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Kuduro, rap and resistance: Politics of music and activism in  
'new' hegemonic Angola

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
award of the degree of Masters Coursework in Politics

[Master of Social Science in Political Studies]

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

[2018]

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## Glossary

27 de Maio 1977	27 of May 1977
AI	Amnesty International
Angolanidade	Angolaness, imagined common identity of Angolans
bairro	neighbourhood, district of Luanda
batida	beats in music which also means physical beat
Batida	Lisbon-based kuduro ensemble
cadáver andante	walking corps, zombie
cuka	the national beer of Angola
cultura do medo	culture of fear in 'new' Angola which has lately been identified with 27 May 1977
griot	Northern African traditional story teller and musician
hiplife	popular fusion genre of highlife and hip-hop music
kimbundu	widely spoken Bantu language in Angola
kizomba	traditional Angolan music style
kudurista	kuduro musician
kuduro	globally influenced Angolan music and dance style
kwaito	South African electronic dance music genre
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, the ruling party since independence in 1975
musseque	township in Luanda
NGO	non-governmental organisation
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, second largest political party in Angola which was defeated by the MPLA in the civil war
semba	traditional Angolan music

## Acknowledgement

To say thank you to those who encouraged me in writing my mini-dissertation would be almost impossible to accomplish here. I cannot recall each moment, situation, reflection and impression which came to inform my writing. Many of my fellow students, debate partners, lecturers and friends, but also my built and natural environment have inspired me along the writing process.

Naming those who generously dedicated their time and energy to listen to my concerns, to advise me and to keep me optimistic when I was losing hope is only partial acknowledgment of what I have received from these conversations. I will always remember this research, as milestone in my intellectual journey, not only for the repetitive office work and exciting researching, but also for the 'imagined community' of people who surrounded me during this time.

I would like to thank the academic and administrative staff in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Cape Town. To my supervisors, Lauren Paremoer: thank you for carefully listening to my (initially) confusing ideas, reading my papers and raising your more than helpful guiding questions. Thank you to Nikiwe Solomon, Lesley Green and Thiven Reddy for guiding me through the labyrinth of political philosophy and critical social theories. Thank you to Vicki Sinden for managing everything that made this intellectual communication possible in the department.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the *Music, Power, Networks* (May 2017) conference participants for the insightful comments they provided me following my presentation. Also, I am indebted to the conference's organizers for their hospitality and encouragement. Similarly, I am grateful to my colleague, Gianna Maita for her insights and advice on how to make this mini dissertation more enjoyable to my readers.

I would like thank Sibondha Wood for his generous support in translating some of the Portuguese phrases I struggled with, and also for the friendship, love and patience he shared with me along the way. I am grateful to my friends Krisztina Bozo and Manapo Tebello Mokose for their feminist spirits, honest comments and encouragement. I want to thank my family as well, for their emotional support and uplifting words they shared with me along the way.

Finally, I would like to thank the INSPIRE Erasmus Mundus exchange program for the financial and administrative support I benefited from during my studies at the University of Cape Town.

## Abstract

**Keywords:** kuduro, rap, music, diasporic, resistance, neoliberalism, seductive power, necropower, frozen citizenship, electronic capitalism, visibility, human rights

I introduce *kuduro* music as a vantage point to uncover the political landscape of Angola where critical voices do not emerge with ease. I argue that *kuduro*, the globally known and disseminated genre of dance music, has been hijacked by the dos Santos government's populist narrative so that it has become an ideological audio-visual narrative for 'new' Angola. Co-option is a socio-economic practice in new, independent Angola, but also political in the sense that it brings Angolans closer to the ruling elite's economic power. The redistribution of wealth what Kalyan Sanyal (2007) coined as reversal of primitive accumulation is a useful concept here, but it falls short of fully explaining practices of patronage. Thus, I suggest seductive power as an extended concept, in order to understand co-option as both an economic and a cultural practice.

In contrast to the *kuduro* scene, rap and hip-hop music have remained part of underground and DIY culture in Angola. This quasi-marginal position has allowed some musicians' artistic practice to emerge as critical voices. In this mini-dissertation, I examine Ikonoklasta and MCK's music because they are among the most represented musicians and activists by online media. New modes of civil resistance are often attached to Ikonoklasta's name and songs. However, the recently emerged revolutionary's movement cannot be fully identified with the Angolan rap scene (Martin 2015). In this sense, through Ikonoklasta's activism and music production, along with MCK's music, I show the extent to which the Angolan government keeps a certain culture of fear alive through necropolitics which was coined by Achille Mbembe (2003). This politics of death, and consequently, that of fear jointly produce what I call 'frozen citizenship'.

Before the revolutionary youth were arrested, Ikonoklasta and MCK collaborated with Batida, the Lisbon-based *kuduro* musician. Moreover, following the detention of musicians, local journalists and academics in Luanda, Batida began to use its global music network and platform to tell stories about the Angolan revolutionary movement. Repurposing his world music shows and DJ sets, Batida has enabled the dissemination of local counter-narratives within transnational NGOs' circle. Pedro Coquenão aka Batida have organised demonstrations by utilising the global infrastructure and intellectual labour of Amnesty International.

To elaborate on the transnational NGO's role, I draw on critical human rights scholarship which consider human rights language as a global hegemonic framework

engaging with injustices in a depoliticizing manner. Moving away from this theoretical preconceptions, I briefly discuss the extent to which transnational NGOs such as Amnesty International, paradoxically constrains and enables local activism at the same time. Although human rights organizations seem to have little power to put pressure on the Angolan government, they have the financial and infrastructural means to disseminate images, music and stories of local activists. I argue that this visibility provides global attention and certain protection to the high-profile activists targeted by the dos Santos regime. This medium falls in the trap of global witness fever (Kurasawa 2009) which offers an escape from 'frozen citizenship' through positive activist practice and a politics of hope (Baridotti 2010).



## Introduction

Angola is one of the Southern African post-colonial nations which, following 500 years of Portuguese colonial rule, suffered from a devastating liberation war (1961-1974) and civil war (1975-2002) (Hodges 2001). Since 2002, Luanda experienced a post-war economic boom which has been transforming the economy and culture of so-called 'new' Angola. Luanda's spectacularly changing city space shelters approximately 7 million residents. 70 percent of the 7 million people live on less than 2 dollars per day which they predominantly earn on the informal market (Martin 2015).

Despite the prevalence of massive poverty, Luanda is often compared to world-class cities such as Paris (African heritage 2014), Dubai (Martin 2015, de Oliveira 2015: 2) and Kuala Lumpur (Collier 2008: 206). Indeed, what the Angolan development model strives for has already emerged in Dubai: extracted natural resources, foreign capital influx, luxury products and wealth accumulation managed by the ruling elite. Moreover, Luanda is undoubtedly one of the world's most expensive cities (CNN 2013). The city embraces newly built skyscrapers, shopping malls, night clubs and music scene that jointly constitute a transnational, cosmopolitan urban aesthetic (Mbembe 2008: 110). The construction of modern and carefully designed buildings have been the most visible indicator of development.

These processes are largely reflected by statistical numbers and best described as 'economic freedom' in reports issued by US-based think-tanks (Sogge 2011). Clearly, 2002 opened up novel ways for few to accumulate wealth. The economic boom has unequivocally been an opportunity for the ruling elite to further cement its centralised political power. However, beyond economic control, the ruling elite is able to maintain its power by silencing and exterminating its oppositions which include anyone who dare to critique the rule of Eduardo dos Santos, the president. The massacre of 27th of May 1997 demarcates a fatal date which is widely known in Angola. Nevertheless, the ruling elite did not talk about the massacre committed by their own party, the MPLA, on that date. In Angola, in the aftermath of the civil war, mass killings did not cease to exist: it occurred in 1992, and another more recently, in 2015 (Pawson 2014).

