

THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN MOZAMBIQUE'S 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the political participation of youth in Mozambique's electoral processes, specifically the 2019 general elections. The results were obtained through interaction (semi-structured interviews) with young members and institutional representatives from four political parties, who explained their views on youth and political participation during elections. The interviews were conducted between April and September 2021 through virtual platforms. We also carried out a detailed analysis of the manifestos of three political parties. The study finds that Mozambican political parties do not have a clear vision of young people's aspirations, since the definition of the 'youth problem' is dominated by adults. In addition, young people's issues have been generalised without considering the specific concept of what it means to be young. However, in order to maintain the social and economic benefits provided by their political parties, the same young people assume that adults continue to be an example to follow in guiding the destiny of the country.

Keywords: political participation, elections, youth, Mozambique

INTRODUCTION

The debate about youth and politics integrates several studies developed in recent years (Oyedemi, Onodera & Suurpää 2016; Andrew 2020) which assume a degree of fatigue regarding formal politics on the part of voters in general, and young people in particular. However, these young people were once seen as real agents of change in the political reality of several African countries (van Gyampo & Anyidoho 2019). This debate is not new; according to Mbembe (1985, p. 20), in most African states young people are 'the spearhead of the nation ... the surest guarantee for the future,... and the future in the present'. The author argues that for the African states, there is only one definition of youth; discourses,

therefore, proceed by homogenisation and the state refuses to recognise the plurality of conditions that young people experience. Thus, these young people have been perceived as a group sensitive to anything that could lead to the state's destabilisation.

(...) Open to imported ideologies, they would be easily manipulated by external forces that could use them as instruments to challenge national security. In several African countries, young people are identified with threatening perils and the instinct to destroy. Hence, every speech addressed to them functions as a warning.

(Mbembe 1985, p. 19)

Mbembe endorses the tendency in the statement made by the first president of independent Mozambique, Samora Machel, at the creation of the Mozambican Youth Organisation (OJM) on 29 November 1977. He emphasised the historical importance of youth as crucial in the construction of the country, highlighting the need to be vigilant in defending the country. In several of his public speeches, Machel called the Mozambican youth the sap of the nation, contributors to the country's liberation from colonial domination to democracy. President Machel's speech is relevant to understanding the role that youth played in Machel's time, and its meaning for current political actors.

A discussion about youth and politics needs a definition of political participation, even if there is no consensual approach to this subject. According to Ekman & Amnå (2012), scholarly interest in political participation is justified by the concern about declining levels of civic engagement, low electoral turnout, eroding public confidence in the institutions of representative democracy, and other signs of public weariness, scepticism, cynicism, and lack of trust in politicians and political parties. Research on citizens' engagement in politics has conventionally focused on electoral participation. Verba and his colleagues assert that by 'political participation we refer to those legal acts by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take' (Verba, Nie & Kim 1978, p. 1). They used four dimensions of participation: voting referring to elections; campaign activity, including membership in or work for political parties and organisations, as well as donating money to such parties or groups; contacting public officials; and cooperative or communal activities, basically understood as all forms of engagement focused on issues in the local community.

Nonetheless, political participation consists of more than elections. For example, Teorell & Torcal (2007) suggested a more extensive typology

encompassing five dimensions, of which electoral participation is the first. Consumer participation taps into the role of citizens as critical consumers and covers donating money to charity, boycotting and political consumption, as well as signing petitions. The third dimension is party activity: to be a member of, active within, do voluntary work for or donate money to a political party. Protest activity is the fourth dimension, which covers such acts as taking part in demonstrations, strikes and other protest activities. Contacting organisations, politicians or civil servants constitute the fifth dimension, that is contact activity.

In examining political participation as more than a reductionist dimension of voting, this article aims to discuss youth political participation in electoral processes, specifically the 2019 general elections. Much of the literature (Oinas et al. 2018) indicates that young people have a decreasing interest in elections, even if this may not be as evident in the case of Mozambique. In general, young people appear to believe that their actions may be less effective in changing governance – what may be considered youth fatigue in participation (Cammaerts et al. 2016). For van Gyampo & Anyidoho (2019), because of their material and social conditions young people are often portrayed as politically indifferent and distrustful of the state's capacity to meet their needs. Hence, young people are less likely to believe that voting is a civic duty, although they have other less conventional forms of political participation and engagement, such as demonstrations, petitions, or opinion articles (Sloam & Henn 2019). This also refers to the National Democratic Institution (NDI) (n.d), considering that despite constituting more than half of the population in many countries, including Mozambique, young people often find themselves marginalised from mainstream politics and decision making.

They [young people] struggle to gain the respect of public officials and are seen as lacking the skills and experience to engage in political activity and lead positive change in their communities. This exclusion, combined with limited access to educational and economic opportunities, creates a sensation of stagnation and frustration with the status quo (NDI). According to ACE project (n.d), although official voter turnout figures are not consistently available from electoral authorities across regions, data collected from surveys conducted in different continents sketch a discouraging picture. It shows that while in the past political engagement of citizens was mainly channeled through activism in political parties (through membership, voluntary work, door-door campaigning or attending meetings), in recent years political parties have been struggling to attract new party members, and in particular young people.

Analysing the Afrobarometer data from 16 African countries between 2005 and 2015, Lekalake & Gyimah-Boadi (2016) have shown that although young people are less interested in politics than they had been previously, significant proportions of this group still vote. In addition, Round 8 (2018/2019) of Afrobarometer data indicates that two out of three young people between 18 and 35 years voted in the last national election, and more than half reported being interested in politics and having contacted a community or political leader.

