form of entertainment in rural areas, one can imagine that many teenagers are sexually very active, with the effect that early execution of the initiation rites are often blamed for damaging moral principles and contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. One way forward would be to postpone initiation rites. The first lady of

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44 Interview with Grupo de Mulimba, City of Chökwe, 22 Aug. 2006
45 Interview with a young woman, Espungabera, 2 Oct. 2006
46 In Mossurize, there are still women with the typical tattoos on their chest that are related to the initiation ritual. But in general fewer girls are initiated today and the practice is about to disappear.
Mozambique, Mrs. Maria da Luz Gebuza, recently addressed this issue during a visit in northern Mozambique by promoting the delay of initiation rites to prevent premature marriages for girls and postpone the beginning of a sexually active life because of HIV/AIDS.

For all the ethnic groups of Mozambique, it is a strong taboo for parents to talk with their children about sexuality. Therefore, all ethnic groups without initiation rites handed the instruction of adolescents over to third parties like aunts, uncles or grandparents. The Shangana in the south designated a mentor for each boy or girl to take care of the teenager during these years and to prepare him or her for adult life. For girls, these instructions started from the day of her first menstruation up to the day she got married. According to this system, during the phase of instruction she was still a girl and started to consider herself a woman from the age of about 19 years.

The girl’s family decided when she was ready to get married. When a young man showed interest, the two families started to negotiate the dowry, *lobolo*, with the consent of the girl. The young couple started to exchange messages and gifts, though without seeing each other. Often the young man needed some time to earn the necessary money for the *lobolo* through contract work in South Africa. At the time of the actual marriage, the woman was at least 20 years old and the young man sometimes up to 30. The young woman had to be a virgin (the family of the groom inspected the bed sheets after the wedding night). Old people who told us about the former customs all stated that this traditional structure is not in place anymore and complained passionately about the bad behaviour of today’s youth:

> Nowadays, girls do not even tell their mothers when they start menstruation. The family just suddenly realises that she is pregnant! - Young people today think that they know everything better. They think that they are able to grow up all alone without any guidance of the older generation. They do not want to hear our advice. - Young people today lack respect, they contradict older people openly, they drink and smoke and start sexual relationships far too early.

Older people in all the districts expressed similar opinions about the youth of today. They usually blamed the government, education, democracy and the laziness of young people themselves for their bad behaviour. This is obviously a simple way to look at the issue but it has some basis in reality. I also suspect that today’s parents and grandparents do not insist so much anymore on the fulfilment of traditional rules either, for whatever reason.

Young people themselves did not perceive their situation as too problematic. Actually, they rarely complained about their parents or grandparents. This shows that they still have high respect for the older generation, they would never criticise their parents in front of strangers. Several young people admitted openly that they do not sufficiently respect traditional rules and taboos. Their ideas of adulthood are straightforward: Marrying and having children, earning money, being a respected member of society and trying to improve their livelihood.

Rising school enrolment rates and the improved quality of education leads to the prolongation of adolescence, which happened in the industrialised world about a hundred years ago. The longer teenagers stay at school, the longer they are in this hovering state between childhood and adulthood with all the chances and risks that this period of transition carries. The prolongation of adolescence and the disappearance of adult guidance during puberty increase the difficulties of young

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48 Interview with the chairman of a Makwaya Group, City of Chókwe, 24 Aug. 2006
people in growing up and getting integrated into society. They face the difficult task of combining different opinions, influences and lifestyles and trying to make sense of them. Consequently, they assemble a conglomerate of rules, ideas, knowledge, pictures, opinions and experiences and look for a coherent path through a labyrinth of contradictions, often realising halfway through that their parents are almost as disoriented as they are.

**Gender relationships, love and sex**

Adolescence brings about a tremendous increase in heterosexual interests and social relationships. There is little doubt that sexual attitudes and sex role behaviours are primarily shaped through peer interactions.49

There is no doubt that the physical transformation during puberty has a strong impact on the social behaviour of youth. Young people develop a strong interest in the opposite sex and are concerned about their attractiveness and image. Youth behaviour and activities are strongly motivated by such reasons, as in the following statement of a young Makonde man who soundly illustrates the imperative link between youth culture and sexuality, with culture as the terrain to negotiate sexual and social attractiveness:

> There are two things that I like about dancing: On one hand, I like it as a physical activity, it makes you feel strong and agile and helps you forget all the problems around you. On the other hand, girls are very attracted to you as a dancer. They come to see performances and admire you and you can have as many girls as you want.50

For young people, gender relationships clearly create a lot of tension and insecurity. The discussion of this theme with our interviewees often became the longest section of the interview and was frequently used by the young people to ask questions of us.

According to a national survey from 2001, girls have their first sexual experience on average at the age of 15.9 and boys at 15.6 years. The large majority of those experiences are pre-marital. Only between six and seven percent of young people used condoms at the first sexual intercourse. Young women who never attended school have their first sexual experience earlier than girls who go to school.51 The field work reflects those results: Boys and girls frequently have their first sexual experience early (around 12-13 years) and normally with a partner that they do not know very well. Most of them have some information about protection from HIV/AIDS but normally do not use condoms, although sometimes they start to use them later. However, there is a significant group of boys - and especially girls - who do not get sexually involved before 18 years old. These often state that they do not want to get involved at a young age because they want to continue school, because they obey religious rules and, for girls, because they are very concerned about getting pregnant.

What surprised me were the expectations and experiences young people had with (love) relationships. In all three districts, we met young people who said things like: 'Love does not exist here. You cannot trust in relationships. Nobody is really serious

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50 Interview with two young men, Muidumbe (Cabo Delgado), 24 July 2006
about love.52 ‘Everyone seems to betray everyone. Nobody can be trusted. Among adults, it is the same thing. This is really difficult. It is a problem of the whole society.’53 Girls blame boys for not being faithful and adult men for just using them. Men would charm them, offer them presents and then drop them when they get pregnant. Boys blame girls for not being faithful either and just running after men who have money. Young men openly admit that they have other partners apart from their girlfriend or wife. However, in a society with a long tradition of polygamy, this might not be too surprising54. Comparable to our experience, research from Tanzania reports deep mistrust of partners in relationships and how this lack of trust impedes communication and sincere emotions.55 This reflects a profound instability in the whole society and increases the vulnerability of youth tremendously.

