



# **The urban middle class of Maputo**

**Crucial actor in overcoming the gap between state and  
society or simple imitator of the elite?**

## **IEP Bordeaux**

Prof. Monsieur Comi Toulabor

Student Johanna Bornschein

Proposition of theme for the master thesis



## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE MASTER THESIS

### Economic and political context

Mozambique has been one of the countries with the highest economic growth rates, varying between 6, 5-12, 6%<sup>1</sup> in Africa for over ten years now. At the same time Mozambique remains one of the poorest countries in the world, occupying the 172<sup>nd</sup> position in a total of 177 countries according to UNDP Human Development Index, the lowest in the Southern Africa Development community.

Once the civil war had ended after 16 years in 1992, the first democratic elections took place in 1994 and the economy made remarkable progress in restoring growth and improving welfare. Mozambique successfully reduced the monetary poverty from 69% of the population in 1997 to 54 percent in 2003<sup>2</sup>. One could state that Mozambique is one of the countries which benefited from good management on the macro level side and experienced a global boom in commodity prices. It was and remains also one of the “donor’s darlings” as it is considered to be a credible partner who quickly implements economic conditions requested by donors<sup>3</sup>.

Never the less, much of the growth is linked to the development of highly capital intense mega projects (Aluminum MOZAL) with very limited absorption of workers<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the financial crisis has shown that the economy remains vulnerable to external shocks, being highly dependent on FDI, Trade (particularly with South Africa), Remittances from migrants, and Aid from the international community.

---

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Millenium Development goals, Mozambique 2009, p.11

<sup>2</sup> Foxe Louise, Beating the Odds: Sustaining Inclusion in a growing economy, a Mozambique Poverty, Gender and Social Assessment, p.3

<sup>3</sup> Öhm, Manfred : Mosambik: Demokratie ohne Mehrwert ?,p. 5 in: FES, Maputo, Mosambik 2009

<sup>4</sup> De Vletter, Fion; Migration and Development in Mozambique: Poverty, Inequality and Survival, p.7



Regarding the political system, Mozambique can be considered as an “electoral democracy” in which elections take place regularly and opposition parties are officially legitimated and accepted.

Never the less, huge regional disparities hinder sustainable development of the country in whole (Maputo has an IDH of 0,622 while Zambesia has only an IDH of 0,202.). These regional cleavages are also observable in the political area and are demonstrating the persistence of a deep regional division of the country, becoming especially visible in the electoral behavior of the population. Outcomes of all elections show FRELIMO (Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique) dominating the south and the extreme north while RENAMO (Resistência Nacional Mocambicana) has its strongholds in the centre and north of the country.

However, RENAMO has lost a huge part of its electorate in 2008. The local elections in November 2008 revealed indeed the lack of an effective opposition, as FRELIMO won the local elections in 41 cities out of 43<sup>5</sup>. According to experts there are no doubts about FRELIMO winning the elections on the 28.10.2009, and steadily becoming a hegemonic force in politics<sup>6</sup>, as people do not have a credible alternative in this bipolar system. Consequently there is no effective opposition existing in Mozambique and the RENAMO finds itself in a deep crisis. Many members already deserted and the new opposition force MDM (Movimento Democrático de Mocambique) has already been created.

This overwhelming victory of the FRELIMO cannot lead to the conclusion the ruling party would be that popular in society, but is rather a sign that people don't see any alternative and indicates a loss of trust in government and its institutions in general. According to the Afrobarometer<sup>7</sup> 64% of the survey's participant's state that Mozambique is a democracy with big or small deficits.