Discussing elections seems to have become a topic of less interest, since many studies have shown that, in recent years, democracy is in a crisis (Przeworski 2019) because the 'ritual of voting' (Déloye & Ihl 2008) is no longer relevant, particularly for young people (Augusto 2008; Andrew 2020). In Mozambique, this is due to the emergence of 'new escapisms of political participation' (Tsandzana 2020), making voters interested in alternative means of engaging in politics. However, other studies have shown that elections are one of the most privileged ways to participate in political life (Youth Parliament of Mozambique 2014).

According to a recent study published by EISA (2021) and IMD (2022), Mozambique has had many reasons to increase the political participation of youth. This is linked to the authoritarian political culture, as well as the restrictions and excessive control of freedom of expression, which have become more acute in recent years. Equally, the same studies suggest that despite the emergence and opening of new spaces for political participation, such as social networks, the political participation of young people is still limited.

The structure of this paper consists of the introduction, followed by the methodology, a general discussion of politics and youth in Africa, and the Mozambican context. The conclusion is a preliminary analysis prior to further discussion of the topic.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted through interaction (semi-structured interviews) with young members and institutional representatives from four political parties (Frelimo, Renamo, MDM and *Nova Democracia* (New Democracy)) in Mozambique, who explained their views on youth and political participation during elections. The interviews were conducted between April and September 2021 through a virtual platform and the main focus was on the general elections (presidential and legislative) held in 2019. We interviewed 14 young people from five cities: Maputo, Xai-Xai, Beira, Quelimane, and Nampula. Only the initials of the interviewees are presented, except for three youth leaders who agreed to be identified.

Although the city of Maputo has the highest number of representatives, we admit that urban-based informants cannot represent Mozambique. Amongst the interviewees, three were women. We understand that these conclusions

cannot be considered complete, given the inequalities not just the gender and the geographical gap, but also the fact that the thinking of the youth cannot be seen in a generalised way. On one hand, as noted by van Gyampo & Anyidoho (2019, p. 3), 'young people's participation in politics must be situated within the context of political systems, economic conditions, cultural repertoires, and social dynamics of religion and ethnicity'. On the other hand, Coffe & Bolzendahl (2011) state that gender relations have a particularly strong impact on youth politics. In patriarchal societies, young women's participation in formal politics is hindered by the socialisation of young people into gendered roles and by male dominance over resources and public spaces.

The fact that we interviewed youth leaders and ordinary party members is important in understanding that those who simply vote for political parties do not necessarily have the same point of view as party leaders. On one hand, there were restrictions on conducting some interviews because of the pandemic, as we could only be present in person in Maputo throughout the 2019 general elections. On the other hand, difficult access to the Internet did not allow us to access a greater number of young people, even though it is young people who most frequently access digital platforms as a means of political participation in Mozambique (Tsandzana 2018).

Furthermore, we noted excessive bureaucracy on the part of some young people, mainly in Frelimo. In order to speak with us they needed to present formal documents or ask for authorisation from the higher structures of their political parties. Thus, this article is not based on young people in general, but on those who are members of political parties. Specifically, we wanted to explore two complementary questions: how young people participated in the writing of political manifestos during the 2019 general elections; and the views of political parties towards young people. The analysis of these questions was based on the answers of each interviewee, an interpretation made by cross-referencing the interviewees' speech and based on the literature.

In addition, to interviews, we also carried out a detailed analysis of the manifestos of each political parties – *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo), *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo) and *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* (MDM) – to understand their promises to young people. These three parties are the only ones able to elect representatives to Parliament, and theoretically are considered to be the main political organisations in the country. However, the participation of youth is not limited to parliamentary representation but starts even before the elections, for example in the drafting of manifestos, the selection/election of candidates, and campaign activities. That means that the youth also participated in other political parties that contested parliamentary elections.

Thus, we have also included *Nova Democracia* (New Democracy) – a political party created in 2019 – which has been seen as a youth party because of its leaders and members. This party emerged as result of the Youth Parliament of Mozambique (a civil society organisation) and has gained much attention from young people since its creation. This choice is important, because political parties in Parliament and those not represented in Parliament are likely to have different levels of youth engagement. However, we had technical and methodological limitations to including more political parties, of which Mozambique officially has more than twenty.

Our analysis is the first academic exercise to be done in Mozambique, as it has an eminently youth-centred approach focusing on youth as the central actors in politics. The youth are the majority group during elections. In addition, an analysis of the manifestos offers an opportunity to compare the political parties in the chapter on young people, although a similar exercise had already been carried out to analyse the same manifestos but as a whole, without a specific focus (Cahen 2020).

YOUTH AND POLITICAL NARRATIVES

Mozambique has more than 30 million inhabitants, of which of over 50% are under 35 years of age (INE 2017) with an average age of 16 years. The discourse around youth has a double dimension. On the one hand, there is a debate about the statistics regarding the population considered young, given that there are contradictory reports and demographic studies on the same subject (Tsandzana 2022). On the other hand, the legal framework, especially the Youth Policy (2013), does not clearly define youth, which is currently considered the interval between 15 and 35.