Sex with adult men is a common strategy for young women to secure their livelihoods. Sometimes poverty forces them to do so, sometimes they just want to have access to goods that they could not afford otherwise. They consciously risk undesired pregnancies and the infection with STDs or HIV/AIDS.56 Sometimes they hope that a child will oblige the man to support her but usually they simply hope that nothing will go wrong. Inevitably, undesired pregnancy is one of the most serious problems for young women in Mozambique. They are often younger than 14 years when giving birth. Many girls are concerned about getting pregnant, but at the same time, they have insufficient information about contraception and HIV/AIDS prevention. Many young people did not know that condoms prevent pregnancy57. The consequences for the girls and their families are severe: The girls are frequently incapable of assuming the responsibility of raising a child and pass it on to their mothers and grandmothers who have to carry the additional burden of caring for an undesired child. Some girls end up having several children by different men and then have great difficulties getting married. Young mothers frequently drop out of school: Sometimes going to school is not seen as suitable for the role of a mother, or they do not find anyone to take care of the child on a regular basis or they lack the motivation to continue their education.

Hospitals in these districts do not perform abortions. Therefore, young women frequently have traditional abortions done and put their own lives at serious risk. Some young women give birth alone somewhere in the bush and leave the newborn behind. Child murder is illegal but the police have difficulties prosecuting because of not being able to identify the mother of the dead newborn.58

The early start of a sexual life for teenagers together with a general feeling of having no future and feeling useless increases risky behaviour and adds to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Even more so as many young people regularly have sex with different partners. Girls are usually remunerated with money or goods and have little chance to negotiate the use of a condom. Many young people seem to lack basic information about sexuality and have no consciousness or knowledge about their own protection.

52 Interview with three young men, Nangade Sede, 16 July 2006
53 Interview with a young woman, Espungabera, 2 Oct. 2006
54 Men who live in polygamy though differentiate clearly that using a girl as a lover and taking a wife is not the same thing in terms of responsibility and commitment. Espungabera, 27 Sept. 2006
56 See also Hawkins, K. & Mussa, F. & Abuxahama, S. 2005. Milking the Cow: Young women’s constructions of identity, gender, power and risk in transactional and cross-generational sexual relationships: Maputo, Mozambique, Options Consultancy Services and Populations Services International (PSI), Maputo
57 Interview with a young mother: A neighbour seduced her when she was 13 years old. She did not know that she could get pregnant from having sex with him and only realised that she was about to have child when people told her. He still lives in the area but does not want to see nor support the child. Interview, Espungabera, 5 Oct. 2006
58 Commander of PRM (Polícia da República de Moçambique) in Mossurize, Espungabera, 26 Sept. 2006
There are HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns in rural areas, but they tend to be superficial. Most interviewees reported that they received information about HIV/AIDS at school, sometimes from theatre pieces and from TV. Usually activists of different organisations will hold lectures at schools but the limited time and the high number of pupils, as well as the incomplete knowledge of the activists themselves, do not permit time for questions or personal problems. Thus, young people are simply filled up with slogans that they are incapable of transferring into action. Their knowledge is too incomplete and contradictory to expect them to assess their behaviour and protect themselves.

Figure 16: Information centre of SAAJ in Chimoio, Sept. 2006

Therefore, there is definitely an urgent need for accessible and personal information and advice. Unfortunately, the centres of SAAJ (Serviço Amigos Adolescentes Jovens) at the hospitals of Espungabera and Chókwe are both closed. The activists who were supposed to run the centres were too few and were not paid and therefore not motivated enough.

Of the three districts, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in Nangade is the least advanced. A few months ago, UNICEF started to train activists for an organisation called PSSRAJ (Programa de Saude Sexual e Reprodutiva de Adolescente e Jovem). In comparison to other regions, people in Nangade are poorly informed about HIV/AIDS. Moreover, there are no condoms sold at the market in Nangade Sede, they can only be picked up at the hospital. Most teenagers we spoke to had never used a condom and often did not even know how. HIV tests will only be introduced in the next few months, therefore nobody has ever taken a test and, in addition, retroviral therapy is not yet available. Today the biggest health problem of young people in Nangade are STDs, which clearly multiply the risk of an infection with HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS prevalence in the province of Cabo Delgado is much lower than other parts of the country, but these statistics do not reflect reality because systematic testing of

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59 SAAJ runs small information centres in many districts: a room at the hospital equipped with VCR and TV, the latest prevention brochures and boxes full of condoms. Local youth know about them but repeatedly complained that the centres were closed when they needed advice.

60 Interview with nalombo (master of initiation): He told us that he circumcises a group of 20 boys with the same knife. He did not know that HIV can be transmitted through blood. Iluanda, 17 July 2006

61 Today only the hospital in Pemba (capital of Cabo Delgado) offers retroviral therapy for a restricted number of patients. Soon more hospitals in the province will introduce retroviral therapy, the nearest to Nangade will be in Mueda (ca 120 km and 6-7 h by bus). Director Distrital de Saúde, Nangade, 14 July 2006

62 Director Distrital de Saúde, Nangade, 14 July 2006
pregnant women, available in other parts of the country, has not been implemented yet.

There are a lot of socio-cultural factors affecting gender relationships and sexual behaviour. The advantage of the traditional guidance and teaching is its holistic character. It introduced sexuality and gender relationships linked to the aspects of health, social life, culture and spirituality. To replace this with slogans like ‘Use a condom when having sex’ is so oversimplified that it is not a surprise if young people do not follow it. Their worries and problems around relationships are far greater in every sense and entail all the questions about the meaning of life and the fears of the future, exactly like every other teenager in the world. To make HIV/AIDS prevention more successful, these questions have to become part of the process.

Violence, drinking and other problems

Young people consider the lack of entertainment and occupation as their biggest problems. The feeling of emptiness and uselessness seems to be omnipresent in rural areas and leads to a number of ‘typical’ youth problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, violence and criminality.

Adults stated that today’s youth was drinking much more than previous generations. My impression is though that teenagers usually did not have the money to buy a lot of alcohol. They would rather smoke marijuana because it is cheaper, but it is illegal and can lead to problems with the police. Definitely new is drinking among girls. Excessive drinking among adult men is very common all over Mozambique. Its typical effects are alcoholism and violence; fights in bars, discotheques and other public places but domestic violence is also frequent.

![Figure 17: Mural painting of a bar, Muatide (Muidumbe/Cabo Delgado), Dec. 05](image)

Normally drunken men fight with fists, bottles and furniture, but many men in rural areas carry knives and machetes with them, which are occasionally the cause of serious injuries and even casualties. Other weapons are not very common among young men.  

