

NEGOTIATING ADULTHOOD. DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF MEN IN RURAL
KWAZULU, SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The social role of youth is an issue that, in the last twenty years, has become a key point of the political agenda of many African nations. In South Africa, the consequences of segregationist politics, market economy, and migrations, have profoundly shaped the social and cultural role of youth, both in urban and rural contexts. Moreover, the end of apartheid has opened a new period of wide transformation.

Based on my ethnographic research in kwaMashabane, a remote South African rural area, this paper analyses how the social role of male youth is shaped by national state policy and by local dynamics. Moreover, I will focus on the relationship between models of adulthood, and the strategies that youth adopt to cope with conflicts and continuities. This analysis will show how post-apartheid freedom and the constraints of the local social structure are negotiated, and how society is coping with the complex relationships between cultural reproduction and social change.

1. INTRODUCTION

South Africa, compared to other African countries, has been a pioneer concerning the production and use of the category 'youth'. It has been important in the national social and political arena, more so since the 1970's. Political resistance movements and, particularly the African National Congress (ANC), created the idea of 'youth' in order to allow their political activism in the anti apartheid struggle (Seeking, 1993). In this way the social and cultural role of youth in South Africa has become quite peculiar of the intersections between local cultural structure and global trends.

The site that this paper describes is called kwaMashabane. It is, at present, part of KwaZulu-Natal region. During the nineteenth century, it was a small independent kingdom. It was under the influence of the Zulu Kingdom, one of the major political structures of Southern Africa in this period. KwaMashabane was also obliged to pay tributes to the Zulu Kingdom. These past conditions are still visible in today's groups and individuals identity

negotiation processes, mainly as a consequence of the apartheid regime. During this period, kwaMashabane was part of a Bantustan, an ethnically based state in which social life was formally regulated by Zulu customary law. Bantustans were political structures that allowed the process of segregation and control of black South Africans. After the democratic transition, kwaMashabane has remained one of the deepest rural areas in the whole country and the infrastructural development remains a slow ongoing process.

The research I am presenting concerns the social role of youth in the kwaMashabane rural context. I started to work in kwaMashabane in 2005 and my relationship with many local people, especially with some youth, has become a long-term one. Historically youth have been subjected to strong coercive forces. During the time of the Zulu Kingdom they were generally regimented in order to create a powerful army. In the twentieth century they became, through migrant labour system, the major supporters of families' economy. While the political power has strictly remained in the hands of elders, from an economic point of view, youth were the ones who maintained their fathers' households. This work is based on a comparison between an analysis of ideologies and narrations that are diffused in the people's imagination (Taylor, 2004), and the observation of strategies of youth and adults in what we can call social life stage (Geertz, 1973). This theoretical framework will allow me to reflect on social change processes, and on how those processes are intersecting with a local socio-cultural system and its own particular structure.

2. YOUTH AS RELATIONAL CATEGORY

The first problem I encountered studying youth, is classification. Around eighty years ago, Margaret Mead was asking herself "What is coming of age like in Samoa?" (Mead, 1949: 109). The same question has been the first step of my work. Indeed, it has been necessary try to understand when a person, from an emic point of view, could be considered an adult. Sociology and pedagogy usually start this analysis focussing on age groups or cohorts. The ethnographical approach adopted in this work has been to try and analyze society in a more holistic way. The study of intergenerational relationships requires the observation of persons of different ages within a local society, and of their interactions. Starting from this consideration, a classification of differences between 'youth' and 'adult' has been produced.