Moreover, there is a tendency to differentiate the actions of young people according to successive generations, in comparison with adults. Each generation – understood in this article as a polysemic and conflictive notion (Mannheim 2011) – represents a specific era in the history of Mozambique, seen as carrying its own logic and methods of participation. During the presidency of Armando Guebuza (2005–2015), young people were seen as *geração da viragem* (turning point); a political analogy that sought to hold young people accountable as leaders of their own destiny. Studying youth is not a consensual exercise, especially when there is a great deal of conceptual divergence on the subject. It is not even clear that it has meant anything or ‘is only a word’ (Bourdieu 1984, p. 1). Youth may be defined as a historical construct linked to the transformations that have affected socialisation and education. It is also a cultural and institutional construct whose contours vary according to national borders.

Galland (2009) shows that to study youth we need to consider the difficulty of defining youth; in particular the passage from one age, such as adolescence, to another, adulthood. The concept of youth, in the sociological sense of the term, has not always existed. Indeed, it has a certain social consistency when these periods that define an uncertain social position are extended. Youth is thus a social invention, historically situated, whose definition evolves with society itself (Galland 2009, p. 5). However, Honwana (2013) understands youth as an anthropological concept, a social construct proposed by other sociologists. The author considers youth as *waithood*, a prolonged period of suspension between childhood and adulthood because youth transitions to adulthood have become so uncertain that a growing number of young men and women must improvise livelihoods and conduct their relations outside of dominant economic and familial frameworks.

Most governments, however, adopt the age dimension. In many African countries, including Mozambique, youth corresponds to the ages between 15 and 30/35 years. In the African Youth Charter, as in Mozambique, youth is considered to be between 15 and 35 years, but other definitions adopt 18–35 years. For example, 18 years of age confers the right to vote in several countries, including Mozambique; thus its importance in our definition of youth regarding electoral participation. The concept of youth has been associated with concepts of ‘radical’ and ‘rebel’, directly related to the age of the students (Sommers 2015). The international scientific community has long been engaged in a debate to define the age range of youth. For this article, we will consider youth as people of at least 18 years of age, the legal voting age in Mozambique, because our interest is directly related to political processes, particularly the 2019 general elections.

Africa is no exception to the rule that young people are less likely to be engaged in traditional politics than their older peers. While opinion polls show that young Africans discuss politics to the same extent, a lower percentage vote, and a higher percentage participate in protests (Resnick & Casale 2011; McMahan & Kalantaryan 2020). But frustrations around poor public services and a lack of jobs can equally contribute to apathy or a desire to leave the country in search of brighter prospects elsewhere. To change this reality, different initiatives have emerged seeking to reverse the current economic and social situation of young people in many African countries.

African states have established formal spaces for the political participation of youth, ranging from the creation of youth parliaments to national youth councils outside of voting. Many are also institutionalising government entities and youth research institutes and, through these mechanisms, enabling youth participation in international forums, as well as in the public policy process. However, these initiatives and institutions are not driven by the youth. In addition,

it should be noted that the United Nations concept of youth was born in the 1960s after the youth revolutions that shook several countries in Western Europe and North America.

For example, during the popular demonstration in Maputo in 2010 against the high cost of living, the former Minister of Interior (Police), José Pacheco, described the demonstrators, many of whom were young, as ‘vandals... destabilising the country’. This is an example of how young people are regarded in Africa. Although children and young people represent a very large demographic group, they are not yet seriously considered as significant and independent socio-political categories with their own way of life. Rather, they are generally perceived as being on the margins of social, economic, and political processes, often playing a less than promising social role (De Boeck & Honwana 2000).

Maganga (2020) explains that despite the existence of several platforms for participation and for the expression of discontent – such as forming or joining political parties and participating in local elections or forming civil society organisations – youth(s) in Africa have resorted to demonstrations as an effective way of expressing their views on various issues. This is probably because other platforms are not as effective as protests; they do not produce instant results, or youth(s) are manipulated or captured. This may also explain why many young people do not participate in elections, either as candidates or voters. The reasons for this are discussed in relation to the general elections in Mozambique.

GENERAL ELECTIONS IN MOZAMBIQUE

Multiparty politics was introduced in Mozambique in 1990. The first multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections were overseen by the United Nations (UN) and were held from 27 to 29 October 1994. They were based on the framework agreed upon in the Peace Agreement signed on 4 October 1992 between the Mozambican government and the rebel group Renamo, that put an end to a 16-year civil war and to almost two decades of single-party rule. The second multiparty national election took place in December 1999, and the third was in December 2004.

The fourth general elections were held in Mozambique on 28 October 2009. Incumbent President Armando Guebuza ran for re-election as the Frelimo candidate. President Guebuza was again challenged by opposition leader Afonso Dhlakama, who had stood as the Renamo candidate in every general election since 1994. Also contesting for the presidency was Daviz Simango,¹ who was an affiliated Renamo member before founding his party, *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* (Mozambique’s Democratic Movement, MDM) earlier in 2009.

1 Daviz Simango died on 22 February 2021.

The elections in Mozambique on 15 October 2014 were the fifth national elections since the introduction of multiparty politics in the country in 1990. These elections took place at a time when the country was undergoing several transitions. At the political level, the country was transitioning from one president to another, as it was President Guebuza's last term in office. There was also a transition in the ruling party as a result of the change of presidential candidate, from Armando Guebuza to Filipe Nyusi. The political context in which the 15 October 2019 general elections were organised presented some challenges and opportunities for the consolidation of peace and democracy in Mozambique.