---

<sup>5</sup> Öhm, Manfred : Mosambik: Demokratie ohne Mehrwert ?,p. 5, in: FES, Maputo, Mosambik

<sup>6</sup> Mozambique file Number 373, p.3

<sup>7</sup> Afrobarometer No.70, May 2009 Are democratic Citizen emerging in Africa? ,p.15



Another sign of the mistrust of society towards state institution are the repeatedly revealed corruption scandals, the murder of the journalist Cardoso being only the most famous one. Corruption in general is an important issue in everyday life and influences the relationship between society and the state. According to surveys nearly 60% of the population think that the government and the justice-system are corrupt and even 70% do not have any trust in the police because of their corruptness<sup>8</sup>. This perceived and experienced corruption has a negative impact on the citizen's trust in already weak political institutions, and enforces the gap between state and society.

### **Impact of middle classes on development issues and the difficulty of its definition**

While donors and some researchers persist to underline the importance of pro-poor growth mechanisms (believing many African countries couldn't develop because of the poverty trap), Nancy Birdsall<sup>9</sup> proposes another perspective. She argues that it is not so much the poverty-trap many African states suffer from but rather the weak institutional-trap African countries are caught in. Besides the dependence on mineral and oil export, low natural openness, few checks-and balances for the executive and problematic borders combined with ethnic heterogeneity, she sees **the missing middle class is another important indicator of a weak-institutions trap**<sup>10</sup>. Moreover the American economist William Easterly also stated that the smaller the income share of the three middle quintiles, the worse a country does on various institutional measures like accountability and government effectiveness<sup>11</sup>. According to those statements the questions is **where to find the link between the sizes of a middle-income group with the weak-institutional trap?**

According to Nancy Birdsall the share of households in the middle of the income distribution is sufficient to provide a check on the abuse of economic and political power. Furthermore the interest of the middle-income group to create and sustain a

---

<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International: License to kill: Police Accountability in Mozambique, 2007

<sup>9</sup> Founding President of the Center for Global Development, one of the top 15 non-profit think tanks in the USA, based in Washington D.C. She worked long time for the World Bank as well.

<sup>10</sup> Birdsall, Nancy: Do no harm: Aid, weak institutions and the missing middle in Africa, development policy review 2007 25 (5),

<sup>11</sup> Easterly, Williams; Social Cohesion, Institutions, and Growth, Working paper 94, Center for global development



political system that undertakes productive investment instead of rent seeking is very likely.

Vijay Mahajan, author of “Africa Rising: How 900 million African Consumers offer more than you think” complements this perspective. He explains that the expansion of middle classes is one of the most striking African realities, which lead to a rather optimistic view of the future, if supported consequently.

While all these approaches focus rather on the economic dimension, they tend to neglect the sociological point of view, which offers a more complex vision of the middle classes and their role in society. Pulantza, trying to modernize the marxistic approach, states that the “new intellectual small bourgeoisie” is so heterogenic and internally divided, that they don’t have a common position and are fluctuating between the dominant ideology and contestation against it. When we are talking about the concept of the middle class in sociology we also have to mention its heterogeneity of interpretation.

In the United States Gouldner (1979) and Ehrenreich (1977) were the first interested in this new emerging class that often had a university degree during that period. This new strata were often linked to the cultural contestation, drawing its legitimation from its specific capacities e.g. their knowledge and their know-how. However its social ascension was decelerated by the traditional leading class.

While some marxists see the middle class primarily as a weak copy of the elite, trying to accumulate enough capital to become part of it (petit bourgeoisie, professionals, managers), others (council communists, advocates of participatory economics) argue that the middle class, including intellectuals, technocrats and managers, seeks power to defend their own position.

For Bourdieu class distinctions are primarily marked

*“In the ordinary choices of everyday existence, such as furniture, clothing, or cooking, which are particularly revealing of deep-rooted and long-standing dispositions, because lying outside the scope of the educational system, they have to be confronted, as it were, by naked taste.”<sup>12</sup>*

---

<sup>12</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (translated by Richard Nice), *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*, 1984



This means that class fractions are not only determined by the economic capital, but that social and cultural capital plays an important role as well.

These examples already highlighted the complexity of the middle class concept that depends on the context of each country and needs a very careful and attentive interpretation.