Despite the centralised power and crimes committed under dos Santos' rule, 2002 has become a modernist milestone in Angola's history (Schubert 2015). Moreover, it has nourished hopes that better times will come. However, as this dissertation argues, hopes for a better future in post-war Angola are vulnerable, as they are subject to the MPLA's<sup>1</sup> hegemonic politics. Politics of hopes (Mbembe and Posel 2005), which involve proactive actions and emotional labour by citizens, has constantly been under the threat of the ruling elite which has the capacity to govern lives through complex and interwoven modalities of power. The economic modernization of Luanda,

The economic modernization of Luanda, patronage and the deployment of deadly police and military forces in the name of order, I argue, co-constitute Angola's hegemonic power.

In this dissertation, I analyse what kind of modalities of power are at work when a group of young, revolutionary activists in Luanda (Pawson 2014, Vidal 2015) attempt to criticise and organise civic resistance against the thirty-six year-long rule of the dos Santos government. Through the case study of Luanda-based activism which emerged after the 2008 re-election of dos Santos, I wish to discuss the possibilities for and constraints of active citizenship in Angola. In so doing, I dedicate more attention to the role of musicians and music in organising resistance. By analysing interviews I conducted with Luaty Beirão and Pedro Coquenão, I uncover the strategy of resistance that has been fostered through their diasporic musical collaboration. The aforementioned artist, Beirão, has become known under his hip hop stage name of Ikonoklasta, while the latter, Coquenão, is a *kuduro* DJ known as Batida in Lisbon. I also examine Angolan rapper MCK's collaboration with Ikonoklasta and Batida. The visibility of these musicians is crucial to keep critical art and activism alive in and beyond Angola.

At the same time, I must discuss the production of *kuduro*, the Angolan electronic dance music, as cultural labour. It has been hired by the dos Santos government for political purposes. In this thesis, I discuss the micro-politics of *kuduro* and hip hop musicians who contribute to both hegemonic politics and counter-hegemonic narratives in different ways. While *kuduristas*<sup>2</sup> in Angola make a living from patronage money provided by the authoritarian state, hip hop music is under censorship and some rap songs have been banned. Through its political economy, cultural politics and police force, the dos Santos government has intimately penetrated music production (Tomás 2014).

## **Neoliberalism and modalities of power**

Given the cemented power of President dos Santos, the politicized music of Ikonoklasta, MCK and Batida, what I wish to further unpack in this thesis, do not emerge with ease. Clearly, political activists, attempting to imagine ways of governing Angola, cannot make claims without experiencing a repressive reaction from the dos Santos regime.

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<sup>1</sup> Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola*) is the ruling party since independence in 1975, led by dos Santos.

<sup>2</sup> Angolan musicians are playing and producing *kuduro* music. See more in Alisch and Siegert (2012).

To uncover how the repressive regime in Angola works, I wish, as sociologist Sallie Westwood (2002: 7) suggests, to first excavate the interconnection between different modalities of power through analysing *kuduro* and hip-hop music production in Luanda. Then, I will analyse the diasporic collaboration between Ikonoklasta and Batida on the Luanda-Lisbon axis. Hence I articulate the definition of power through the case study of music production and activism in Angola, where politics and cultural and affective labour overlap to counter the regime's narrative.

Although power can derive from everywhere (Foucault 1990: 93) and intrinsic to human interactions (Giddens 1984), also to human and non-human assemblages<sup>3</sup>, I narrow my analysis down to modalities of power in relation to the intersection of music production, activism and social commentary. I do so by drawing on Foucaultian scholarship, which holds that power is embedded and processed, but also it can be both productive and coercive (Foucault in Rabinow 1991). In other words, actors are produced and constrained by various mechanisms of power (Ibid). Therefore, I wish to discuss different modalities of power<sup>4</sup> which are interwoven in the dos Santos regime's politico-economic agenda, socio-cultural policies and coercive operations. More precisely, I wish to sketch the interconnection of different modalities of power which constrain, and at the same time enable (Hayward 2000: 8) a political praxis via *kuduro* and rap music production.

In so doing, my interest rests in what kind of politics can be pursued through digital activism under a repressive regime. In order to unveil the different dynamics of power – such as seductive power, necropower and global human rights discourse – I examine different scenes of music production and civil resistance connected to music which have been informed and shaped by these interwoven dynamics of power. I begin this journey with the scene of Luanda, the emerging 'global city' (Sassen 2005). Given this point of departure, it is necessary to first talk about neoliberalism and postcolonial capitalism, which inform and enable different modalities of power.

The term neoliberalism might be overused both in critical scholarship of political economy and everyday parlance. Since the 2000s, a dark narrative of neoliberalism

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<sup>3</sup> Although power dynamics were lately interrogated through the lived experience of humans in relation to non-humans such as mundane artefacts and infrastructures (see for instance Latour 1992, Morton 2013, 2017), given the methodological preferences I opted for, I only look at the discursive realm instead of an ethnographically informed analysis of power dynamics across human and non-human entanglements. However, in an expanded ethnographic research project, it might be possible to involve human and non-humans such as oil or infrastructure alike.

<sup>4</sup> Modalities of power might be best understood as ability to produce effect on something, influenced behaviours, outcomes of a situation, prevent something from happening and even bring about changes in a certain context. Power is not fixed and immanent in nature. Rather, power is dispersed as Foucault argues. It comes from different agent and operates in different modes at various levels of the social strata. For Foucault, these modalities of power are disciplinary power, sovereign power, pastoral power and biopower (See more in Rabinow 1991).

has emerged that identifies it as the main global politico-economic force responsible for social inequality (Ortner 2002). Instead of imposing a negative preconception in the case of music production, I rather suggest carving out the way in which politics of resistance has been shaped through different modalities of power that operate within, by or despite the global neoliberal political economy. As Stephen J. Collier (2012) points out, it is challenging to formulate a concise definition of neoliberalism. One way to approach the term, as he proposes, might be to unpack the 'neo' in neoliberalism. Unlike classical liberalism, neoliberalism relies on the state's active role, which creates favourable condition for the market logic to thrive (Collier 2012: 190).

A similar point has been made by Wendy Brown (2015). She notes that states are not reluctant to intervene in the economy to facilitate the market which can operate within various social realms by invading, for instance, the cultural one. It is in this sense that the market can coexist either with democratic or authoritarian regimes, as it was the case, for instance, throughout the last decades of the South African apartheid regime (Schnitzler 2016). However, Collier (2012) warns us that we must be cautious in taking neoliberalism as the context of the social realm. It is not a coherently omnipresent, homogenous structure invading all strata and layers of societies. Rather, we might better understand the concept of neoliberalism as a malleable political project that aims to economize most of the social terrain (Wark 2017: 145). And thus, it is capable of incorporating pre-existing traditions and concepts as well (Schnitzler 2016: 46-64). Neoliberalism is not merely about political economy, but a social, moral and cultural phenomenon which has locally embedded consequences (Hilgers 2012, Osumare 2014, Taylor 2012).

Even though neoliberalism has predominantly been negatively portrayed, following Sanyal (2007) careful conceptualisation of primitive accumulation and its reversal form, I propose to take the beneficial, productive effect of late capitalism into consideration as well. I propose to think through what Sanyal (2007) calls the dualism of post-colonial states. I must note, however, that Sanyal's theoretical innovation is not entirely novel. He draws on the Foucaultian-Nietzscheian concept of productive power. For Foucault, productive power is empowering, beneficial and creative, rather than destructive and restrictive (Westwood 2002: 26).