These national elections would be the first held without Renamo's historic leader, Afonso Dhlakama, who had died in May 2018. Importantly, the elections took place in the context of the Maputo Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, signed on 6 August 2019 between the government and the main opposition political party, Renamo. Due to a revision of the electoral law, the 2019 elections offered a new electoral dispensation which made provision for the election of provincial governors to replace the previous system of presidential appointees. The four candidates approved by the Constitutional Council for the General Election were Ossufo Momade of Renamo, Filipe Nyusi of Frelimo, Daviz Simango of MDM, and Mário Albino of the United Movement for Action and Integral Salvation (AMUSI). The results were a resounding victory for Frelimo's Nyusi, with votes cast as follows: Mário Albino: 45 265 votes; Ossufo Momande: 1 351 284 votes; Daviz Simango: 270 615 votes; and Filipe Nyusi: 4 507 549 votes, as indicated in Figure 1 below.

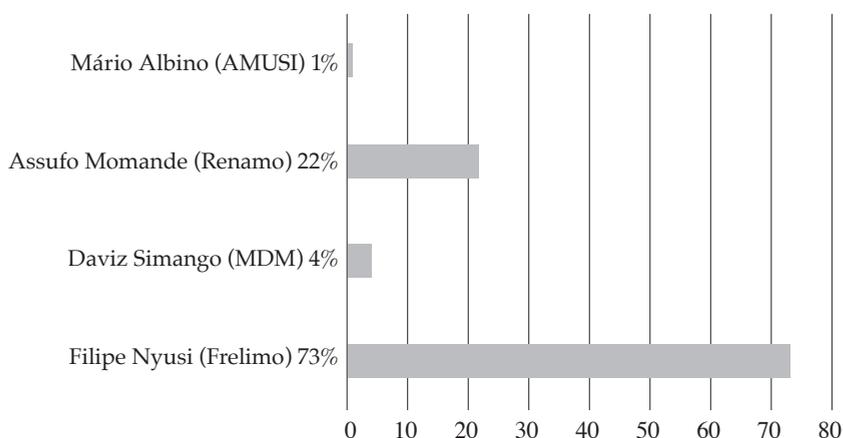


Figure 1: 2019 General Elections in Mozambique (presidential candidates)

In addition to electing the president of the Republic, the 2019 elections also allowed for the election of a new parliament, which resulted in a new configuration, although dominated by the majority Frelimo party. One of the highlights in our analysis was the parliamentary composition based on the ages of the elected Members of Parliament, as illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 2 below.

Table 1: Election to the Assembly of the Republic

Deputies	Over 35 years old	Under or equal to 35 years old
250	233	17
100%	93%	7%

Source: National Electoral Commission – CNE

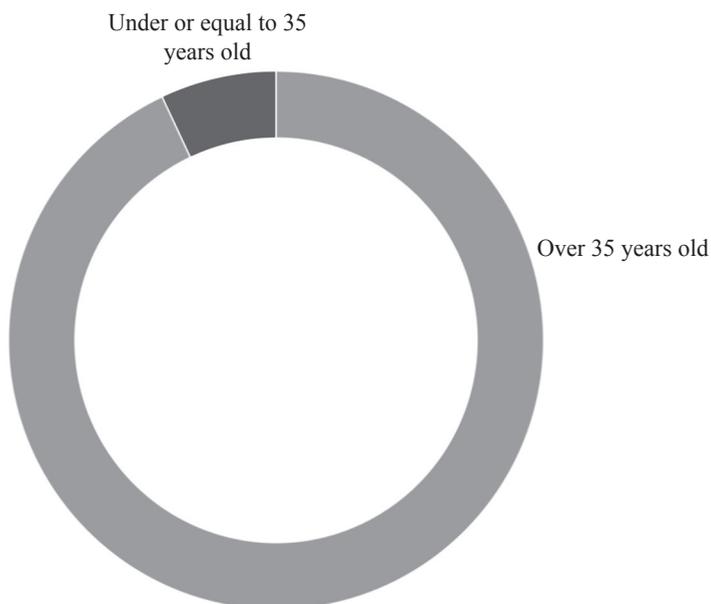


Figure 2: Distribution of parliamentary seats by age

Source: Parliamentary Youth Cabinet

According to the data presented in Table 1, 16 of the 17 Members of Parliament are from Frelimo, 1 from Renamo, and none from MDM. A voter must be 18 years old by the date of the election in order to exercise the right to vote or to be elected, except for the President of the Republic where the minimum age is 35. While our interest is specific to the 2019 general elections, we would have liked to include an assessment of the evolution of youth political participation in each election; but the National Election Commission does not publish age-disaggregated data.

YOUTH AND GENERAL ELECTIONS:

Writing the Manifestos

In 2016 the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung organised a debate around the meaning of the crisis and what young people could contribute to overcoming the difficult situation in Mozambique. The organisation noted that talk about the crisis was commonplace as this was affecting various sectors of the economy, such as the price of public transport, the confidence of donors to continue supporting the country, and, above all, future generations. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung initiative allows us to introduce the scope of problems identified by the three political parties as fundamental for young people in the 2019 general elections.

Table 2: Political parties' manifestos in the 2019 general elections

Political party	Commitments
Frelimo	<p>Section 3.1.4 (Title: Youth, p. 47) of Frelimo's manifesto refers to the youth as follows: 'Frelimo recognises the dynamism, perseverance and leadership spirit that has always characterised the youth in all historical processes that culminated with profound political and social transformations in the country'. Among the promises, the party intended to: (1) facilitate youth access to infrastructure land and decent housing with credit; (2) promote youth activism as a mechanism for dialogue with the leadership; (3) stimulate the creation of initiatives that encourage youth participation in the planning and implementation processes of development programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The word youth appears five times in Frelimo's manifesto.