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63 Interviews with commanders of PRM (Polícia da República de Moçambique) in Nangade (13 July 2006), Chókwe (14 August 2006) and Mossurize (26 Sept. 2006)

64 In Chókwe, a small group of young men smuggles guns from South Africa for criminal purposes. In Mossurize, a lot of men still hide arms despite the demobilisation in 1993/94. They can become deadly risks in family conflicts.
Many young men try to make money smuggling goods over nearby borders. In Nangade, it is petrol, marijuana, but also timber and poached animals. In Mossurize, it is sugar and other goods from Zimbabwe and in Chókwe stolen cars, motorbikes and different types of electronics. Burglaries and theft are common in all communities and can be quite ruinous for the victims. Offenders frequently manage to disappear over the border to a neighbouring country. People in the districts usually blame foreigners for burglaries and robberies. This can only be partly true because the burglars need detailed information about the wealth and habits of a family. In Chókwe, a small group of young men get involved in gang criminality in South Africa and spend their lives between Mozambique and South Africa trafficking stolen goods.

It was shocking to hear how much families sometimes have to fight to protect their girls from stalking men. Many girls talked openly about the harassments they suffer from neighbours, classmates, even teachers. Obviously, the wishes of young women are often not respected and sexual violence is very common. Girls who entertain relationships with different ‘sugar daddies’ risk jealousy and violence among the men and against themselves. Nevertheless, rape and sexual abuse are rarely reported to the police. Often the girl or her parents do not know that they could report such incidents to the police. Many girls do not tell anyone because they fear that their environment will play it down and blame them.

Figure 18: Boys playing ‘combat fighting’ outside Montepuez (Cabo Delgado), Sept. 2006 (photo: Paulo Israel)

Apart from the headquarters of the PRM (Polícia da República de Moçambique) in each district, the police have a number of small police stations in larger villages. In small villages and settlements, the police rely on the collaboration with village elders and local leaders. In case of an emergency, it takes several hours to more than a day before a policeman will arrive on location. If the perpetrator is a minor, local leaders and the police will facilitate a process of compensation and apology. The teenager has to pay his guilt in money or kind to the offended person. Young people over 18 years are fully accountable to the law. All districts have detention cells to keep suspects.

65 Xilembene (Chókwe), 15 Aug. 2006 / Macaretane (Chókwe), 21 Aug. 2006: Interviews with groups of schoolgirls (14-17 years): Both groups of girls told us that sexual harassment and abuse, sometimes even rape are common in the village as well as at school. Girls in the other districts reported similar problems. Domestic violence and sexual abuse in the family were not discussed in the interviews.
The large majority of crimes are committed by young men. Their incentives are usually lack of employment and poverty.\textsuperscript{66} Young offenders tend to come from very poor families or are orphans. Their marginalisation started previous to their criminal activities. Once they start to get involved in illegal activities, they become more and more alienated from mainstream society and can develop into a social threat for the whole community.

\textbf{Education and employment}

Despite continuous investments in the area of education, the condition and infrastructure of education remains critical: Many villages have inadequate school buildings, not even providing minimum shelter against rain or wind. The number of students per class is usually extremely high (primary school: 80-120 in Nangade, 60-80 pupils per class in Mossurize and Chôkwe).

Language problems are serious in rural areas: The most common languages in the district of Nangade are Kiswahili and Makonde. Most children speak or at least understand two to three local languages but had never encountered Portuguese until entering school. Under these conditions, literacy is extremely difficult and typically even students of fifth or sixth class are unable to speak or understand Portuguese. Even though in Chôkwe and Mossurize, young people’s proficiency in Portuguese is definitely better, there is a considerable group without any knowledge of Portuguese.

In Mossurize, school buildings in several villages are under construction and accessibility and quality of education is slowly improving. A number of young people between 18 and 30 years finished their education in Zimbabwe, but their chances for employment or further studies are lower because the school systems are different and their level of Portuguese is insufficient. Chôkwe has a number of newly built and newly equipped schools and the situation in terms of the size of the classes and access to higher education is better than in other parts of the country.

Generally, there is a lack of professional training in the country. The province of Cabo Delgado, with around 1.3 million inhabitants (census 1997), has one college for technical professions and a small private university in Pemba. That means that even students who finished twelfth class often have no opportunity to continue their studies. A few young men in each district manage to organise an apprenticeship with a local craftsman\textsuperscript{67}, but all the others will never find such opportunities.

In all three districts, a majority of pupils drop out of school before even starting sixth class\textsuperscript{68}/\textsuperscript{69}. The INJAD survey reports that 45 percent of female and 21 percent of male youth in rural area have never attended school and only 30 percent of girls respectively 43 percent of boys between 15 and 24 years are at school (rural and urban areas together).\textsuperscript{70} These numbers demonstrate clearly that a majority of young people are not attending school.

\textsuperscript{66} A young man in Chôkwe told us that he used to break into houses. He was unemployed for many years and unable to make a living otherwise. When the police caught him, he changed his behaviour. Chôkwe, 23 Aug. 2006
\textsuperscript{67} The apprentice usually pays a monthly fee to the master.
\textsuperscript{69} Primary school is free up until seventh class. Students of secondary school have to pay matriculation fees, materials, and as these are often boarding schools, for accommodation and food. To register for the exams at the end of seventh class, the pupil has to show identity papers. Poor children frequently do not have them and lack the money to have them done. They consequently drop out of school.
There are still a lot of young people and their parents who seriously question the value of education. In fact, the opportunities of an illiterate farmer who never went to school and his literate neighbour seem to be quite the same. Education is not paying off in terms of money or livelihood security. Its value lies in other areas; in contact with authorities, better self-esteem and broader knowledge of the world in general. At its best, education could enable young farmers to cooperate, organise themselves and create initiatives that would improve and secure their livelihoods.71

Reports about youth in Africa therefore often discuss the relevance of education, arguing that the education system does not equip young people with skills to compete in the labour market, nor does it prepare them to go into self-employment enterprise activities.72 It seems to me that the education system does in fact lack such concepts. Nowadays, it is not enough to provide basic education for every child in the country. It cannot be enough to make children repeat sentences and learn them by heart. The contents have to be relevant to the context of the child, promote the ability to critically reflect and prepare him or her for the challenges of the adult world, outside their district as well.

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71 Interview with primary school teacher, Nangade Sede, 21 July 2006
Unemployment clearly is the biggest problem for youth in all three districts. In fact, it is quite impossible to find wage labour at all. The only areas with some demand for workers are agriculture (seasonal work), construction (short-term contracts) and from time-to-time development projects.\textsuperscript{73} The frustration of local young people therefore is not to be underestimated. Official youth unemployment rates in Mozambique are not available. For comparison; in a survey in Zambia (2001), the great majority of young people (over 73 percent) indicated that they were doing ‘nothing’.\textsuperscript{74} In the countryside, most people are not literally ‘unemployed’, but rather ‘underemployed’ due to low productivity in smallholding agriculture.