For Sanyal, the productive effect of post-colonial capitalism rests upon the redistributive capacity of few who make a profit via capitalist primitive accumulation. Similarly, Slavoj Žižek (2008: 20) argues that capitalism is no longer able to reproduce itself on the basis of sheer wealth accumulation logic. Capitalism also needs extra-economic activities to legitimate its logic by the financial support of cultural activities, education, the informal economy etc. Reversal of wealth accumulation is about

redistributing some part of the profit for charity, human developments or other similar purposes (Sanyal 2007). Thereby, (re)creating opportunity for social reproduction, capitalism is capable of justifying its existence and, at the same time, maintaining itself through the reversal process of its very purpose, that of profit-making. However, only the sheer political economic approach of Sanyal (2007) might overlook the cultural terrain of reverse primitive accumulation. Thus, I introduce the concept of seductive power, what I discuss a moment later, which might be better to describe the economic practice of patronage in Angola

Patronage is a mutually beneficial relationship between often unequal parties. It is a mode of governance that requires loyalty to certain causes, ideologies or leaders. It is also a way to prevent and manage conflict in African societies (Bissel 2015). This patron-client relationship persists in sub-Saharan Africa, including in Angola, through what might be defined in terms of neo-patrimonialism. This informal distribution of resources is considered to be instrumental to one's own survival, rather than to corruption (Francisco 2010). Patronage in Angola helps *kuduristas* to sustain themselves and produce music. The two concepts of reverse primitive accumulation and patronage together allow me to introduce the seductive power of the wealthy Angolan elite.

Looking through the lens of the above-mentioned concepts, this research paper offers an analysis which seeks to take the intersection of productive and restrictive power seriously, through the case of *kuduro* production and the *kuduro*-rap diasporic network of Ikonoklasta and Batida. Beyond the distribution strategy of the ruling elite, we should look at the historical and the psycho-social context within which the dos Santos regime exercises its power. Killings and massacres committed by the MPLA which date back to 1977 have undoubtedly shaped the public sphere in Angola.

Angolan politics, thus, have the paramount symptoms of what Achille Mbembe (2003) calls necropower. It is a form of sovereign power that is able to create deathscapes. Spaces where extermination of the population can occur without any consequences, within a state of exemption, without fighting a war (Mbembe 2003). Within numerous spacio-temporal deathscapes social existence is attached to a particularly vulnerable experience of life. It is a fragile condition of human beings that might be called living dead (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014: 25). Thus, necropower is the restrictive, negative mode of power that creates a culture of fear in Angola. It is a general anxiety and emotional

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<sup>5</sup> Sanyal argues that from the 70s there was a shift in development discourse. Human rights politics generated a shift in development projects. It was about taking care of the poor, intervening in situations where primitive accumulation impoverished the population. Thus, human rights discourse contributed to the self-legitimizing practice of post-colonial capitalism: reversal form of primitive accumulation. Blatantly put, this shift resulted in a developmental model which takes resources away and give a little back somewhere, not necessarily in the same community.

uneasiness that prevents broader public discussion in Angola about massacres and repressive politics. More precisely, by exercising control over the media, the dos Santos regime is able to centrally prevent critical voices from being heard (Pawson 2014). These concepts are also crucial, as I illustrate through the music scene, to understand the way in which resistance has emerged in Angola.

## **Civil resistance and music**

Activism in Angola, as a 'politics of hope' (Mbembe and Posel 2005) and a 'sense of possibility' (Newman 2015), tries to envision new ways of living together in the aftermath of the war by navigating in between the empowering seductive power and the obscene violence of necropower which have been manifest at various levels of the social strata. This dissertation defines and unpacks these concepts using the case study music's role in civil resistance.

I believe the case of Angolan activism represents a small-scale movement, and that, it is important to examine because most research about social movements dealing with the Southern African region tends to shed more light on South Africa's protests and grassroots movements (see for instance Friedman 2012, von Schnitzler 2016). Even though Angolan activism has garnered little attention in social science research, there are some academic publications which mention and partially analyse Luanda-based demonstrations (Vidal 2015, Pawson 2014, Tomás 2014, Pearce 2015). However, recently published interviews and journalism have actively covered and represented narratives of the young revolutionary activists, including Ikonoklasta and MCK.

Moreover, social movement studies tend to play less attention to the different modalities of hegemonic power I discussed earlier. Many studies are framed as if social movements have not relied on and connected to capitalist production in some way (Hayes 2007, Brandes and Engels 2011, Philipps 2016). In critical social movement studies, Lorenzo Cini et al (2017) stress the need for a systematic, critical approach, including capitalist transformation. The authors argue that capitalism and its locally manifested effect should always be taken into consideration (Cini et al 430). Being inspired by this insightful remark, I wish to discuss the recent wave of demonstrations in Luanda in juxtaposition with local manifestations of global capitalism. In order to do this, I must first emphasize that the social, economic and cultural cannot be treated as separate realms of scholarly inquiry (Streeck 2012 in Cini et al 2017). Given this recognition, I must also stress that the literature on African social movements has challenged certain theories and concepts for adapting a Eurocentric perspective that overlooks localities and the formation of African social movements and demonstrations (Philipps 2016, Brandes and Engels 2011).

The so-called Western framework becomes problematic when it comes to adapt the concept of civil society which, in an African context, has a function more like a

service provider that the repository of civil resistance (Brandes and Engels 2011: 7-10). The same authors argue that African social movements are under-researched, at least in comparison with scholarship interested in the Global North's popular movements. Moreover, on the African continent, more attention has been given to Anglophone and Francophone countries than Lusophone ones (Brandes and Engels 2011: 2-4). At this point, my research intends to occupy the gap by investigating recently emerged civil resistance and demonstrations in Lusophone Angola. I prefer to specifically look at the micro-politics of activism and adopt the macro-approaches of Sanyal (2007) and Mbembe (2003), who carefully analysed capitalism and necropower in post-colonial contexts. I believe it is needed in order to see how power works in the case of Angola.

In practice, however, it is impossible to restrict my analysis merely to the Angolan context, because social movements and demonstrations in Africa are predominantly hybrid in nature. By this, I mean that it is worth looking at certain cases from a global perspective, as they are internationally influenced social phenomena (de Waal and Ibreck 2013). The term hybrid might also be useful to illustrate the effect of technology on contemporary social movements. Matio Diani (2000) argues that social movements might be better described as informal networks. But these networks have lately been forged within the virtual sphere, in the context of electronic capitalism. Tracing back online and offline networks, donors, collaborations, global influences seem to be crucial to locally embedded activism in Angola as well (Vidal 2015).

Furthermore, given South Africa's reputation as the protest capital of the world, multiple studies have also been conducted on the extent to which music and political resistance are interwoven (Vershbow 2010). Not only in South Africa's case, but also in social science inquiry in general, music is frequently regarded as a potential medium for fostering counter-hegemonic norms. Moreover, music has often been theorized as a cultural product, either fostering political projects (Lipsitz 1994) or reconciling and healing society (Alisch and Siegert 2013). In other words, many researchers carving out the intersection of music and politics have fruitfully grown the fields of musicology, ethnomusicology, political studies, sociology and anthropology over the last decades. Most of the studies have, however, been reluctant to juxtapose music with neoliberalism (León 2014). Besides a couple of case studies, little has been written about how music production, neoliberal values and political economy are interwoven. The case study that follow illustrate this.

Continuing with the South African context, I must mention Steingo's article (2007) which invites the reader to discover how the seemingly apolitical, popular electronic dance music called *kwaito* adapted a depoliticizing, neoliberal discourse by mere self-actualization. Musicians, therefore, paradoxically perform a new politics of freedom in

South African townships: a nightlife-centred, joyful music which helps people to forget about state politics. And more interestingly, ANC politicians also discovered the cultural power of *kwaito* music which they have managed to turn into political campaign music. Although the music's apolitical lyrics are preserved, politicians have taken the stages over to give speeches to the crowd.