MDM	<p>The MDM's manifesto has 54 pages, in which the subject around youth(s) appears on page 46 (Title: Youth, section 4.11), as follows: 'MDM sees in youth the great hope for a new Mozambique and all. Youth will be the inspiring and guiding axis of the MDM governmental action. Youth will be the priority of MDM's government'. To strengthen the Mozambican youth, MDM undertakes, as its main priority for this social group, to create job opportunities, school social action services, and allocate part of the GDP to finance a national housing plan for youth. Among some of the promises, the party intended to: (1) promote actions that stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit in young people; (2) stimulate through solid and continued education, the development of a more qualified generation; (3) introduce plans to disseminate the importance of attending secondary, technical professional and arts and crafts education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The word youth appears 13 times in MDM's manifesto.
Renamo	<p>There are 44 pages in Renamo's manifesto. On page 23, (Title: Youth, section 4.1.5), Renamo states that: 'The intervention of public policies on youth should have as objectives the promotion of youth employment and social inclusion'. Among some of the promises, the party intended to: (1) promote access to employment; (2) institute subsidised housing credit lines for young people in their first job; (3) approve a credit policy favourable to the acquisition or construction of their own home; (4) grant merit-based scholarships to young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The word youth appears four times in Renamo's manifesto.

Source: Centre for Public Integrity – CIP

Our analysis is based on each manifesto. For the sake of methodological balance, we have chosen political parties that were running in the presidential elections. This was not the case of *Nova Democracia* (New Democracy) which ran only in the legislative elections. This is an important exercise given the fact that the debate around youth is repeatedly placed as central in the national political discourse,

even if these same youths had been called the 'sap of the nation' by Samora Machel (1977); and they were considered potential 'sellers of the motherland' (Hama Thai 2008), indicating that the youth were not prepared to lead the country.

These three manifestos demonstrate their youth-political connotation through the creation of the Mozambican Youth Organization (OJM) in the case of Frelimo, and youth leagues, in the cases of MDM and Renamo. Among the similarities in these manifestos, we found some ambiguity in the definition of being a young person. How all parties consider young people makes us think that there are no social, cultural, political, or even economic categories of what it is to be young in Mozambique, which we consider methodologically erroneous. Not all the parties defined what is understood to be youth in Mozambique.

Only Frelimo and the MDM presented the date of conception or approval of their respective political manifestos as July 2019 for Frelimo and May 2019 for MDM. However, the list of problems identified by these parties as those that afflict the youth can be seen as a strategy that hides the potential in self-taught youth and leaders in their field. In other words, the three manifestos are a set of solutions to problems considered to be those of young people, even if at no point is the difference between problem and non-problem explained.

Different terms are used to refer to the intention of each party, and in this aspect, Frelimo and MDM use a variety of terms that indicate some intention of placing the responsibility of young people to take charge of their future. Renamo makes four areas of intervention for young people, in comparison to Frelimo (eight promises) and MDM (18 promises). There is a large difference between the three political parties in the textual quantity and explanation of the promised actions.

Of the three political parties only Frelimo intersperses its actions with photographs, and in the youth section, did so with a photo that appears to represent two young women. Furthermore, employment and housing are commonly seen as central and necessary problems to be solved when talking about young people. However, it does not seem to us that these two elements should be treated universally for the youth in Mozambique. Even if these are considered to be the main issues faced by young people in Mozambique, we think that there is no clarity in the identification of such problems in terms of gender, age, or even social situation. We recognise that it is still problematic to characterise young people from a biological perspective, or by an age group (18 to 35 years, for example), especially in a regional, continental, or even world context in which there is no consensus on the formula to define who is a young person.

According to MDM member HS in a Zoom interview on 22 September 2021, the reason for the lack of youth participation was because the party was experiencing an internal crisis. For him, many young party members were not present to draft the manifesto, since its elaboration depended solely on the

members of the party's secretariat – the elders – as well as some experts paid to write the document for the party: 'The manifestos are drafted by companies which provide consultancy services, not by the youth. This happens because youth are not so keen to collaborate with the opposition parties'. This reveals that the way in which the party is organised can determine the greater or lesser engagement of young people in political processes. It also indicates that party members do not have full confidence in their ability to produce an effective proposal, which is why they have asked private entities, usually professional (legal) specialists to do so.

In almost all parties, there is an excessive reference to the dominance exercised by elders. In the case of Renamo, CM mentioned (in a Zoom interview on 21 September 2021) that it is a challenge to gain entry into political parties, as young people are a minority representing the majority. He mentioned that in 2019 there was a reasonable opportunity, but the elders still dominated the space for participation, because they had drafted the manifestos and only called the youth to confirm it. 'There was some discussion at the bottom level, but the youth have no power to decide. It's still a struggle. The youth are the majority, and the manifestos should be 60% dominated by youth...', he said. However, within the same party there were some members with different points of view, as they believe that young people should respect their elders and not necessarily be concerned about making decisions. OU said (in a WhatsApp interview, 21 September 2021), that it is necessary to realise that the Renamo is composed of people with many needs, and some people may understand that everyone wants to make decisions, but it is necessary to respect the leadership and those who have power. For him, 'it is not so true that the debate is only made by adults, as there are forums for young people. What is missing is understanding whether or not the youth league has initiatives to promote the party – the mission of the youth is not necessarily to decide, but to transmit their concerns to the highest level'. The nostalgic idea of defending elders was also supported by a member of Frelimo, who thought of the young as the main problem. AM stated (WhatsApp, 25 September 2021) that although it is said that youth need space, they need to listen to the elders, because 'many young people act emotionally – most of the young people nowadays (1980s) do not respect militancy and are not patriotic. Young people want to live in what is immediate, there is no attention to the future. The elders sacrificed their lives. Although we are the majority, there is still a lack of understanding of the country's problems. There is no sense of homeland, we must put our country first, as some of them are in the party just for immediate gains'. In general, the youth of Frelimo were less critical, indicating that the process of integrating young people in the preparation of the manifesto was peaceful, and suggesting that young people should gain experience from their elders, according to MA (WhatsApp, 24 September 2021). In the same way, it is the elders who must pass