Most young people hang around without work from the day they drop out of school. They try to survive by cultivating a field, doing occasional jobs and running little businesses. Young women usually get married and will stay bound to household and fieldwork for the rest of their lives. Young men might tentar a vida (endeavour life) somewhere outside the village (South Africa or a city) or try to set up a business at the local market. Normally, they will sooner or later start to cultivate their own fields, build a house and look for a wife. They usually scarcely manage to survive by farming, fishing, hunting and trading a little bit. In Nangade and Mossurize, there is enough farmland available and the community will allocate land to young farmers, in Chókwe, it depends on the location.

Just like the cyclic model that I discussed at the beginning of this paper, a farmer’s life today is in general very similar to a farmer’s life some decades ago. With the difference that young people today are aware of the new, accessible opportunities like education, better means of transport, communication technologies and modern goods. Through TV, they even see images of ‘shiny’ city life. ‘Democracy’ means for many young people that they have the right to make individual choices. They slowly start to claim their personal freedom and are no longer ready to sacrifice all personal interests for the benefit of the community.

\textsuperscript{73} Those projects are often directed and organised through faraway central offices, local youth rarely have a chance to grab one of those rare contracts: The mine clearance program of HALO Trust in Nangade exclusively hired young men from other districts.

\textsuperscript{74} Chigunta, F. 2002. The socio-economic situation of Youth in Africa: Problems. Prospects and Options, p. 11
An important practical factor is money; every household today needs cash to get access to modern goods and services, but earning money in rural areas is incredibly difficult and young men and women have to engage in activities that are often close to illegality to earn the urgently needed cash (cross-border trading, smuggling, prostitution, theft, etc.).

Many young people miss family support and are forced to ensure their own livelihood very early. More than half of our interviewees below the age of 18 years were not living with both of their parents\textsuperscript{75} and had to contribute to the family household. A considerable group of poor young men do not have a real home anymore and move around between villages and countries in search of occasional jobs. The number of minors who will be forced to provide the means for their own survival is bound to increase in the future due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the population.

The exchange of workforces over the borders and migration has its specific characteristics in each of the three districts. In Mossurize, there are increasing numbers of migrants coming over the border in search of work due to the difficult economic and political situation in Zimbabwe. These immigrants compete with young unemployed Mozambicans and often accept lower wages. The border police are increasingly controlling illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe and sending them back, despite the strong ethnic and personal links between the communities on either side of the border. Many young people in Mossurize and Chökwe dream of going to South Africa even though the times of contract work in the goldmines is over and unemployment in South Africa is very high as well.\textsuperscript{76} They usually cross the border illegally although visa duties for Mozambicans was lifted recently. South African authorities still send back thousands of illegal Mozambicans immigrants every year.

In Nangade, despite all the difficulties in making a living, migration is not an option for most young people. Previously, a lot of young Mozambicans worked on farms in southern Tanzania to avoid the forced labour policy of the Portuguese. Today, the wages and living conditions are similar on both sides of the border. Migration is not as attractive as it used to be. Some secondary school students might dream of studying and working somewhere far away. Young people without much education imagine themselves as farmers or even as local businessmen. Big cities are far away and most young people do not even imagine ever travelling to a city. They try to combine traditional life as farmers with the pictures from video clips and modern products sold on the markets and somehow make up their own image of the world they live in.

\section*{Conclusions}

Every generation clearly has its specific challenges linked to the political, social, economic and cultural situation. Mozambican youth today live in new and different conditions. African youth, like youth in other parts of the world, is very much influenced by global trends. But, unlike youth in the developed world, rural youth in Africa look at images of worlds that they have never seen in reality, that are an enormous contrast to their everyday life. At the same time, many values in rural communities have shifted or are about to disappear. The cyclic character of their ancestors’ life is diminishing and a linear, transitory aspect of an individual’s life is gaining importance. This transformation is often blamed on ‘democracy’ or general ‘egoism’ of people today. This

\textsuperscript{75} Reasons: Parents separated, migration, one or both parents passed away, parents are too poor and place some children in the house of other family members, and family conflicts.

\textsuperscript{76} Usually Mozambican immigrants in South Africa today sell food and clothes on the street, do seasonal work on farms and, if they are very lucky, they find employment in a factory. Their living situation is usually very hard.
transformation of society is profound, happening quickly and obviously producing imbalances, tensions, conflicts and losses in many areas. Culture has an important role in this process, a place to work things out creatively fosters the dialogue between different cultural strains and models and forms a basis upon which to build new identities.

Appreciating culture is crucial even more so in periods of dramatic transformation, when people are looking for new orientation and values. It is then that the culture’s impact on society is the biggest. Culture when acknowledged gives strength in moving forward or even in beginning to reject its negative features. It then becomes a backbone that can create the resilience that makes change and transformation easier.  

**Culture: from local to global**

This study was to assess the importance and significance of cultural activities in the lives of young men and women in rural areas of Mozambique and to understand what kind of cultural influences they are exposed to. Looking at the free time of young people, cultural activities are very popular and young Mozambicans are obviously proud of their culture. But what is Mozambican culture? I would argue that Mozambique has a great wealth and variety of traditional cultures and that there is some kind of typical Mozambican lifestyle and culture that one can find all over the country – but, first of all, culture is local.

Local or ethnic culture is in great danger today because an important store of cultural knowledge is about to disappear in the next 10 to 20 years. According to my observations, most of the knowledge and skills lies with the generation of the 40-60 years olds who were born before national independence. The rapid political and social changes, various armed conflicts, economic development, modernisation and globalisation have changed people’s attitudes towards their own culture and values. Those who were taught as children still have some access to their cultural roots, while today’s young people are often missing basic skills and knowledge of traditional art forms.

Young people are very impressed by the ‘new’ coming in from outside, but most of them also have a sense of belonging and respect for their origins. What they long for most is access to something, to learn something and to become someone to be proud of. They do not want to be left alone in a remote village watching the world pass by on TV. This leads to a profound frustration and increases the feeling of poverty and powerlessness. In contrast, young members of cultural groups emphasised the personal value of their activity in their interviews with us. It gave them something to be proud of and a feeling of belonging to a cultural context.