Similarly griots, traditional story teller and musicians in Northern Africa (living in Mali and Senegal) have several opportunities to repurpose their traditions. Today, they are hired by politicians during the period of electoral campaigns (Panzacchi 1994: 196). It seems that the griot tradition has received great attention within Senegalese business circles as well. In Dakar, business women are willing to pay musicians to boost their businesses via individualized musical praise (Panzacchi 1994: 199). In Ghana, Halifu Osumare (2014) conducted ethnographically-informed research on hiplife music – which is a popular fusion genre of highlife and hip-hop music – and its relationship to international corporations. As he notes, under the sponsorship of international telecommunication companies, hiplife music has become 'an obvious conduit for transference of symbols of private ownership' (Ibid: 191). For local musicians, it is necessary to find a reliable sponsor, which is often a giant telecommunications company operating across the African continent.

Moreover, I take this research as an opportunity for critically engaging with Stefanie Alisch and Nadine Siegert's (2013) study on *kuduro* music. They coined *kuduro* as electronic music and a dance style culturally rooted in Angola; but aesthetically-speaking, it has been influenced by global pop culture. It first appeared in Luanda's *musseques*, the shantytowns of the capital city. In a nutshell, they consider *kuduro* as a coherent music genre which, through its aesthetic features, contributes to broader reconciliation, and thus able to heal those who interact with this music. Instead of taking *kuduro* as a genre, I consider it a set of audio-visual commodities produced by creative labour. Thus, I suggest studying *kuduro* where politics unexpectedly encounters music. Some *kuduro* musician in Angola has different relations to the government than *kuduro* produced in collaboration with Angolan rappers. It can channelled in both, in hegemonic discourse and counter discourses.

Instead of taking *kuduro* as a genre, I offer a close reading of *kuduristas* Ikonoklasta and Batida's diasporic collaboration in order to understand the complex mechanism of power, and the way in which resistance has emerged in Angola. I believe this analysis allows me to think through the concept of electronic capitalism (Appadurai 1995), which refers to a globalised political economy enabled, managed and dominated by the use of electronic media in the virtual sphere (Paehlke 2003: 27). Capitalism, in this sense, does not only impose constraints on civil resistance; it also fosters the transnational solidarity and visibility of Angolan activists. This globalised visibility, however, would be more challenging to foster if human rights NGOs such



as Amnesty International did not provide intellectual labour and infrastructure to support revolutionary activists and musicians.

## **Methodological considerations**

Micro-political actions (Baridotti 2010) are more often included in comparative studies which contextually study each case (de Waal and Ibreck 2013). Similarly, within electronic dance music research, comparative analyses have been published on *kuduro* music which tend to lead to generalizing conclusions stating that *kuduro*, as genre rooted in Angola, can contribute to broader reconciliation within Luanda's *musseques* (Alisch and Siegert 2013). Comparative case studies, for me, seem to theorise from the commonalities of the chosen cases, rather than unpack them.

To overcome the limitations of comparative analysis, I rather propose to look at a case study of global networks of activists, musicians and human rights organizations. The specific case study of Ikonoklasta's and Batida's politicized music-making and collaboration allows me to interrogate different modalities of power (neoliberal economic development, authoritarian institutional politics, massacres and human rights discourse) that they encounter in Luanda. Thinking through music networks across Luanda and Lisbon, I offer an analysis of the interconnection of music production, politics and resistance. I propose to take both seriously in terms of local and long-distance encounters, which are equally important in co-producing a particular culture and common vocabularies of a potential counter-culture (Tsing 2005: 4).

To provide a narrowly focused analysis of the music network, I opted for a qualitative online research which, broadly speaking, means the contextualization of the cases I am looking at via online representation of Angolan activism, music and politics (Greenhouse 2010). I reconstruct the newly emerging activism by analysing online materials such as journalistic writings, interviews, blog posts, social media posts and pages, documentaries, videos and pictures circulated online as primary sources. These sources are crucial to understanding Ikonoklasta's and Batida's narrative about how music activism emerged in Angola and beyond. I found social media useful for tracing articles back about their activism and detention.

Furthermore, online media content facilitated the research process by preserving the interaction between transnational organisations and musicians. Given the online visibility campaign, these documents, comments and pictures became primary sources in reconstructing the politically active musicians' narratives. On the other hand, I rely on ethnographically-informed studies to uncover the contextual conditions and power dynamics in Angola. These ethnographies often include interviews and analysis of online materials' as well.

The language of online representations and literature that I use here is predominantly English. However, some articles, posts, comments and lyrics published in Portuguese and French are also included in my analysis to further substantiate the case study. Although Angola is a Lusophone country, academic writings are often translated or published in English. In a similar vein, music videos, lyrics and news are available in both English and Portuguese. I must note that articles and blog posts published in English might depict the demonstrations and detentions from a slightly critical angle than sources written in Portuguese in Angola. In this light, I restrict my analysis to the globally-circulated online materials which have targeted an Anglophone global audience. I must also point out that the information circulated online is limited; it reflects and only makes visible certain perspectives, representations and voices in relation to the Angolan music and activism. To partly overcome this limitation, I contacted two musicians who have been at the forefront, in the media representation, of critiquing the dos Santos regime.

Since January 2017, I have been in touch with Luaty Beirão (aka Ikonoklasta) and Pedro Coquenão (aka Batida) and conducted brief email interviews with them in relation to the gap that I noticed in academic writings and journalistic interviews. I raised questions that previously published interviews did not ask, mostly about their politically conscious art and actions. Furthermore, I asked them to describe their relationship with one another and with NGOs and human rights organisations. The interviews mostly informed Chapters 2, 3 and 4. They also informed my overall analysis of the Angolan political climate. The interviews, together with journalistic interviews conducted by others, led me to conceptualise the politics of fear and of hopes, which initially were not included in my conceptual web.

## **Outline of the argument**

In Chapter 1, I map the terrain of politics and music production in the city of Luanda. The post-war city's politics consists of sequences of seductive images: luxurious offices, shopping malls, clubs and *kuduro* music. Luanda is a playground for the economico-political elite and for spectacularly performative politics of the dos Santos government practiced under the banner of national reconstruction (Schubert 2015, Gastrow 2017). It is in this context that the ruling party, the MPLA, is able to maintain its patriotic grand narrative (Schubert 2015). The discursive power of the MPLA is attached to the physical reconstruction of the city (Schubert 2015). While the Angolan elite favours this neoliberal trajectory in re-engineering the urban landscape, the residents have consequently been pushed to the periphery (de Pacheco Melo 2016). Whereas the modernist rebuilding of the city targets and aesthetically downgrades

the *musseques* (Gastrow 2017), the locally embodied music and dance style of *kuduro*, the symbolic power of popular culture (Hall 1998), is attract the ruling elite. To further enhance its discursive power, the Angolan government has infiltrated cultural production through patronage (Tomás 2014). Patronage is a successful instrument in consolidating one's power in a country where the socioeconomic gap between the ruling elite and citizens is enormous. By offering patronage to Angolan musicians, mostly *kuduro* producers, the dos Santos government has successfully mobilized and hijacked local, electronic dance music (Tomás 2014). It is a neoliberal aesthetic which infiltrates into city of Luanda, but also, as I argue, the music of *kuduro* constituting a cosmopolitan outlook that is able to seduce people with its promise of a better life. Seductive power is the term that I use, following Sanyal (2007), to illustrate the ideological use of *kuduro* music.

Recently, as I uncover in Chapter 2, the Luanda-based rappers, musicians and activists, reacted to the urban socioeconomic tensions and repressive politics by attempting to organize themselves as a reading group. They gathered in order to read Gene Sharp's book (2010) entitled 'From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation'. The Angolan authorities responded to the peaceful activist meeting by detaining 15 activists. This chapter traces how the new generational activism, what Vidal (2015) regards 'confrontational', in contrast to the nineties' civic intervention, emerged despite the seductive power in Angola. Relying on journalistic articles and interviews, I show how rappers like Ikonoklasta and MCK are involved in music-mediated politics in Luanda. Through the recently emerged activist journey, I introduce my reader to culture of fear that has been produced by the necropower of the dos Santos regime (Mbembe 2003). The culture of fear, I argue, has been made communicated and represented through rap music which often talks about what it is like to be 'living dead' in Angola.