the baton to the young, according to SV, another Frelimo member, in a personal interview (WhatsApp, 21 September 2021). The lack of criticism may be a way to keep benefits and proximity to the party, and through this gain advantages that can be translated into political positions and patronage from the elders.

In the case of New Democracy, they take an opposite line to the other three political parties analysed above. For the members of ND, there was much debate as to which focus was on young people and their problems. The youth contributed in their area of expertise and knowledge, based on small groups and focus meetings. The interviewees also noted that there was no blocking of the elders. After the debate, a compilation was submitted to the headquarters in Maputo. However, in a WhatsApp interview with WD on 21 September 2021, other members consider that additional resources could have allowed for a greater reach of young people, so there were 'decisions taken from the capital'. This makes us realise that no matter how much openness there may be in political parties, they retain an almost absolute centralisation and domination where decisions must be taken at the central organs of the which are in the capital of the country. This may be a limiting factor for the perception of the local problems of young people.

THE PLACE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLITICAL PARTIES

After discussing role of youth in designing each of the manifestos, this section identifies the vision of each party regarding youth and politics in Mozambique. In a Zoom interview on 23 June 2021, Frelimo's José Luís Ernesto Fole (Secretary of the Central Committee of OJM) said that youth is at the centre of political debate, and the education factor gives youth a broader vision of politics. According to the interviewee, Frelimo knows that it can only remain in power and continue to be the leading party if it addresses the youth in its own party: 'Frelimo's governance is turned to the youth'. This is in line with the recent EISA study (2021), that Frelimo uses OJM to dominate the public space for youth in Mozambique.

For José Fole, one of the indicators is the creation of the Secretariat for Youth and Employment (SEJE), because in the previous model, youth issues were marginalised, forcing the government to create a Secretariat for Youth to respond to the concerns of young people. Employment is the main reason for the disintegration of young people, which deters them (young people) from thinking about patriotism, he noted. The youth have limited participation in Frelimo, since all decisions about what is important or not for young people are taken by the adult members in position of leadership. This is why the SEJE was created, an entity led by Oswaldo Petersburgo, who was born in 1984 (38 years old in 2022).

This discourse is in line with the analysis of the electoral manifestos of each party, where the problems of young people are summarised as employment and

housing. This probably conceals a greater challenge regarding the integration of young people in the decision-making processes of political parties. In other words, the emphasis on these problems is a strategy to make young people think that political parties exist to solve their problems, without their inclusion in the leadership structures of such political parties.

In addition, Frelimo intends to recover the nationalist discourse, which Fole describes as the problem of unemployment that makes youth less patriotic because they are searching for survival strategies. This narrative infers that the cause of some conflicts is motivated by young people who lack opportunities such as access to employment and education (Flückiger & Ludwig 2018), although such correlation has already been relativised to indicate that there is not necessarily any cause and effect between unemployment and lack of education (Sommers 2019). The same discourse has been used to justify the apparent reason for the non-involvement of young people, leading senior members to decide what constitutes youth problems. It shows that Mozambican youth engage in political parties as a choice of patronage, not as a way to bring about change. Van Gyampo & Anyidoho (2019, p. 9) note that young people's predisposition to vote is also influenced by their perception that elections are fair and by the length of tenure of the incumbent, which indicates the likelihood that there can be a political change (that is, that their vote will count).

This also indicates that the recurrent emphasis on quotas may reveal that the youth in the four parties analysed are not interested in incorporating their priorities within party strategies and policies, or pushing for greater transparency and accountability in the party's systems and processes. They are more focused on fighting for increased youth quotas at leadership level, as noted by RF when interviewed on WhatsApp (23 September 2021), that even though MDM has quotas for youth (30%), these are difficult to respect. For her, the elders are the majority at decision-making levels, and even though the youth try to impose their ideas, the political commission has no young people.

From the leader's perspective, Renato Muelega (MDM President of the National Youth League) noted in a Zoom interview (14 April 2021) that the party created a slogan indicating that it was considered a 'party of the youth', given that a certain youth movement identified with MDM as a new party. For him, the assumption was that it was a party of the youth, although the day-to-day dynamics indicated differently. Our interviewee affirmed that MDM is a party run by adults. In this way, the 'youth march' is reduced, and MDM is becoming a party just like all the others.

At the last Congress, held in 2017, it imposed itself to have a space in several bodies, as well as in the candidate lists. The challenge of

implementation is great, as it is always necessary to renegotiate. It was a party open and sensitive towards young people, which allowed, after the Congress, to have a 30% youth fringe, a National Youth Council with a minimum proportion of 30%.