Learning artistic skills and techniques, like drumming or dancing, are becoming rare today. However, the imitation of video clips that we observed in many places can actually become a very creative and challenging act if it is based on cultural knowledge and artistic skills. Without that, the artistic deficits and technical inadequacies are limiting any creative process. Creation and innovation clearly happen on the basis of existing cultural forms, be it in consent or in opposition to them. A broad knowledge of traditional steps and the ability to improvise are the key elements for the development of new dances, for example. Improvisation is much used in African dance and music and always departs from a common stock of traditional performance knowledge.

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77 Landry, Ch. 2005. *Culture at the heart of transformation*, Swiss Development Cooperation/Pro Helvetia, p.15
Periodically repeated, unscripted performance, including ritual, music, and dance in Africa, is improvisational. Most performers [...] have been trained from childhood in particular techniques enabling them to play spontaneously with learned, in-body formulas.  

The performance knowledge of indigenous societies is large and proves to be a pool of material for the creation of new forms. This is reduced when people move away from traditional life. Without the support of a traditional community that shares the same knowledge, they seem to lose trust in their creative power.

![Children trying out drums, Muidumbe (Cabo Delgado), July 2006](image)

Traditional knowledge and skills are currently in the hands of people over 40 years. Principally traditional knowledge is available but not accessible to the younger generation. That is why it might look as if young people sometimes do not have much interest in traditional culture. Maybe traditional culture does not correspond to young people’s tastes or lifestyles today but on the other hand dancing and music are definitely popular and many young people express the desire to learn more but they do not know where or how. A number of schools in the districts offer dance as an extra-curricular activity, but without skilled leaders, these groups only manage to do simple dances of low quality and they lack continuity.

Independent dance groups have more to offer in terms of quality but also in terms of self-organisation, self-esteem and creativity. They often very naturally gather different generations, providing fertile ground to teach and learn about traditional culture. However, today in many regions the number of independent groups is on the decline. In comparison, government programs and development organisations increasingly use dance and theatre to promote the prevention of HIV/AIDS or other development targets. The groups that are formed for such purposes do not have an innovative character, they simply deliver commissioned messages. This impoverishes culture in Mozambique enormously. Geraldo Norte, theatre facilitator in Chókwe, reflects the opinion of many young artists with his statement:

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AIDS is destroying our mental immunity. We are not free anymore to talk about the issues that are concerning us really. It seems as if we would not have culture if we would not have AIDS.\(^ 80\)

This is an issue of serious concern. Groups and artists are biased by funding and lose their artistic freedom. I believe that it is very important for civil society that culture can provide space to freely express alternative voices and does not restrict the opinions and visions of people.

Generally, I would argue that there is not much value placed on (local) culture, not in the districts and not nationally. This is true for public consciousness, government programs and projects of development organisations alike. Local groups are always welcome to perform at official events, but normally there is not even a minimal remuneration for those artists, although they successfully animate the crowds on such occasions.

Every district in Mozambique has a Técnico da Cultura that is responsible for the cultural issues of the district. These public servants do not have clear objectives nor even minimal means. One of their tasks is usually an inventory of all the groups, artists and art forms of their district, but they very rarely have the opportunity to travel to villages and therefore cannot provide the necessary information.\(^ 81\) None of the districts invests in local festivals, meetings of groups and artists to celebrate the local culture or fosters the exchange between groups. Not even a town as large as Chókwe provides space for culture. The same problem applies to Chimoio and other medium-sized cities in Mozambique. I am convinced that the provision of space, opportunities and exchanges for groups and individuals is essential for them to develop and share their practice and creative expression and subsequently preserve the cultural wealth of the country.

**Today’s youth - just too many problems?**

In the previous sections, I mentioned many issues and touched on many of the difficulties and problems of young people in rural Mozambique. The statements of the young people that touched me most was their lack of trust in relationships and society in general (see section: Gender relationship, love and sex). I think that it is a frightening verdict for a society if young people have no confidence in others anymore. A vital ground of human life is missing which increases disrespect for others leading to violence and destruction. I would argue that this is phenomenon is linked to the increasing individualism and general insecurity in a quickly transforming society.

Another element that young people must often struggle with is money. Having or not having is of ultimate importance. Poor is not just poor anymore. The hierarchy in terms of financial means and access to goods is gaining importance in the adult community as well as among the youth. But, most young people only find access to cash with great difficulty.

The combination of the two is dangerous: A young person who has no money and no confidence, trust or social support can become an unpredictable and destructive element and act without respect for social rules or laws. With the disappearing

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\(^{80}\) Interview, City of Chókwe, 17 Aug. 2006

\(^{81}\) Ganhane Samuel has been Técnico da Cultura in Mossuríze for many years. Transport is so rare that he has to visit villages by bicycle (the next **posto administrativo** Dacata is ca. 20 km away and around 200 m lower). In 2002, a **Muchungoio** group from the northern part of the district was invited to a national selection in Maputo. Since then he has neither seen nor heard from them due to lack of communication and transport. Espungabera, 4 Oct. 2006
traditional values and rules in most rural areas, young people lose guidance and support. They used to have assigned teachers and counsellors for the difficulties in the transition to adulthood. Nowadays, they are free(er) of some conservative restrictive customs (especially the girls), but they lack assistance. The need of youth for advice and dialogue though remains vital and has to be provided somehow. Family clans and village communities are losing influence on young people, while the peer group’s opinion and habits becomes increasingly important. However, schools and other institutions (especially religious groups) are gaining influence.

Religious and politically independent institutions for youth are nonexistent, community or cultural centres are very rare and schools are not able to provide any extra services. Teachers usually are overloaded by high numbers of students and are so occupied with the normal school program that they have no capacity to deal with the personal problems of their students. Thus, only the peer group is left as a young person’s refuge.

The HIV/AIDS prevention campaign reflects the same problematic situation. The usual superficial prevention campaigns with simple slogans do not provide the in-depth information, the space for questions and personal advice that would start the necessary dialogue with young people around HIV/AIDS. The little that is established in terms of prevention campaigns and activist movements is mostly targeted at youth in school. Considering the high drop-out rates of young people, it seems very important that young people who are not in school are also addressed with special programs and get access to information and services as well.

I find it remarkable that a large part of HIV/AIDS prevention in the country relies on unpaid and badly trained activists. I consent that peer teaching has its advantages and facilitates dialogue and reflection among young people, but this can only work out with good professional supervision and support. If information centres on HIV/AIDS in districts are closed because of the lack of activists and missing motivation, it is a clear sign that the strategy of peer teaching alone does not work. I advocate that it needs at least one skilled social or health worker per district who is assigned to coordinate prevention and information in the whole area and runs different kinds of workshops and consultancy sessions.