In Chapter 3, I move on to examine Lisbon's music scene, which has been connected to Luanda's music scene through diasporic, politicized, musical collaboration. Batida, the Lisbon-based *kuduro* DJ, Pedro Coquenão, appeared on the world music scene with a politically conscious audio-visual performance. This *kuduro* is about performance in which the past and the present of Angola met in one, semi-fictional narrative. The golden years of Angolan music, contemporary *kuduro* and social commentary jointly mapped the terrain of diasporic music-making in the performance, which was a collaboration with Ikonoklasta. Given Batida's media visibility, diasporic music collaboration cultivates an ideoscape. This global circulation has been made possible by electronic capitalism, which is best described as a globally-extended political economy enabled, managed and dominated by the use of electronic media (Paehlke 2003: 27). When Angolan activists criticise the centralized power of dos Santos, I argue that, they paradoxically utilise channels of neoliberal economy in order to render their case more visible to an imagined global audience.

However, the reception of their narrative greatly depends on the music industry, and human rights organisations.

Batida has not merely been criticizing the Angolan regime by producing music in collaboration with Luanda-based artists; it has also organised campaigns and demonstrations together with international NGOs such as Amnesty International. In Chapter 4, I unpack the way in which the transnational human rights campaign represents the new wave of Angolan activism. However, I argue that it might not place the Angolan government under direct political and economic pressure because NGOs are unable to make significant changes within Angola (Masuku et al 2015). Despite that, musicians and activists rely on the intellectual labour and resources of the NGOs.

This is the brief sketch of my research in which I propose to take the discourses, representation and emotions that have come into existence in post-war Luanda seriously, but also dare to go beyond them. Moving toward a conclusion, in the last section of my research, I theoretically discuss the practice of hope in juxtaposition with the seductive power and necropower. As Rossi Baridotti suggests, for political subjectivities, for those who are living under the threat of necropower, one possible path to escape might be through the transformation of 'the negative into positive passion' (2010: 214). The new generation's imaginaries, hopes, claims and presence in the underground music scene might be understood as creative manifestation of a positive passion. Activism in Angola, through the medium of music, is a political practice of emotional, bodily and creative labour. It requires mobilizations of hopes and strong beliefs in order to continue dissenting against the seductive power and necropower of the regime.

## Chapter 1

### Luanda and kuduro: in captivity of seductive power

*'To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.'* (Berman 1983: 15)

#### Aesthetics of new Angola's political economy

Angola currently owns the second largest oil industry on the African continent, following the great oil power of Nigeria (OPEC 2018). Given this enormous income, Luanda has easily become a fertile terrain for corporates and businesses. They invest in modern, luxurious forms stimulated by neoliberal economy. The Angolan government is mostly invest in infrastructural reconstruction due to the Chinese credit they received. In exchange for credit, Angola provides China with oil cargo (de Oliveira 2015: 56). In this sense, Luanda seeks to join the network of transnational hubs not merely on the African continent but around the world. As sociologist Saskia Sassen (2017: 24) points out, the Angolan capital city, similar to Nigerian cities, has already produced the symptoms of what she calls a geography of centrality. This position within the global hierarchy refers to the remarkable presence of corporates, businesses, banks, wealthy residents and a service-based economy. It is in this sense that Luanda gains a new identity at the crossroads of globally-shaped, but locally-managed, state-led developmental projects.

Ndalu de Almeida, an Angolan artist who writes and makes films under the pen name 'Ondjaki,' illustrates the current dynamics of the emerging global city of Luanda as follows:

*'Anyone who has money can go to Luanda and buy a house and then demolish it and build a hotel and demolish it to build a bigger hotel.'* (Martin and Moorman 2010: 61)

What this concise description allows us to see is the process of buying-up the urban landscape, apparently without any legal and political limitations. Demolition and reconstruction have been the obvious aesthetic signs of economic investment within the city space (Shubert 2018). Furthermore, these types of material interventions are always accompanied by the marginalization and displacement of residents (Sanyal 2007, Sanyal and Bhattacharyya 2011, de Pacheco Melo 2016). Since 2002, thousands of houses were demolished, between 2002 and 2006 this number was about 3000 houses affecting 20 thousand people (Human Rights Watch 2007).

Luanda, through sites of rapid construction, seeks to join the network of economically thriving global cities (Sassen 2005, Sanyal and Bhattacharyya 2011). It is an aesthetic aspiration of capitalist investment, inspired by the modernist promise of prosperity. Through rapid construction, investment and reinvestment, the government discursively presents national reconstruction as a physically and aesthetically graspable promise for a common and better future. The president José Eduardo dos Santos also reinforced this image of Angola in one of his speeches stating that 'each Angolan will have better life' (dos Santos quoted in de Oliveira 2015: 51). Therefore, Luanda's construction sites, embracing demolished and built concrete, are also providing a ground for the nationalist-modernist narrative of the ruling elite. This discursive representation, however, makes sure that the daily experience of evictions is passed over in silence. Between 2002 and 2006, Luanda witnessed 18 mass evictions organised by the government that destroyed approximately 3 thousand houses (Human Rights Watch 2007). These numbers are barely represented by the dos Santos government.

This reconstruction of Luanda has become both the preferred subject of the dominant narrative, and the spectacularly materialized performance of the dos Santos government. Although the urban landscape is the privileged scene of the massive post-war reconstruction, it has strived to targets the country as whole. Reconstruction can be seen in rehabilitation of roads and railways, the rebuilding of devastated buildings and the reorganisation of public spaces across the country (de Oliveira 2015). That is, a massive modernist rehabilitation is occurring with the support of techno-scientific expertise and is further fostered by continuously flowing foreign capital. What Ondjaki is also describing is basically the MPLA's politics of new Angola: nationalist, capitalist reconstruction that results in wealth accumulation of MPLA-related companies, such as Sonangol.

What is important to note about the politics here is that the government's narrative on the physical reconstruction of the city justifies the need for capitalist development. However, where modernisation of the urban landscape takes place, global capital flows and brings about changes, and consequently restructures socio-economic constellations of the city. Fostering capitalist development allows the Angolan government to appear as if it takes care of Angolan people. Under the banner of 'better life for all', which has been legitimized by the visual power of ongoing physical reconstructions, the dos Santos regime acts out benevolent paternalism and maintains the semblance of a non-existent welfare-oriented state. Along this line, government rhetoric addresses its populist messages to an imagined community that presumes comradeship (Anderson 2006: 7) and *Angolanidade* (Angolaness), a common identity that unites 'new' Angola. *Kuduro* music, which I critically discuss later in this chapter, became one of the cultural repositories of Angolan's national identity (Santos 2013).

Moreover, since reconstruction has positive connotations, especially in post-war settings, and is backed by multiple actors with 'expertise'<sup>6</sup>, it appears to be a legitimate trajectory to pursue. However, this globally justified, pragmatic discourse of striving for economic growth through intensive development masks state violence against the evicted and criminalised poor. During evictions, many of the residents were arrested without any notice and explanation (Human Rights Watch 2007). David Sogge (2011: 90) unpacks this political economy of the ruling party, which is deeply embedded in the process of national reconstruction:

'A narrow state-based elite manages the economy in collaboration with foreign corporations to promote a developmental model that redistributes wealth upward and outward.'

This insight illustrates how the oil industry of Angola allows the MPLA elite and their families to acquire economic power. I consider it a significant moment in understanding the Angolan strategy of patronage, which I am going to discuss in relation to *kuduro*. Redistribution of wealth within the MPLA's elite circle and via state-related companies has been the prevalent avenue through which socio-economic control has become more and more centralized in Angola. In 2015, journalist and activist Rafael Marques was summoned to court for criticizing army generals who are firsthand beneficiaries of state-owned businesses. For their loyalty, they receive shares of approximately 1.2 million dollars from Angola's diamond industry. The journalist accused the generals of killing and torturing miners in the diamond fields (Harper 2015).