## **OBJECTIF OF THE MASTER THESIS**

This master thesis aims to explore the middle classes role to national development in Mozambique. To explore the link between the middle class and the national development we have to find answers to following questions:

- 1.) Who are the members of the middle class in Mozambique and what are their characteristics?**
- 2.) What positions do they take up in society?**
- 3.) How do they differ from other groups and why?**

In order to find answers to these questions we have to define and use the concept of “middle class” in Mozambique very carefully. In the African context we have, like in other parts of the world, a multitude of notions to characterize the stratification of societies. In the African context we can observe confusion between anthropologic and sociologic approaches, challenging the building of social categories and the necessary connections between them. Even though class analysis remains a vital and important



tool to understanding African politics and society<sup>13</sup> there was (and is) an invisible wall separating ethnicity and class analysis<sup>14</sup>. However, the literature of Nancy Birdsall and others illustrates that there is a need of non-ideological, objective class analysis. Therefore we will use the first chapter for a confrontation between different theoretical approaches and Mozambican reality in order to characterize the urban middle classes of Maputo.

Once we characterized the members of the middle class we are going to explore the impact of the financial crisis, the upcoming elections, corruption scandals, social change and mobility to the formation of a middle class consciousness. According to Jason Sumich middle classes were long time strong supporters of the urban elite, but are starting to detach themselves, because they cannot pull the same benefits of the liberalization as the elite can. Furthermore we believe that urban middle class members are more vulnerable to the effects of the financial crisis, which can produce certain affiliation as well. So, the questions we are going to answer in the second chapter are:

- 1.) Do recent developments lead to a hardening class consciousness of the urban middle class?**
- 2.) Does an identification/demarcation with other groups appear?**
- 3.) Can we observe the mobilization of other identity producing attributes?**

To put it in a nutshell we can say that the second chapters aim is to explore what kind of events and processes produce a certain kind of social and political identity.

In the last chapter we will explore main challenges to sustainable development and state legitimacy in Mozambique. We will interpretate programs like the *Agenda 2025*, the *Economic and Social Plan (PES)*, the *Government 5 year program* and the *Action plan for the reduction of absolute poverty (PARPA)* with regard to possible implications of the urban middle class. We want to find out **to what the degree urban**

---

<sup>13</sup> Schrader, Peter: *African Politics and Society, A Mosaic in Transformation*, Palgrave Mac Millen, 1999 New York

<sup>14</sup> Young, Nationalism, Ethnicity and Class in Africa: A retrospective, in: *Cahier d'études africaines*, 1986, Vol.26 No 103 p.421-495



**middle class is considered to be an important factor in development and if they are recognized and addressed like such by international donors, development agencies and politicians.**

## **STRUCTURE OF THE MASTER THESIS (provisional)**

### **I. What's about "middle class" in Maputo, Mozambique?**

#### **A. Theoretical concepts of middles classes in literature**

- Economic and sociological perspective

#### **B. Characterization of the middle class in Mozambique, Maputo**

- Findings regarding the middle strata in Mozambique in general
- Special findings of the urban middle class in Maputo (Income, social origin, job, family, activities, beliefs and values)

### **II. Identity and political Mobilization of the urban middle class in Maputo**





**A. Political mobilization and Identity in Maputo**

- How is political identity created in general/in Maputo?

**B. Impact of recent developments on identity and political mobilization in Maputo**

What are the impacts of...for the middle class (consciousness)?

- Politics, corruption, liberalization processes, financial crisis
- Social change, increasing inequalities and individuality
- The last elections and the election campaigns

**III. Impact of the middle class to sustainable development and state legitimacy in Maputo**

**A. Main challenges for development and state legitimacy in Maputo (and Mozambique in general)**

- Definition of the concepts, programs, challenges, achievements

**B. Can the urban middle class in Maputo become a crucial actor for improving state legitimacy and promoting development?**

- Between mimicry of the elite and hardening class consciousness
- Outlook, possible scenarios, influence of the stakeholder

**CONCLUSION**