In this study, the category of youth is considered as a social shifter, a “deictic or indexical term [...] that works not through absolute referentiality to a fixed context, but one that relates the speaker to a relational, or indexical, context (‘here’ or ‘us’ are such terms)” (Durham, 2000: 116). Classification of the category youth therefore requires double attention. The first is concerned with the relationship between me – an ethnographer – and the field. Youth is a relational term and its use requires a comprehensive knowledge of local society, and for the speaker to be located within society. Social interactions are the primary sources of data for a study of intergenerational relationships. The act of ‘talking’ to a person, requires the knowledge of a broad relational code. To engage himself in communication, a child must embody the relational code that underpins social interactions. As we will show, in kwaMashabane, *hlonipha* code, which means respect, is an elementary knowledge that a person must demonstrate to master. Considering this, when a male child is able to ‘talk’ (James, 1995: 47) to an adult, he can be considered as a youth. Learning to talk, in the proper manner is the first step in the path to adulthood. For me the process of ‘learning how to talk’ has required long amounts of time and energy. The observation of interactions between me and the others has constituted an extensive source of information. Implicitly, interaction means to place oneself in a social structure. The way I had been talking and behaving led local people to consider me generally as a youth, sometimes as a man, and especially in the first period of my stay as something like a confused child.

The second concern is with the local categories that are used to define youth. The people with whom I worked were IsiZulu mother tongue. Most of the youth are also able to speak basic English. On the contrary, there were very few cases where elders were able to speak English. My knowledge of IsiZulu did not allow me to undertake deep conversation, but it has been enough to draw on and work with terms used and their meaning. IsiZulu has many terms to define age and social roles. *Umntwana*, can be translated as “baby, small child; child; offspring” (Doke, Malcolm, Sikakana, Vilakazi, 1990: 609). Children are not differentiated by gender. Distinction between male and female appears only if we look at terms used for youth. A young female is defined as *intombi*. The translation of this term is “maidenhood; age or condition of a full grown girl; virginity” (Doke, Malcolm, Sikakana, Vilakazi, 1990: 605). The terms are explicitly referring to the physical condition of sexual maturity and to the status of virginity.

On the contrary, young males are not defined by their physical maturity. The term used is *umfana* that means “boy male child (from babyhood to young manhood); son; person younger than or inferior to oneself; very derogatory when used by another boy” (Doke,

Malcolm, Sikakana, Vilakazi, 1990: 199). I can not find a clear distinction between child and boy. *Umfana* is indeed useful to define both. But I can state, from observation, that this term can be derogatory if used to define a peer. *Ubufana* which means youth does not have a clear positive connotation. This, I will show, is important data for this analysis.

However, an IsiZulu speaker can use another term to indicate youth as community. *Insha* means youth, as group and as new generation (Doke, Malcolm, Sikakana, Vilakazi, 1990: 729). *Ubusha*, another term built on the same radical *-sha*, means “freshness, newness, youthfulness” (Doke, Malcolm, Sikakana, Vilakazi, 1990: 729). These words indicate the characteristic of youth, its sense of newness. It is interesting now consider that the use of this term is unusual. *Abantu abasha*, that literally means ‘young people’ is a term that I have heard from few persons, usually close to the area of political activism. Most people prefer to use *umfana* or *abantu abancane*, which means ‘small people’. *Insha*, compared to *umfana* seems to have modern meanings, close to the ‘new concept of youth’ that arose from the South African political past and from transnational communications.

Departing from the category youth, youth, we find that the condition of adulthood seems marked by marriage. Man is define as *indoda* that means adult male and husband (Doke, Malcolm, Sikakana, Vilakazi, 1990: 165). *Umfazi* means married woman or wife. Considering this we can state that marriage is essential to being considered an adult. Literature on the concept of person is useful in understanding this point. A person is here considered as a complete human being (Remotti, 2009). What is necessary to reach this ‘completeness’ is the result of the social and cultural orientations of a group of people. In kwaMashabane marriage is considered one of the necessary steps to reach this completeness.

Finally, we can analyze a key category of the IsiZulu language. *Umntu*, which means ‘person or human being’ is connected to the highly ideological concept of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* means ‘humanity’ with no differentiation between male and female. ‘Having *ubuntu*’ means to adopt certain culturally recognized behaviour, that I will show, are connected with the concept of respect, *hlonipha*. It may be useful to analyze a definition of *ubuntu*, given by one of the most impressive persons of South African history, Nelson Mandela:

“A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?”