Moreover, businesses are tightly related to family networks and the MPLA's narrow, political circle, including the generals. To illustrate this, I introduce a widely-known case here: the family business of president dos Santos, which has received remarkable attention both in journalistic and academic writing. His daughter, Isabel dos Santos, has predominantly been portrayed in Western media as Africa's richest woman. Isabel dos Santos owns nightclubs, restaurants and hotels in Luanda (Harper 2015). On top of that, in 2016, her father appointed her head of Sonangol, the national oil company. The giant corporate, which has acquired the position of the second largest business in Africa, is responsible for most of the state's revenues. Sonangol is also the main source of the patronage system (de Mayda 2017; Amnesty International Report 2016/17: 66). Similarly to the dos Santos-led corporate, the Eduardo dos Santos Foundation (FESA) has been at the centre of centralized redistribution of patronage money. By dedicating money for leisure activities, both Sonangol and FESA infiltrate the socio-cultural life of Angolans (de Oliveira 2015: 107-8). *Kuduro* musicians, as I discuss in the next

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, experts are academics and NGO members, those who advocate reconstruction and post-war reconciliation. International development studies, transitional justice and peace-building studies are constantly contributing to the positive image of reconstructionist discourse, the modernist ideology of transition. See more about similar concerns in relation to South African techno-politics in Antina von Schnitzler's book (2016).

chapters, along with football clubs and cheap beer (Harper 2015), are promoted by the dos Santos government. Similarly, banks, businesses and centralized charity organizations, via patronage, are partaking in the complex dynamics of the post-colonial dualism (Sanyal 2007).

Dualism refers to the paradoxical bidirectional dynamics of capitalism. On the one hand, capitalist accumulation has occurred through land grabbing and buying up buildings; as noted earlier, it is almost always accompanied with evictions and dispossession of the surplus population.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the reversal of primitive accumulation occurs in parallel with accumulation. Put differently, capitalist development intends to accommodate and include the *musseques* in the universe of capitalism in order to legitimize the violent structure of ongoing primitive accumulation. Sanyal's (2007) theory, with the concept of reverse accumulation, introduces the ideological work of capitalism, which justifies and consolidates its political economy via charity, donations and redistribution of money to the poor. First taking away (primitive accumulation) and then giving back (the reversal of the process) have been the paradoxical dynamics of capitalism. The contradiction between making profit from and donating to the surplus population permeates post-colonial societies, and as Sanyal argues, determines the type of post-colonial capitalism.

In this regard, I do not suggest merely reading the culture of co-optation (Schubert 2018) and the system of patronage in terms of political culture. Neither should it be taken as the Angolan government's cultural policy, implemented with the help of oil-wealth and foreign loans. Rather, it should be further discussed as the capitalist logic of reverse primitive accumulation that constitutes the dual capitalism in post-colonial city of Luanda. Differently put, I am interested in looking at *kuduro* as a cultural product, produced by the funds and financial supports of donors that flow towards townships. This conceptual shift, I argue, allows us to look at politics from a slightly different angle and to understand Angolan politics from the perspective of a post-colonial capitalist economy through the case of *kuduro* music production. In the followings, taking Sanyal's theory seriously, I reread the literature on *kuduro* with the notion of reverse primitive accumulation. I discovered the way in which *kuduro* is tied to political economy and, thus, to the new ideological politics of the dos Santos regime. For the purpose of better understanding music and resistance in Angola, I find it crucial to first draw a parallel between the capitalist economy and *kuduro* in Luanda.

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<sup>7</sup> The term surplus population refers to those people who have been left out of the domain of capitalist production. They are those residents in Luanda who do not have jobs and opportunities to find a place within the capitalist economy. At best, they engage in informal economic activities to survive.



## Kuduro, development and patronage

*Kuduro* is one of the global electronic ghetto music styles that gained greater popularity in the last few decades travelling from Luanda's *musseques* through Lisbon's outskirts to international stages of the Global South and North alike. It has been best described as African house dance music played with rough rhythms along rapped lyrics (Alisch and Siegert 2012). *Kuduro* first appeared in Luanda's racialized shantytowns, in the streets and taxis of *musseques* during the nineties. The first experiment of *kuduro* making was by playing music on cell phones. Youth of the *musseques* started dancing to these techno-rhythms (Young 2012).

Up until today, the shantytowns of Luanda such as Rangel, Sambizanga and Viana, the same urban districts which gave birth to the golden years of music in Angola, remained authentic sites of *kuduro* music production (Moorman 2008, Alisch and Siegert 2012). However, these neighbourhoods of Luanda are regarded by the neoliberal re-engineering project as aesthetically inferior in comparison to the modernizing hubs of the Angolan global city. In practice, modernisation takes place in form of demolition and reconstruction within the shantytowns, especially those which are located close to the modernizing sites. They are constantly threatened by the drive for capitalist accumulation. Thus, in everyday parlance, the *musseques* signify socio-economically downgraded parts of the city, potential sites for modernist reconstruction. Buying up and demolishing the residents' cement houses, built over the course of decades is a common practice under the dos Santos regime (Gastrow 2017).

According to the Development Workshop's<sup>s</sup> estimations, nearly 75 percent of the urban Angolan population lives in *musseques* threatened by the reconstructionist project (Cain 2013). Within these peri-urban districts, residents are trying to make a substantial living by engaging with national and global markets via the informal economy (Ibid). Following the short period of Afro-socialism, when the socialist project failed to persist at the end of the nineties, a massive informal economy emerged in the heart of Luanda. These political changes loosened control over the circulation of goods and music products in the *musseques*. Within this politico-economic vacuum, *kuduro* music began to circulate through informal networks. This informality initially gave *kuduro* music a sort of distance from the state, allowing it to occupy a quasi-counter-public space (Tomás 2014). However, within the current national discourse of reconstruction, *kuduro* seems to be a more complex socio-cultural phenomenon than merely a sonic and aesthetic glue for a celebrated cosmopolitan identity of *Angolanidade* (Moorman 2008, Alisch and Siegert 2012).

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<sup>s</sup> It is an Angola-based NGO.

If one takes *kuduro* only as a performative, cultural element of identity formation, and instrumental to the dos Santos nation-building project, I argue that it might remain a constrained approach to *kuduro* music production. Cultural analysis of music often misses the opportunity to adopt a holistic approach which simultaneously takes the economic, the cultural, the social and the political realms seriously. David Hesmondhalgh (2007: 33-35), for instance, proposes a critical political economy approach to cultural industry that is able to shade more light on the interrelatedness of the various realm of life. Hesmondhalgh points out that well-grounded critical approaches to cultural industries, including the music industry, traces power back through the interconnectedness of the economic, the cultural, the social and the political.

In this sense, music production itself might also be discussed as creative or cultural labour (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 52). The concept of creative labour allows us to think of *kuduro* as a cultural product born out of complex interactions between human labour and inhuman apparatus (Wark 2015). The labour aspect of music production takes us back to a political economy which, as I argued, alone is not sufficient to apply as lens of analysis. Although the materiality of *kuduro* production is important to examine, the discursive and symbolic realm cannot be neglected in analysing cultural products such as music. In order to excavate this interrelatedness of discourses, symbols and the material context of performing *kuduro*, I must further discuss the way in which music has been played and listened to in Luanda, in juxtaposition with the socio-economic realities sketched above.