The other area where young people in the countryside are really disadvantaged is in terms of access to education and employment. The unemployment and underemployment of young people in the entire country increases a feeling of uselessness and powerlessness in the younger generation. Simply imagining the amount of unused human resources in the whole of Africa is a torment. In sight of a fast developing world, but without the possibility to be part of it: African youth is sitting around ‘doing nothing’. Their emptiness and frustration leads to many of the problems discussed in the previous sections but especially to feeling little respect for their own and other people’s lives therefore leading to risky behaviour, neglecting the children in their custody and having little motivation to invest into the future.

The fact that there is nothing much to do, especially in rural areas, is the point where culture and youth problems are linked. Cultural activities contribute to entertainment and conviviality, which is important for every community. In addition, cultural values give guidance or offer a field to contradict and criticise established values. Artistic and creative activities give some sense of fulfilment and competence, which could help to alleviate some of the emptiness and boredom of youth and strengthen their self-esteem.

Such a strategy serves two purposes: The support and care for traditional culture and its development into the 21st century and the indispensable empowerment of youth in
rural areas. Both matters need some distinctive framework and have their own special obstacles to overcome, but it can work out as a means to encourage local self-esteem and the identities of communities, especially youth.

Recommendations

Rural youth in Mozambique have plenty of problems and they are all interlinked and woven into a complex socio-cultural system. Problem management therefore has to start with a dialogue not only with young people but the whole community. In this section, I want to put forward some ideas of how both the support of culture and the empowerment of youth can be embraced in different areas.

Culture offers opportunities

A broad discussion of the impact of cultural activities definitely exceeds the scope of this paper. To give some background, I want to put forward some of the results of Matarasso’s landmark study on the social impact of the participation in the arts, in which he classifies their social impact in the following six areas:

- **Personal development**: increase of self-esteem and confidence, enhance social skills, learn new skills and make new experiences, stimulate interest and motivation to take up education, explore personal rights and responsibilities.
- **Social cohesion**: make new friends, develop social networks, promote tolerance and develop contact between the generations and different ethnic groups, integration of marginalised members of the community.
- **Community empowerment and self-determination**: build community organisational capacity, encourage local self-reliance, self-organisation and project management, strengthen community co-operation and networking, gain insight into political and social ideas.
- **Local image and identity**: develop pride in local traditions and cultures, feel a sense of belonging and involvement, improve the image of public bodies.
- **Imagination and vision**: develop people’s creativity, explore values, meanings and dreams, gain of visions beyond the immediate.
- **Health and well-being**: people generally feel better, improve the quality of life, provide a unique and deep source of enjoyment.

These effects are related to all kinds of organised or self-organised community arts activities such as theatre, dance, music, visual arts and handicrafts. This list suggests that culture helps tackle a wide range of social problems, but under certain conditions: To reach a good and sustainable social impact through arts and culture, there has to be a continuous long-term commitment, which is usually difficult to attain within the framework of projects. Many examples demonstrate that such improvement and transformation of community life through cultural activities needs time but it will be permanent and sustainable.

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83 The example of the *Jana Sanskriti* theatre movement in India shows that the long-term commitment of a small group of people over twenty years now has lasting impact on gender relations (division of labour, reduction of domestic violence and alcoholism) and social structure (acknowledgment of the voices of the less powerful such as lower castes and women) in the communities. A movement that started with one theatre group in a West Bengal village in 1985 multiplied over the years not only in West Bengal but in other parts of India, Pakistan and Nepal and has a very large number of active members today. The enduring behaviour changes in the villages involved in theatre activities have manifested slowly over many years of practice. In Ganguly, S. 1999. ‘A Space for Empowerment: Celebrating Jana Sanskriti’s Experience in India’, in Boon, R. & Plastow, J. (eds). 2004. *Theatre and Empowerment: Community Drama on World Stage*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 206-237
Building on existing structures and cultural activities is indispensable to the outcome. This means in addition to existing traditional art, new trends of youth culture (imitating music-videos, movies and pop-music) must also be included. According to my observations, traditional groups and artists usually demonstrate a high level of self-organisation and self-reliance. This is already a very good base but it also means that interventions from outside have to respect the independence and freedom of these groups.

In the rural regions of Mozambique where a significant part of the population is illiterate, excluded from ‘modern society’ and without much confidence and initiative to change their living situation, reinforcing and encouraging cultural activities can be an important means to empower people to take on their own development.

**Safeguarding the intangible heritage**

Apart from the usual strategies of inventories and research to preserve the cultural heritage, the UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage also recommends to ‘ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage and to involve them actively in its management.’

In my opinion, this is of paramount importance. The actors of traditional culture have to receive support. Though the groups are usually able to organise their own activities such as rehearsals, costumes, instruments and performances. They need support though when it comes to the organisational form of the group or larger projects. For dance and music, I would emphasise local festivals and exchanges. This would celebrate the enjoyment of culture for the whole community and give the groups opportunities to meet, network and compete with their abilities and talent. Such public attention and the exchange will boost the motivation and creativity of the groups and attract new members, which is indispensable for the survival of the groups. Today such festivals in the districts or provinces are very rare.

In small and medium cities, possibly in larger villages as well, space for cultural activities is urgently needed. The study on Mozambican youth from 1999 revealed that urban as well as rural youth overwhelmingly wished for the establishment of youth centres in their areas. Be it youth centres, community centres or cultural centres, space for creative activities, meeting people, getting information and advice is definitely in high demand. It is important that such centres are adapted to local conditions. Therefore, I welcome the new status of the Casas da Cultura in the country: From 2007 on they will become independent of the Ministry of Education and Culture and will function as autonomous centres in their province or district. This modification will allow the centres to support culture locally and adapted to the local situation. The provincial government pays the salaries of staff, some material, rent and maintenance of the building. For activities, the centre has to fund raise and find partners. This is a large obstacle of course and many Casas da Cultura risk not

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86 In cities, most groups are registered associations. The required procedure is complicated, costly (over 5000 MTN) and demands the approval of a lawyer. For many groups this is too difficult. Only as a registered association though, can a group open a bank account or apply for subsidies. Interview with Associação Cultural Mashaka, Maputo, 15 Sept. 2006


88 Interview with Director of Casa Provincial da Cultura Inhambane, Inhambane, 12 Oct. 2006
having any activities due to lack of funds or little initiative or competence to take on fund raising. Furthermore, the number of cultural centres in the country is still very low.