(Renato Muelega (Renamo, Maputo, April 2021))

It is clear that the survival of MDM's Youth League has been a great challenge. For example, since it has its own programme and agenda, it should hold two meetings a year, an internal national meeting and another with the national bodies; but often legal statutes are violated due to a lack of resources to organise these activities. This illustrates how the materialisation of the youth agenda within political parties largely depends on the will of the central bodies run by elders, those with the financial power to realise youth activities.

In general, while new parties tend to allow greater youth engagement in consultations and decision-making, traditional parties continue to have greater power. However, this is not the case of the MDM. The usual perception that well-established parties are probably more conservative (with a limited participation of youth) than new ones, is not valid for MDM in comparison to Frelimo and Renamo as they do the same. In addition, it claims to be the party of the youth by holding the majority of youth engagements and pro-youth promises in its manifesto; but it is the party that has the lowest youth representation in Parliament.

This is endorsed by a young man from the MDM. For him, MDM does not differ much from other parties, because the drafting of its manifesto was really a replication of past discourses. It works as an imposition, since the young people don't really say anything, only the older ones do. 'Many people talk about housing and employment, it's the same thing. There are no specific ideas, there was no consultation process with young people. What is done is to impose these wishes through the youth league, but they don't represent youth as a whole. There is no clear process of consultation. The elders continue to dominate the spaces, they feel they are the masters and set the rules. There was only continuity from the other manifestos,' as noted by FN (WhatsApp interview, 22 September 2021).

From comments by Renamo's representative, it is evident that the interest of young people in politics is declining in Mozambique. Augusto Magaure (head of the Department of Organisation and Statistics) commented that 'if we place it on a scale of 1–100, we can see that it is around 50, for there is a lot of frustration in young people, given the lack of opportunities and employment' (Zoom interview, 25 April 2021). He emphasises that, for example, the allocation of scholarships should be based on merit, but what is seen is that this is based on the political colour of the ruling party.

This reality frustrates the longings of young people because they are not aligned with the party in power (Frelimo). Most young people do not have any activities and politics does not emerge as a strategy to overcome difficulties. However, young people are confident (and hopeful) in Renamo and its President, where they believe that opportunities will be provided for all young people.

Augusto Magaure (Renamo, Maputo – April 2021)

Magaure's remarks may indicate that the youth have no hope of leading the change for the better. Renamo tend to blame the ruling party, asserting that the main obstacle to developing the technical capacity of young people is Frelimo's poor governance. Once again unemployment among the youth emerges as a central problem for political parties, as this confirms the Frelimo representative comments. In other words, both parties place the need and opportunity to acquire a job as fundamental for young people.

Each party had a different vision during election campaigns. José Fole stated that Frelimo is composed mainly of young people and had quotas of 18%, which was increased to 22% in 2019 because this group of people needed to have internal benefits within the party. Fole noted that the youth want incentives, and the party felt obliged to provide these. As a result, the 2019 strategy of the youth office was changed; because young people are different, it was necessary to adopt a new style and policy. Instead of using trucks in the campaign, the party used motorbikes. This shows that the fuel or the motorcycles given to the youth were simply incentives for them to participate in the campaigning activities.

Almost 99% were young people who thought about the messages to convince other young people. They thought about the pillars to call other young people. The field of political struggle focuses more on the youth. The adults (from 50 years onwards) are already formatted...even with their eyes closed they vote for Frelimo.

It is no longer possible to convince young people with the discourse of national liberation. They (youth) want to know more about employment policies, about their education and housing. Young people want to know about resource management. This scenario meant that the manifesto was biased towards young people, the candidate's posture, speech, and dress as a young person. This led to him (Filipe Nyusi) having an advantage over the other candidates.

The candidate walked and ran as a young man to attract the attention of the youth. The campaign was fluid – young people liked the posture, and it was really for the young people. Another dynamic

was through the red wave, where the party leadership had a youth-led campaign process. The youth had a chance to say what they wanted to see in case the candidate won.

José Luís Ernesto Fole (Frelimo, Maputo – June 2021)

Fole's remarks can be interpreted in two ways. First, it is a demonstration of Frelimo's capacities, whether technical, political, or financial, and what could be used to attract young people by giving them money to buy fuel or motorcycles. It shows us that because of the political settlement (Buur & Salimo 2018; Khan 2019), Frelimo had a clear advantage over the other parties in the general election since it used some of the state's resources for its campaign. Fole's speech reveals a political party that was well prepared and clear about what it should do to capture the sensibility of young people.

Second, when Fole says that 'the candidate walked and ran as a young man to attract attention of the youth', this indicates that Filipe Nyusi was representing the elders, and there was a need to adapt his profile to win over young voters. Using Mozambique's Afrobarometer's data (2002–2015), Shenga (2017) argued that youth affiliated to political party organisations as well as in civic associations are more likely to participate in political processes, thereby receiving a positive payoff. Whilst the attitudes of these youth are known, the attitudes of ordinary youth (those not affiliated with youth party organisations and civic associations) are not known.

In the case of MDM, Mualega said that in the first phase, their manifesto was defined as a sectoral area, and the youth elaborated their thoughts, after which they were submitted to the party in a general commission. MDM's Youth League was heard, but because of financial difficulties it was not possible to express these ideas in an aggregated and national dimension, since there was no interaction with all the young people within the party.

It was in our interest to go to rural areas, but this was not possible due to the financial dilemma. As a solution, it was necessary to think for others. After this phase of information gathering, a meeting of the staff was held to discuss the manifesto, and the necessary alignment was made, which was then submitted to the young people. The central debate was around academic training, first job, and housing. These were the three main pillars that MDM advocated to solve. Hence, the strategy was to try to solve these issues.