During the liberation war, music was explicitly political and an important medium to transmit political messages. For instance, the Ngola Ritmos band members were arrested for organising the nationalist resistance through their music and political activism (Moorman 2008: 14-16). In the eighties, at the time of the civil war, the political opponents (MPLA and UNITA) were separately organizing political music festivals and recorded songs (Ibid: 190). The MPLA's supportive attitude toward popular music, and it's simultaneous extended control over communications media allowed politicians to attract young Angolans to their side (Moorman 2008: 166). During the aftermath of brief state-socialist rule in Angola, the concentration of power in the hands of the MPLA resulted in exclusivist practices over memories and culture (Pearce 2015). Before we accept that cultural policies are fabricated to support Angolan musicians, it worth look at how state control takes place economically. In brief, it is worth discussing the way in which this hegemonic control takes place in contemporary Angola through patronage.

Since the inauguration of president dos Santos in 1979, the MPLA supported and managed a transition from state socialism to the neoliberal reorganisation of the economy from the late eighties (Moorman 2016). During this period, the political

project of neoliberalism, known as structural adjustment, in forms of policies encouraged economic stabilisation and free market in African countries (Hilgers 2012). Angola smoothly adopted the neoliberal discourse around development and opened a place for investment in the city of Luanda. However, it is crucial to note that the shift from Marxist ideology to neoliberalism did not mean the disappearance of either the previous regime or the legacy of the war. Thus, the politico-economic transformation cannot demolish the cultural practices and strategies linked to the previous state-socialist structure. Rather, cultural practices survive and persist within the neoliberal structure (Hilgers 2012: 88-94).

Drawing on this anthropological insight, I argue that Angola is also performing a mixed cultural and politico-economic project. While the centralized system of state socialism remains, provide room for exercising control over the socio-cultural realm of Angola through state media, the country has also joined the global ranks of neoliberal cities. Jesse Salah Ovidia (2013: 14) termed the phenomenon of the Angolan state power 'hybrid capitalism'. By this term, she refers to the state strategy which mixes the coercive interventions of the Afro-Marxist state with liberal market policies. In the following, one of the cases which I dedicate more attention is the role of music and music production within the authoritarian regime of Angola.

It is worth noting that the hegemon does not exist in the form of passive dominance. Instead, it has been renewed and modified, resisted and challenged (Williams quoted in Kun 1994: 7). In this sense, new Angola, pursuing the trajectory of neoliberal capitalism, seeks to embrace a cosmopolitan outlook along with a patriotic nationalism which is ready to annex what is able to reinforce it (Lloyd 2000). Thus, *kuduro*, as an already existing locally rooted music culture, has become the target of the Afro-Marxist capitalist state through patronage. Due to the economic transition of the nineties, *kuduro* emerged in *musseques* which initially received less direct state-support. However, as the ruling elite noticed the presence of *kuduro* in the shantytowns, it soon became 'the most exportable commodity of Angolan culture' (Tomás 2014: 273).

To further discuss what makes *kuduro* a commodity within the hybrid regime, I offer here a short overview of examples from contemporary *kuduro* production. The dissemination of *kuduro* music has occurred through patronage, what the centralized regime applies in various situations. Antoniό Tomás (2014), in his article on *kuduro* production, introduces one of the most well-known *kudurista*, Nagrelha, who has frequently been an invited guest of political events organized by the MPLA. In the same article, he notes that two sons of Eduardo dos Santos initiated a festival under the name of 'I Love Kuduro' in 2011. Other *kudurista*, like Dog Murras, have lately benefited from the sponsorship of military personnel (Moorman 2008). In further illustrating the relationship between *kuduro* and the Angolan hybrid regime,

Sonangol's International Magazine known as *Universo* is worth looking at. In the 2008 edition, an article about *kuduro*, entitled 'The Angolan beat that's shaking the world', was published. In this piece of writing, Tony Amado, the so-called king of *kuduro*, describes *kuduro* as a fashionable genre which adopted a cosmopolitan aesthetic. Alex Bellos, the author of the article, concludes that *kuduro*, after all, is the voice of the people. In this context, however, we must see that Sonangol is one of the donors that put *kuduro* music at the forefront of Angolan music genres.

The popularity of the genre, within the framing of state-related businesses and organizations, seems to produce an official aesthetic for new Angola. For instance, Schubert's (2015: 12) ethnographic research mentions the way in which *kuduro* fit into political discourse about 35 years of independence in Angola. He shows how the birth of the new, rapidly developing nation was celebrated with locally produced sounds of *kuduro*.

'After a host of parades and official speeches, the theme tune, a slick new *kuduro* production, blasted out slogans like 'leaving this mess behind' and buzzwords such as unity, democracy.'

This politically charged moment well illustrates the meeting point of state power and neoliberal ideology within popular genre of Angolan *kuduro*. That is, we must see the interconnections between the authoritarian state, patriotic nationalism, the neoliberal marketplace, and the way in which they interact through the commodified music of the 'popular'<sup>9</sup> (Hall 1998). This quote represents the ideological use of music that promotes the modernist developmental narrative of the regime. Therefore, I argue that the co-option strategy of patronage is part of the legitimating process of post-colonial capitalism. When money is distributed to *kuduristas* in the process of reversal primitive accumulation, the musicians are invited to create an aesthetic which benefits from the status-quo and thus promotes the ideology of capitalist development in Luanda. Ultimately, the regime intervenes precisely within the space from which anti-regime revolts may emerge over time, in the *musseques* (de Oliveira 2015: 115).

However, patronage is not exclusively an Angolan phenomenon. Market-driven patronage has long been present within cultural industries, for instance, by a telecommunication corporation in Ghana (Osumare 2014) and by business-men and -women in the case of Senegalese griot musicians (Panzacchi 1994). Political patronage, I argue, is closely related to capitalist dynamics and takes form of reversal accumulation in Angola as well. Politicians, highly ranked officers and business men alike are in the position, at the top of the economic hierarchy, to hire creative labour for political purpose.

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<sup>9</sup> By the term popular, Hall means people who are playing music for their own pleasure, instead of commercialising it.

As Sogge (2011) reminds us, the Angolan state is a clientele state distributing its incoming profits, derived from the oil industry, upwards through the oligarchy. This allows people and families who are affiliated with the ruling party to participate in the patronage system. In other words, the Angolan state operates within a patrimonial structure (Bratton and van de Walle 1997) which can be best described by centralised redistribution of wealth. As I illustrated above, the patronage system is not a unique innovation of the Angolan state. Rather, it is a continental phenomenon which remains highly dependent on the economic capability of the ruling elite. Patronage is a wealth-distributive gesture, often appreciated not only by musicians, but Angolan citizens (Schubert 2018) and social movement leaders alike (de Waal and Ibreck 2013: 309). Distribution downwards is thus needed for survival in the wastelands what have been downgraded and demolished by capitalist accumulation (Sanyal 2007).

### **The seductive power**

Borrowing McKenzie Wark's words, we must note that 'hegemony is rather felt than thought' (2017: 134). What he refers to is that hegemonic power is not a metaphysical abstraction in nature, as we might think of. Nor is it a structural phenomenon framing experiences in Angola. Instead, hegemony has been manifested at the level of senses, the experiences of everyday sensory and material conditions. I suggest considering *kuduro* production as the sensory cartography of the complex hegemony of contemporary Angola (Sanyal 2007). Complexity of power in Luanda involves the dual dynamics of, first, keeping the residents of *musseques* at bay and under the threat of eviction, and second, offering opportunities for survival through patronage, as in the case of *kuduro* musicians. However, this sort of taking away and giving back serves the hegemonic ideology of the dos Santos regime: promotion of modernist development, and thus post-colonial capitalism.