Groups with a leadership role in their region with a repertory of different dances (usually related to Casa da Cultura, Casa Velha or other institutions in the province) generally need more information about dance and music. They need skills to teach, create and arrange dances and must have access to more and better training. A capacity-building workshop for such groups took place in Ilha de Moçambique for dancers from the Provinces of Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado. Due to the very good response of the participants, a second workshop is in preparation for central Mozambique in Chimoio in December 2007.

**Arts in education**

Another area where the arts should receive more attention is in schools. Its benefits will be in two areas: On one hand, children and young people will become motivated to engage in and enjoy traditional culture. They will acquire skills and techniques that are in danger of disappearing, which is also an important measure for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the country. On the other hand, the students will develop their own creativity and expression, which helps them to build identity, increase self-esteem as well as explore values and meaning and gain visions beyond the immediate.

Today pedagogic universities try to equip future teachers with some basic skills in singing, music, dancing and also drawing and handicrafts. Most teachers though leave their training with very little knowledge of the arts, are overloaded with duties once they start working and therefore not capable of transmitting the required skills. The goal to train thousands of teachers in the arts is not realistic and not necessary. I suggest relying on a pool of local artists in each district: musicians, dancers, mask makers, potters, sculptors and others. According to my information, many of those artists would be happy to pass on their knowledge. Such specialists need to be remunerated though. This would definitely be another way for public bodies to emphasis the value of culture and make it available to the children in the community.

The employment of artists in education would also increase the value of the arts as an income-generating activity.

**Youth problems and cultural activities**

During the fieldwork, I increasingly got the impression that it was dialogue that young people missed most, an open dialogue about relationships, gender norms, future perspectives, conflicts and violence, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Many young interviewees told us that they were glad that they accepted our invitation to talk to us because it helped them very much to reflect on their own situation. They were eager to tell their friends about our conversations because it seemed so valuable to them.

Experiences with youth in the developed world indicate that talking alone, psychotherapy and interventions by youth workers can be perceived as too invasive and be rejected by the young person. Doing something is also important and this is where cultural activities come in. The discovery of creative power and the activity in a

89 6 Casas Provincias da Cultura, ca. 5 Casas Distritais da Cultura and 4 Casa Velhas.
90 'Traditional Dance in Presence and Future'. Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança in collaboration with Bettina Holzhausen, supported by the Swiss Cooperation Mozambique, December 2005. See also documentary movie by Denis Buttner. 2006. Dansa na Ilha, Manaba Films, Marseille
group help to develop the personality of the young person and his or her social skills. I would therefore advocate for programs that include both counselling and information and activities like arts or sports.

Young people especially need a safe place to reflect on sexual behaviour, HIV/AIDS risks, reproductive health and conflict resolution in separated gender groups. For successful HIV/AIDS prevention, behaviour changes are essential. There are some promising programs that attempt to apply a holistic strategy to reduce violence in relationships, improve reproductive health (in particular HIV/AIDS and STDs), reduce teenage pregnancies and improve the health of young mothers and their babies:

- Program H began to work with young men in poor neighbourhoods in Brazil. In the meantime, they are now running programs for young women as well. Lately, they also adapted their concept for other countries of Latin America and India. Program H intends to help young people (especially young men) question traditional norms related to masculinity. It consists of a series of manuals for same sex groups proposing sequences of activities and themes: role-plays, brainstorming exercises, discussion sessions and individual reflections. The central topic is the socialisation of young men, the positive and negative aspects of this socialisation and the benefits of changing certain behaviours. Program H is deliberately including youth culture in the activities with the groups. The results of Program H are very encouraging. The views of participating young men about sexuality and relationships change considerably and result in permanent behaviour changes. The program is developed for urban youth.\(^{91}\)

- MAP (Men as Partners) is developed around the same assumption as Program H: ‘In many parts of the world, men often act in ways that contribute to a variety of public health problems […]. However men can, and often do, play a critical role in promoting gender equity, preventing violence, and fostering constructive involvement in sexual and reproductive health.\(^{92}\) MAP has established a variety of community education workshops for urban and rural communities. They work in same-sex discussion groups but also in mixed groups. MAP uses theatre and role-play (forum theatre) to reflect behaviour and gender roles and to offer alternative views. MAP exists in South Africa, several other African countries and the USA.

Both programs strongly emphasise behaviour changes in men, but also the strengthening of the partnership between men and women in the family and the community and they especially target teenagers and young adults.

In order to conceive detailed programs adapted to the regional situation of rural youth in Mozambique, it would definitely need more research and information. Throughout the work on this paper, I became more and more convinced that it is urgently important to invest more effort and money into ameliorating the psycho-social situation of young people, especially teenagers not in school. The cultural aspect of such work is extremely important and needs to be integrated into interventions and programs for young people.


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Websites
- Program H: http://www.promundo.org.br
- MAP (Men as partners): http://www.engenderhealth.org
- Punto de Encuentro (Nicaragua): http://www.punto.co.ni
Appendix 1

Questionnaire for young people

- **Personal data:**

- **Living situation:**
  With whom do you live? How many siblings do you have? If the interviewee does not live with his parents/both parents: Where is your father/mother and why do/does they/him/she not live with you? If the interviewee is married: How long have you lived with your partner? Do you have children?

- **Free time activities:**
  What are you doing in your free time? Why? With whom? How did it start? What is the interesting thing about it?

- **Organised free time activities:**
  Were/are you member of a cultural group, a sports team, a group of activists, a church group, a youth organisation or any other organisation? What do you do in this group/organisation? How does the group or organisation work? Who can join it? How often do you meet? What does this activity mean to you personally?

- **Coolness, codes and behaviour:**
  What do you need to have or wear to be ‘cool’ (clothes, hairstyles, places to go, languages, etc.)? How do you need to behave, interact or show off in order to be accepted and considered ‘cool’ by other young people? What kind of music do you like? How do you manage to get the clothes or gadgets you would like to have?

- **Gender relationships, love and sex:**
  Have you already started to have sexual relationships? Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
  If not: When do you think it would be a good time to start? How do you think you will find a girlfriend/boyfriend? What do you need to do to impress someone of the other gender?
  If yes: How old were you? How many sexual partners have you had since then? Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend at the moment and are you faithful? Do you use condoms? Why do you/why not? What do you know about HIV/AIDS and where did you receive the information?

- **Growing up:**
  Does/did someone instruct you about the rules and duties of adults? What did you learn during the initiation rites? When and how do you think you became/will become an adult member of the community?

- **Problems of young people:**
  What problems do young people have here? Why?