This is particularly interesting quote underlying the issue of economic reciprocities (Sahlins, 1972: 188). The core of *Ubuntu* is richness sharing. Here I am not using richness in its capitalistic meaning; symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1972) is sometimes more important than monetary. Youth, as I will show, seem to be excluded from the realm of *ubuntu*. Completeness is attained through the achievement of a recognized social role in the society. Social recognition is directly connected with redistribution. The youth are the people who are able to ‘talk’ because they have embodied the *hlonipha* code. Nevertheless they are not men, or complete persons. They do not yet have a family and, more importantly, they do not have enough capital for redistribution processes. For these reasons they can not interact with man, they remain *bafana* (plural of *umfana*).

3. CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF ADULTHOOD

The study of models of adulthood requires now an analysis of the ideologies that have had major relevance in the last fifty years of kwaMashabane history. From interviews with local adults I can state that their have been two major supporting institutions in the recent past: the family, and the local political structure. Both were institutions that, as well as regulating society, had been relevant for shaping people’s ideology and morality. In addition, we can find systems for knowledge transmission¹in both. In the family, the educational system was the site of transmission of morality. In order to analyze this I will concentrate on *izinganekwane*, which are fairy tales with strong moral connotations. For what concerns the political structure, the schools have been the most important tools in transmitting a particular conception of society. I must also specify here that the in my research I focussed mainly on male youth.

In 1959, the Promotion of Black Self Government Act laid the foundations for a ‘formal’ political autonomy of the bantustans² (Mdluli, 1987). Education was one of the first sectors managed directly by bantustans and not by the central South African government. The

¹ Knowledge transmission is considered here as the major tools to guarantee intergenerational continuities.

² Bantustans had been rural areas where black people were supposed to live. They were created using ethnical criteria. Starting from 1959, Bantustans obtain a formal political independence.

political structure of KwaZulu was strictly connected with Zulu Kingdom and dominated by the embryonic ideology that later would underpin Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)³. Starting from the nineteen-seventies, a new syllabus was introduced in public schools. It was called *Ubuntu botho*, that literally means ‘our humanity’, and it was written within Natal African Teachers Union (NATU)⁴. This syllabus has been, until the democratic transition, the most important instrument for KwaZulu Bantustan Education.

The principal nucleus of *Ubuntu botho* has been the concept of discipline, that is presented as a direct consequence of *ukuhlonipha*, ‘to respect’. This concept is deeply rooted in what is commonly perceived by local people as Zulu ‘traditional’ culture. The first ethnographical works strongly stress on its importance. Krige translated it as “shame” or “bashful” (Krige, 1936: 30). *Hlonipha* is implicit of every interpersonal relationship or interaction in Zulu tradition. For example, a wife is not allowed to call her husband by using his name. Also, using a word that includes his name can be considered as disrespectful. The same code regulates every relationship: a common man must show respect to his king; a boy to an adult. This consideration is very important because *Ubuntu botho* has influenced many generations, especially the one of the current day adults. It has distilled a concept of discipline and unquestionable authority. The analysis of succession dynamics, for example, shows that in the history of the Zulu Kingdom only once has the new king has been the legitimate successor. Starting from the founder Shaka, all the kings have been usurper. On the contrary, the way the relationship between the king and others is presented does not allow for any case of disrespect. *Ubuntu botho* has been transmitted to various generations of men, an idea of ‘blind’ respect to an unchangeable authority. This idea has moreover shaped the intergenerational relationships between those men and their future sons. After 1994, with the transition from apartheid, a new syllabus was promoted by a unified Minister of Education. These embodied the transnational concept of ‘child right’ or ‘youth right’, and were more liberal and less authoritarian. But, nowadays, in kwaMashabane one of the most common reflections of the elders to regarding the youth is that they do not have respect (*hlonipha*). In the elders opinions the new post-apartheid school system is the major cause of this.