Renato Muelega (Renamo, Maputo – April 2021)

Once again, the lack of resources is the main challenge for the realisation of the MDM youth agenda. Clearly, the promises contained in their manifesto were not necessarily the result of a comprehensive public consultation since there was no internal capacity to reach the youth of that party. This is a lesson that should lead back to the debate on the sustainability of the political parties' youth leagues. Above all, this should question whether they are relevant in the current model, staying only in urban areas like Maputo that do not represent the wider view of young people.

In the electoral chapter, Renamo's central concern was that 'youth was the hope of the country for the future of Mozambique'. Renamo understood that it was necessary to promote access to employment through an education system linked to their first job to create conditions where young people do not think of working only after finishing higher education but start from their first stage of education. Magaure explained that there was a need to invest and think about wealth for young people so they could take the initiative for their lives – an added value for the country.

Renamo held consultation sessions, and from its grassroots, there was discussion about what Renamo's vision should be regarding young people, from various social groups, whether young people, women, or those much older. These concerns were then forwarded to the Provincial Election's Office to be ratified.

Augusto Magaure (Renamo, Maputo – April 2021)

We understand that Renamo differs from MDM, as at least there was an opportunity to expand the discussion on the manifesto to different levels of the party to give 'voice to the youth'. However, the fact that the discussions should always submit to a review by the party's central political bodies, again raises the debate around the legitimacy and independence of these political party youth leagues, since they must still rely on the acceptance of the elders concerning their political aspirations.

As observed throughout our interviews, one of the frequent debates concerns the age of leaders in charge of youth organisations in Mozambique. Adults continue to dominate decision-making spaces without the presence of young people. However, despite this reality, the election of the new Renamo youth president in June 2021 created hope among some young people, who even considered him the 'Malema of Mozambique' (Viage 2021). This statement reveals the hope for change, especially when young people identify themselves with the leadership of youth organisations of their age.² Despite the fact that young people

2 Ivan Mazanga is 32 years old and Bitone Viage is 30 years old (April 2022).

are considered 'fatigued with formal politics' (Tshuma & Zvaita 2019), political parties are still an important space for youth engagement in politics (Honwana 2020).

The Malema of Moz, the Compass of Mozambican Youth

Dear friend Chigamanhane Mazanga, I have always told you how great you are in the Renamo party. If you continue in this path, believe me, that you will be the Malema that our youth is waiting for, you will be the rescue of all the youth confidence that was lost during these years when we were submerged in lies, promises emptied of patriotism.

You know that by continuing in this path, you will never lose sight of my support. It is from postures like yours that we expect. It may even take a while, but at the most, we will go to our graves with our civic duty well done. So, the other organisations will wait for those guidelines since there are many particular interests (political elites) in this cartel.

Well done! For this kind of fight, you can count on my support.

Viage 2021, Facebook (translation from Portuguese)

CONCLUSION

Throughout this article, we discussed the relationship between youth and political participation during elections in a country where most of the population belongs to a group younger than 35 years of age (INE 2017). The 2019 general elections have allowed us to analyse the promises of the political parties on the youth chapter, an exercise that is done for the first time in the case of Mozambique. Equally, we were able to analyse how young people engaged in the design, conception, and approval of these manifestos. However, although more research needs to be done, it was possible to address three key issues.

Firstly, it was possible to observe party-political thinking that the youth represent an important social group in the way politics is practised in Mozambique. This vision derives from Mozambique's history since independence in 1975, when young people were seen as important actors who could not only free the country from the conflict, but equally would be the same young people who would guarantee the country's social, economic, and political stability.

Secondly, from the analysis of the political manifestos it was possible to note the lack of clarity in what the political parties considered to be 'youth problems', and that they define who is young without following clear criteria. There is an

arbitrary generalisation of problems that probably do not belong specifically to young people. In other words, the emphasis given to employability, education, and housing, three topics that we assume to be important for the development of young people, should be seen differently, without assuming that these are young people's central and only problems.

Thirdly, it is obvious that the constitution of party youth organisations is not a guarantee of young people's independence within political parties. In other words, the practice of gerontocracy (Adebayo 2018) is still present in Mozambique's political parties, given that adults still dominate the final decision on what should guide young people, without considering whether these problems were deliberated by young people. Moreover, how the lists for the election of Members of Parliament are defined clearly proves that the over-35s still dominate the decision-making spaces within the political parties.

These three points indicate that the visions of the ordinary members is not the same as their leaders. In fact, youth leaders seem to be better accommodated because of their institutional positions, which creates a distance from the other young people in the party who do not have the same view of their integration in political parties. The lack of capacity-building opportunities for members of political parties can be seen as a sign of fear that youth with high skills may surpass and eventually take over the leadership of the party. This happened in 2018 with Venâncio Mondlane (former MDM) and Samora Machel Júnior (Frelimo), two politicians considered young, who challenged the elders of their parties during local elections.

Finally, as discussed by van Gyampo & Anyidoho (2019), young people are still excluded or marginalised in formal political processes and structures. At the same time, young people's political exclusion is due to their own lack of interest in politics. However, we argue that their activism in alternative spaces of political engagement such as social media networks and unconventional political participation, suggests that young people may be disillusioned with formal political systems that they perceive to be flawed, corrupt, repressive, or exclusionary. This leads them to claim new forms of political participation – new escapisms in the political arena (Tsandzana 2020).

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