- **Future/plans/wishes:**
  What would you like to do in the future?
Appendix 2

Figure 22: Source: http://www.jlhs.nhusd.k12.ca.us/Classes/Social_Science/Mozambique/Mozambique_19859.gif
Appendix 3

Nangade

The district of Nangade is situated in the north of the Province of Cabo Delgado, at the northern border of Mozambique with Tanzania. The two countries are separated by the Rovuma River. The relationship between the communities on both sides of the border are friendly and there is a lot of movement of goods and people between Nangade and Tanzania. Ethnically, the population on both sides of the border is more or less identical and there are a lot of family links. Nangade is culturally strongly influenced by Tanzania, especially in the areas of music and dance but also food, construction of houses, clothing and language show its proximity to Tanzania. Swahili is the most common spoken language and facilitates the understanding between the six ethnic groups in the area. There are Makonde, Ngoni, Ndombe, Mwani, Mwani and Yao living in Nangade. The Makonde are by far the largest group followed by Ngoni and Ndome. Most of the over forty villages and settlements are dominated by Makonde. The administrative centre of the district, Nangade Sede, hosts a very mixed population, speaking seven languages, of which the most common are Kiswahili and Makonde. The district has a surface of 3031 km² and a population of 50,483 persons (national census 1997).

The principal economic activity is agriculture, especially cashew nuts, corn, cassava, rice and vegetables. The higher areas of the district have severe water shortages as accessible water is far away. The lower part of the district with its rivers and lakes has sufficient water. There is neither electricity nor a telephone network in the region. Nangade is linked by two very bad roads to the neighbouring districts of Mueda and Palma. At the Rovuma River, there are ferryboats crossing the border to Tanzania.

Historically, the region in the south of Tanzania was important for the training and supply of troops during independence struggle against the Portuguese colonial regime. Nangade was one of the first districts liberated. FRELIMO’s first military base on Mozambican territory (Base Beira) was set up in Nangade.

Fieldwork in Nangade 13–23 July 2006:
- 17 interviews in total (10 in groups of 2–15 persons, 7 individuals): 8 interviewees were additional informants, 9 interviews with young people between 14 and 30 years of age
- Participatory observations: Event of Radio Moçambique RM in Nangade Sede (15 July 2006), several visits to the disco in Nangade Sede (14/15/21 July 2006), meetings with dance groups in Itanda, Nhanga, Ntoli and Mualala (17/18 July 2006)
- Inventory of all dance groups in the district, map of the district, population and school statistics and some general geographical and historical information
Appendix 4

Mossurize

The district of Mossurize is situated in the south of the Province of Manica and borders on Zimbabwe in the east. The main ethnic group are Ndau, the principal languages are Ndau and Portuguese as well as some Shona and English in the villages along the border. The turbulent history of the region produced various waves of refugees: Due to the conflict between RENAMO and FRELIMO, during the Rhodesian War, refugees from Zimbabwe in Mozambique and a large of the population of Mossurize took refuge in Zimbabwe. Most of them returned after the signing of the general peace accord in 1992.

On a surface of 5096 km² live 122,244 persons (national census 1997). They are spread over ten administrative units (localidades) in over 180 settlements. The population of Mossurize is very young: 74 percent of the inhabitants are below 25 years of age (census 1997). The administrative centre of the district is Espungabera. The district is linked by roads to the neighbouring districts of Sussundenga and Machaze, as well as to Zimbabwe through the border crossing point in Espungabera.

The main economic activities are the cultivation of corn, peanuts and various vegetables and fruits as well as some cross-border trading. There is a long tradition of men migrating to South Africa and Zimbabwe for work. Recently, there are quite a number of migrant workers from Zimbabwe coming to Mossurize and other parts of Mozambique due to the catastrophic economic situation on the other side of the border.

Fieldwork in Mossurize 23 September–6 October 2006:
- 18 Interviews in total (9 in groups of 2–5 persons and 9 individuals): 9 interviewees were additional informants, 9 interviews with young people between 14 and 30 years, two interviews were made in Chimoio and one in Inhambane.
- Participatory observations: Dia da Paz in Espungabera (4 Oct. 2006), Spiritual dance ritual (30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2006), weekend nights in the bars of Espungabera, Sunday afternoons on the football field of Espungabera.
- Some sections of an official report about the district of Mossurize (2004), map of the district, school statistics 2006, list of dances of the Province of Manica (Direcção da Acção Cultural de Manica 2002).
Appendix 5

Chókwe

The district of Chókwe is situated in the south of the Province of Gaza, not directly at the border to South Africa but only around 50 km away. In the north, the River Limpopo separates the districts of Guijá and Chókwe. The largest ethnic group are Shangana and the main spoken languages are Shangana and Portuguese. The City of Chókwe (63,147 inhabitants, national census 1997) near the Limpopo River is the administrative and economic centre of the district with a surface of 2,600km² and a population of 173,277 people (national census 1997) living in around 40 villages and towns. The population of Chókwe is very young: 65.3 percent of the inhabitants are under 25 years of age (census 1997).

Chókwe was severely hit by the floods in southern Mozambique in 2000. The water of the Limpopo River flooded large parts of the district and whole villages disappeared under water. The City of Chókwe was completely covered by water (ca. 3 m deep) for several days. The district received large funds for reconstruction and managed to rebuild and improve an important part of the infrastructure. There is a network of roads in the district, the most important one crosses the district and links Xai-Xai with the South African border. Main roads are asphalted. The district has electricity, a mobile phone network, a railroad line to Zimbabwe and in the city a large part of houses have canalisation and piped water.

The main economic activity in Chókwe is the cultivation of various fruits and vegetables, especially tomatoes, supplying the City of Maputo. There is a long tradition for men from Chókwe to migrate to South Africa to work in the goldmines and farms and their remittances are an important economic factor for the region.

Fieldwork in Chókwe 11–25 August 2006:

- 17 Interviews in total (9 in groups of 2–13 persons and 8 individuals): 8 interviewees were additional informants and 9 interviews with young people between 14 and 30 years, most of them in groups.

- Participatory observations: Dia da Cidade de Chókwe (17 August 2006), Feira in Chókwe (17–20 August 2006), Saturday night in the centre of Chókwe (19 August 2006), rehearsals of Grupo Muitimba (22 August 2006), visits in Xilembene (15 August 2006) and Macaretane (21 August 2006)

- Documents about the history of the City of Chókwe, statistics HIV/AIDS hospital Chókwe, map of the district, recent school statistics.
Appendix 6
Direcção Distrital da Educação e Cultura de Nangade:
Dance groups in the district of Nangade, April 2006

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<th>Posto administrativo Ntamba</th>
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