It is interesting to now turn our attention to the education practices at a family level. Oral literature is one of the most important sources of data here. Many scholars, starting from the nineteenth century, have collected a relevant number of stories in the IsiZulu language.

³ IFP has existed for twenty years, until 2009 national election, the more relevant political party in KwaZulu-Natal. Its ideology is connected with a claim for Zulu identity and a Zulu national consciousness.

⁴ NATU is nowadays the union for IFP affiliated teachers.

They are both poetry and prose. In this last category are *izinganekwane*, which are commonly defined as fairy tales or folk tales, within academia. The first *izinganekwane* were collected more than one hundred and fifty years ago (Callaway, 1868). Nowadays most of the people remember many stories, and the narrations I personally collected are particularly similar to ancient collections. These stories are also considered by some old woman in the community as proper “education tools”. Nevertheless, the practice of storytelling seems to be in decline. Usually *izinganekwane* were performed by elder women within the domestic space, in order to entertain the family and especially its young members. Moreover, it is interesting to underline here that even if the use of this cultural object is declining, it is remarkable that it is still present in the memory of the youth. Unfortunately, many other cultural objects of what we refer to as ‘Zulu culture’ are no longer practiced. The most important example here is male initiations rite, another educational practice, that, due to political and economical causes, have almost completely disappeared.

One of the most important characters in the stories I collected, is uChakijana. Sometimes he appears in the shape of a mongoose, other times as a dwarf. In one story, uChakijana was a child, escaped from his home after being violently punished. Sometimes after his departure, and thanks to his cleverness, he was able to steal some cattle and, after his return home he was forgiven. uChakijana is in many case called Hlakanyana, from the term *hlaka* that means ‘clever, acute’. This character can be defined as a ‘trickster’, a person that performs ‘tricks’ (Radin, 1965: 132). The trickster is in many cases described as someone who is very clever. He uses his cunning to steal and kill in order to get everything he needs. But, in most of the stories, he unconsciously provides enormous benefit to his people. In the story the child brings back home many cattle, which are the objects which represents wealth *par excellence*. If we analyze *izinganekwane*, usually the trickster passes through different standardized stages: lack of something, interdiction, fraud, and social recognition (Canonici, 1993).

Hlakanyana can be considered as a cultural hero. He is able, relying only on his’ own efforts, to enrich himself and to redistribute goods to his social network, usually represented by the family. This path is similar to what kwaMashabane youth have to do to ‘become adults’. It seems that to possess cleverness, or *hlaka* in IsiZulu is very important. Many times it happens that someone awards a man due to his cleverness. This analysis of *izinganekwane* brings us back to one of the etymological meanings of the word *hlaka*. What is interesting here is that the model of morality proposed within the family by means of those stories is very contradictory. Hlakanyana stole and killed but it seems that if his actions bring something

good for his people, he will be ‘recognized’ (Taylor, 1992) as a man, an *amadoda*. Also, the example of Zulu Kingdom succession processes is emblematic. If the structural aspect of society was pinpointing who should be the next king, the rule of cunning was the one which prevailed. The trick is also a social warning, to be always careful. If the trickster is reprovved, if he leads society to a development he can be recognized as a positive social model. Redistribution seems to be the watershed for the judge, as the definition of *ubuntu* here proposed state.

The contrast between the fixed and pure structure of society that is transmitted through *Ubuntu botho* and the ‘trickstering’ strategies present in *izinganekwane* is particularly acute. This also represents the implicit debate between hegemonic models of adulthood transmitted through scholastic educational system and the fluidity that comes out of small-scale education systems like the family. National Zulu education proposes an untouchable *hlonipha* – respect – for every kind of authority. In the family, even if it embodies the *hlonipha* code, it also proposes an alternative path to ‘become an adult’ that considers the slight for authority and social rules. This path is recognized only if it leads to a social redistribution of capital.

4. YOUTH SOCIETY

The analysis of the narrations diffused in the kwaMashabane peoples imagination has been useful to understand which are the two possible paths to ‘became an adult’ in this context. In this section, I will propose some considerations starting from the peer interactions’ observation of both youth and adults groups. In order to do this it is necessary clarify what ‘peer’ is. It is common to say in kwaMashabane that “the peers are the ones that can eat from your dish”. The interactions are, in this way, based on generalized reciprocity, that refers “to transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given and, if possible and necessary, assistance returned” (Sahlins, 1972: 192-193). Reciprocity is based on a very practical and fundamental rule. If you have resources, and food is the most elementary example, you are not allowed to deny it to your peers. These norms could lead you to think of an idyllic idea of egalitarian society. It actually, in many cases leads to strong envy and social control within a small group of peers. Everybody is usually very alert to what others are ‘putting on the table’, in terms of monetary or symbolic capital. This must not be considered

as an absolute rule because I have observed many transaction that were not equivalent. However, peer relations were usually based on reciprocity and this seems the major criteria by which a person chooses who to spend his time with.

Inside a group of peers the mood of camaraderie is particularly strong. Besides this, it is very difficult to encounter dynamics where a strong leadership is absent. The centrality of goods transaction for interpersonal relations also is very high. Usually, the group's leader is the one who has more resources to redistribute: money, but also ideas, or a planning strategy for a particular aim. A common result of these social interactions was indeed inactivity. The topic of many days discussion was based on decision making. For example, if I propose something to my peers it is probable that in the case of success of my idea I will earn more social recognition; in another case I will be criticised. The assumption of responsibility therefore becomes a difficult step.

Concerning these issues I will analyze the trend differences that I have observed in kwaMashabane distinguishing adult society, and the youth society. It is necessary to highlight here that what I am describing is not the only people's behaviour. It is a kind of behaviour that I had observed repeatedly and consequently I had considered as common. I can state that from my point of view that youth try to reproduce the interaction types that they can observe among adults. Moreover, between youth the relevance of resources and redistribution is very high. Young individuals must, as well as trying to acquire capital, also learn how to manage it during everyday life situations. They must become able to occupy a place on the stage of social life (Geertz, 1973) acquiring both the instrument needed to manage social relation, and the capital required by their future position. As ethnographer – and youth - I must say that this has been one of the hardest part of the local *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1976) that I had to learn.

One basilar difference is that adult interaction patterns seem particularly fixed compared to youth ones. Considering that in the kwaMashabane village it is common that everybody knows everybody, in every situation, it will be clear who is the most relevant person. Merely watching the *hlonipha* grade that persons pay each others, will make it easy to understand who will sit in on 'highest chair'. This is always recognizable among adults. On the contrary, among youth the relationships it becomes unclear, and it is not really easy to determine who, in a particular situation, will be the leader. Potentially, everyone can be a leader if they can provide resources for the group. As one youth told me: "you may only be clever". What he means is that you need to demonstrate to be *hlaka* with some particular action. In this case all the previous *hlonipha* relationships probably will change and the group will have a new configuration. This highly variable role playing is common in the youth peer

groups. Among adults it is unthinkable. This duality between youth and adults sometimes has left me astonished.

Concerning social exclusion, the analysis shows that only in cases of repeated miss redistributions, can an individual be seriously labelled. This seems, using a metaphor, a sin that leads to social death. Only in this case I have observed somebody that had been expelled from a group. The older the members the more the interactions between them become structured, and 'social mistakes' are reproved. The social space loses its malleability. The comparison between adult groups' social interactions and the ones observed among youth, show that there is a high degree of experimentation and role playing among the latter. To grow up, seems to mean a conformation to adulthood models that I have already described. Next, I will consider the political sphere of kwaMashabane society.

The political sphere is probably the space where the exclusion of youth from the realm of agency is most evident. In every village there is a recognized political institution that is called *imbizo*. This word means 'assembly of men', and it is a weekly meeting open to all villagers. It is directed by the local traditional leader, called *induna*. *Izinduna* (plural) of the kwaMasahabane kingdom are directly dependent on the *Inkosi*, the formal king. Both these charges are hereditary. This political structure is perceived by the people as connected to the ancient Zulu Kingdom of the nineteenth century. During the apartheid the king was most important symbol of the Bantustan KwaZulu, a formal independent state created for black Zulu people. Nevertheless, the dependence of this state on apartheid regime was very high. Nowadays *imbizo* is a political space for the discussion of many issues concerning everyday life. Starting from villagers dispute to issues concerning the connection between village and regional political institutions.

The observations of weekly *imbizo* and of other political meetings allow me to state that in this context the participation of youth is very low in kwaMasahabane. They remain a highly subordinate category of people usually, with no right to talk. Here only *amadoda nabafazi*, men and women, seem allowed to talk. The praxis of an *imbizo* and its political structure is strongly connected with what we have called the *hlonipha* code. Most of the living adults have indeed been educated through *Ubuntu botho* and have internalised a highly structured view of society. Authority in this code is not something that is questionable, especially in the public sphere. The youth, due to their 'incompleteness', are excluded from discussion, and until they are recognized as men, they will remain offstage.

After democratic transitions, something new was born in kwaMashabane. The African National Congress political propaganda, with its relevance on concept of youth rights, has

probably stimulated new kinds of associational structures. Youth have been one of the most important issues of ANC propaganda. In many cases they had been the most relevant weapon of the anti apartheid political struggle. After the democratic transition anyway, the youth did not obtain a high level of political participation, but they were absorbed in the line of ANC⁵. In kwaMashabane, due to its remoteness from the sites of political struggle I have not found histories of tales of political opposition. Some villagers were engaged in the struggle but mostly when they were living in urban spaces. After apartheid's end new kinds of organizations started to rise up.

One of these has been called the Maputoland Youth Development Programme (MYDP). It was founded approximately three years ago, by youth that had the opportunity to study at University of KwaZulu-Natal, the most prestigious tertiary institution of the region⁶. The MYDP initial aims have been the 'development' of local youth through activities which may be useful in giving them some economical support. There are two strategies. The first was to organize events and activities to 'employ' them. Here we can also find recreational activities. This is because after high school most of the youth enter into a liminal period in which they are highly exposed to alcohol abuse and unprotected sex⁷. Most of the local people think that the youth must 'use their time' properly. The second aim is economic. The association is trying to provide services in order to get capital that could be useful for members. It is interesting to underline here that redistribution processes are not equalitarian, but in most of the cases some resources are given to a single member in order to help him with some personal need.

The MYDP in this way embodies both elements, from local traditional political praxis and from new 'democratic' ideologies. Indeed, there are transactions that are highly unbalanced and not meritocratic. We can find, for example, that an inactive member receives a high amount of resources for an aim that is not connected to association development. Sometimes these redistribution processes follow the connections of a personal network that are extraneous to the association. The affiliation mechanism in the association is indeed based on personal relations between members and new members and most of the participants do not have a real political consciousness about the organization. Most of them state that they are

⁵ It is interesting here Van Kessel analysis of the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation (Van Kessel, 1993). It has played a major role in the political struggle in a social context where there was no perceived 'moral order'. After the transition youth has been reinstated in the ANC Youth League.

⁶ I must underline here that the percentage of youth that are able to study at a university is close to zero in kwaMashabane.

⁷ HIV/AIDS diffusion in the area is extremely high.

engaged “because it could be useful in the future”. These answers are also common when they are asked about their engagement in political parties such as IFP or ANC.

What is interesting is that, in the MYDP, individuals have the choice to reach social recognition through their actions. While adult society need certain fixed steps⁸ to consider an individual as an adult, in these new organizational structure it seems that other praxis are recognized. I can quote here the examples of some youth that, due to their activism in the association, have reached a high level of social recognition. In some cases these members also come from very poor families, concerning economic and symbolic capitals. They continue to be subaltern persons for adult society, but inside the association network they are reaching deep symbolic importance. In this way we find different recognized strategies to obtain social recognition. It seems that we have a shift from a priority of individual empowerment, that leads to redistribution, to social empowerment, that can lead to individual recognition. Youth, one of the categories of people more subjected to coercion by adult society, seem to propose their own strategies in response to the influence that political communications, schooling, and transformation of familiar and relational models pose on them.

Indeed these new models are still far away from an affirmation. The models of adulthood still remain strongly influenced by the world of adults, and that youth agency remains without consequence. The access to the public political sphere still depends on social and economical empowerment, based on the adult recognized models. Nevertheless, in this analysis I have found an embryonic beginning of a social change process. On the contrary, most literature does not give enough relevance to African youth culture, I have underlined how, even in remote rural areas, particular subcultures could be important in understanding intergenerational relationships and social change.

5. CONCLUSIONS

A hypothetical social career of a man, starts with the moment when he, as a child, shows reception of the *hlonipha* code. He than starts to ‘talk’ with adults. In this way the young man can have access to the earlier social life stage. From this moment, the youth has

⁸ In this paper I have considered the two most important: economical empowerment and marriage.

the opportunity to experiment with new types of social interactions, in some case contrasting to the ones recognized by adults. These conditions of freedom seem progressively reduced, until the moment when the youth will become an adult. This passage can assist with his acceptance of the social order. The experimentation is no longer allowed and it leads to hostility. Peer interaction clearly show how, among youth, role playing is tolerated and how among adults it is not allowed. In spite of this I can state that there is a wide distance between youth and adults within the kwaMashabane society. These experimentations, which are proper of youth, do not find a place in the adult society. Moreover, the analysis on political organization show the same results: different models of 'recognized man' coexist within the same society.

These conclusion leads us back to the classical theoretical framework of structural functionalistic anthropology, that had their roots in the analysis of Zulu society. Many anthropologists have stated that in various Southern African societies, youth conditions could be interpreted as a moment of anti-structure and rebellion to adult society (Turner, 1967). After this period youth, to be considered as men, must be embodied in the social and political structure and their new role must follow the proper adult's behaviour. In the analysis of the current day kwaMashabane society we could find similar dynamics. What differs from classical socio-anthropological analysis is that among youth there are some peculiar interactions that are different and contrasting with the ones of adult society. Inside the youth society we can therefore found some opposition that may lead to social change. The youth of kwaMashabane, as explained by the ethno-sociological literature , are the result of two hundred years of strong coercive forces. These forces came from distant sites, such as the apartheid regime, but also from the closest ones, such as 'Zulu traditional culture'. Scientific research also has not revealed, due to its' theoretical orientations, agency among youth. Similarly, *izinganekwanes* analysis demonstrates that strategies to cope with a highly structured organization of society were available in the remote past. For this reason the results of this study can be useful for scientific debate and policy making, especially concerning education.

Youth are considered the future of society and the direct heirs of culture. The comparison between how social change enter in the people's life and the strategies that individuals adopt to cope with them has been productive here. In this paper I have underlined small sketches of the complex dynamics that underpin intergenerational relationship. The dialectic between socio-cultural reproduction and social change should be read through these lenses. The analysis of youth society can reveal new embryonic models of individuals and

group experiments, in trying to cope with a difficult social environment. Those embryonic models can underline strategies, and show why those new models are refused by the broad society. This approach can be useful in understanding the continuities with the past and the new ideas' diffusion processes.

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