Patronage *Kuduro* production further nurtures the fake promise of modernist development that tends to infuse collective imagery, desires, hopes and expectations into African cities (Bruchardt and Kirn 2017: 7). For most of the residents in Luanda, therefore, the aesthetically manifested power of development, a particular performance of cosmopolitan life, has become an effective neoliberal ideology. Halifu Osumare (2014) made this argument in relation to his study of Ghanaian hiplife. A similar argument can be made in the case of Angolan *kuduro* production. *Kuduro* is not simply an apolitical music genre originating from *musseques* of Luanda (de Oliveira 2015: 115). Neither is it an explicitly political genre. Instead, *kuduro* became the medium to transmit and perform the politico-economic agenda of the ruling elite. As I illustrated earlier, *kuduristas* have been invited for governmental events and speeches. In this sense, the ideology of neoliberalism has been manifested in apolitical

lyrics, but also through the political use of *kuduro* music, in a similar vein to other African music genres like the South African *kwaito* and hiplife. The former were appropriated by ANC politicians, while the latter provides a medium for advertising for a telecommunications company.

In this regard, the ideological usage of *kuduro* music is twofold. On the one hand, it is performing a popular cosmopolitan aesthetic which perfectly fits into the urban imaginary about a futuristic global city. In this sense, its aesthetic constitutes an ideological lifestyle, alongside other commodities, produced and maintained by the neoliberal economic trajectory. On the other hand, the ruling elite makes sure that *kuduro* not only fits into the global city ideology of new Angola, but is also promoting it on stages. For instance, in the Cidadela stadium, *kuduro* researcher Stefanie Alisch witnessed well-known *kuduristas* from Luanda's shantytowns praising the president of Angola (Vicky 2012).

Given this complex, capitalist ideological grounding, there is little room left for resistance in the *musseques*. As Sanyal (2007), Žižek (2009) and other post-Marxist thinkers note, capitalist development has come to embrace its own critiques. Put differently, capitalist development can accommodate and include *kuduro* musicians of the surplus population within a capitalist system of production in order to legitimize the violent structure of ongoing primitive accumulation, such as land grabbing and demolitions in city of Luanda.

Appropriating the people's music (Hall 1998) and making it their own voice means that the regime intrudes the *musseques* and support artists of the slums in order to prevent the emergence of critiques and resistance from the slums. This is what I call, following Sanyal's theory of the reversal of primitive accumulation, the seductive power that creates opportunities for musicians and redistributes wealth for the purpose of co-optation. Seductive power rest upon the dos Santos regime's propaganda which maintains the cosmopolitan aesthetic and populist narrative and constitutes a seductive image of Luanda's economic boom. Seductive in a political economy sense which encourage people to accept patronage in order to make their living.

Departing from the seductive modality of the hegemon's power, in Chapter 2, I further explore the context that eliminates widely organised resistance in Angola. In juxtaposition with seductive power, I discuss the dynamics of necropower (Mbembe 2003) which further narrows activists' options for resistance. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to hip hop music and activism in Angola which came to emerge despite the fertile terrain of seductive power in the dos Santos government.

## Chapter 2

### Rap, resistance and fear in necropolitical Angola

*'My friend, choose another way to kill you  
You're killing myself by voting for MPLA.'*

(Ikonoklasta 2017)<sup>10</sup>

In the previous chapter, I introduced *kuduro* music and the politics around *kuduro* production. I noted that the Angolan politico-economy has been powerful enough to infiltrate cultural production. *Kuduro*, as a globally disseminated sound, has become the official music of 'new' Angola. It emerged as a constituent of the broader seductive ideological practice of the ruling elite in the aftermath of the Angolan civil war. In this sense, *kuduro* has lost its counter-public potential (Tomás 2014) and the capacity to transmit social commentary and critics within the *musseques* and beyond in Luanda. Despite that, the medium of music still transmits and contributes to a broader ideology of development in Angola, and thereby to the projected image of a better future. However, music also has a potential as medium that forms critics and mobilizes people. Such is the case with the lyrics-centred underground rap scene of Luanda.

During the years of the civil war, the MPLA and UNITA opponents used to organize their own concerts, and supported their preferred musicians (Moorman 2008: 190). Even before the civil war, Kimbundu lyrics of a band called Kissueia were politically saturated and performed in the *musseques* (Falola and Jean-Jacques 2016: 41). Furthermore, Cuban and Angolan soldiers sang and played music together before they went in action (Angolan Civil War documentary, YouTube). These are only few examples to illustrate that music has almost always been intimately related to political struggles in Angola. Today, given the co-optation of *kuduro* production in Luanda, it is barely possible for criticism to emerge from the *kuduro* scene of the *musseques*. In contrast, rap music seems to resonate with critical voices in the novel socio-economic constellation of contemporary Angola. This is more obvious in Angolan rap videos and in the lyrics of tracks from the less mainstream rap scene. Ikonoklasta and MCK are popular rap musicians who create militant music, as the above quoted line from the former illustrates (Sousa 2017).

Using the example of rapper and activist Ikonoklasta, this chapter aims to introduce the reader to the extent to which resistance and rap activism came to be more visible, represented and discussed in the last few years, not exclusively in Angola, but in global media as well. To begin with, let me quote Ondjaki again from an interview in

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<sup>10</sup> See more in Kino Sousa's article (2017) on Ikonoklasta's songs, activism and translation of the lyrics.

which he talks about Luanda and his filmmaking. At one point, during the conversation, Michael T. Martin and Marisa J. Moorman (2010) ask him about rap music and social movements. Of the local rap scene, he says:

‘Their rap is not against the system itself, but rather against conditions and what’s wrong with the system. They [rappers] are very good and their lyrics are powerful. One of them was chased by the police and a boy died in Luanda because he was singing one of his songs.’

I chose this brief anecdote from Luanda to introduce what I think is crucial to discuss at length. This chapter seeks to look at modes and channels of resistance within the social context they emerges in and the politics they came to embrace. Rappers such as Ikonoklasta and MCK are not only cultural figures in Luanda but critical voices that dare to confront the restrictive power of the dos Santos government. This action means more than music production, since these artists are under censorship and violently persecuted by the state army and police officers.

Where Angolan authorities appear, there is undoubtedly an attempt to silence those who dare to speak against the dos Santos regime. And there is a great chance that encroachment, and consequently violence, will take place. This chapter, thus, discusses rap music as a medium of resistance and the recently emerged demonstrations in Luanda against the backdrop of top-down violence. More precisely, it uncovers the way in which a politics of fear limits the scope of emerging counter-hegemon actions. In order to do this, I look at the rap-activism of Luaty Beirão might be better known by his stage names, Ikonoklasta or Brigadeiro Mata Frakuzk. He is one of the main characters of the Luanda-based DIY hip hop culture, who produce low budget music videos, often using footage of war and the neighbourhoods of Luanda<sup>11</sup>.

## **The terrain of resistance: concerts, book clubs and noises**

In the midst of co-optation and patronage practices, one might rightfully raise the question: what sort of resistance can possibly take shape in Luanda? As I discussed earlier (see Chapter 1), via national policy, centralized organisations and businesses, the dos Santos regime tends to offer positions and opportunities to young professionals and artists alike (de Oliveira 2015: 105-6). The co-optation of young, educated and talented Angolans plays a key role in cementing the central power of the MPLA. Given this political strategy, resistance has little chance to emerge where people are dependent on internal, Angolan sources. Critical commentary might be less possible to grow in an environment where people are co-opted either by the financial promises or the aesthetic seduction of the regime. Acts of resistance seems to occur

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<sup>11</sup> See for instance Ikonoklasta’s music video, *Revolução*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNeQOUJF2YU>



Rarely. They are more like spontaneous and artistic events what only a few can afford. For artists, such actions mean exposing themselves to confrontations and top-down violence. In this regard, I am going to discuss how and in which circumstances civil resistance can emerge in Luanda. I offer an analysis of demonstrations, social critiques and acts of resistance which, following the Arab spring of 2011, shook Luanda's public sphere and gained significant media attention. The artist, journalists and activists who received the most global media attention was Luaty Beirão, also known as Ikonoklasta. Throughout the rest of this section, I discuss civil resistance through the intersection of his music and activism.

Henrique Luaty da Silva Beirão is a *mestico*<sup>12</sup> rapper based in Luanda. He was born in Angola and was part of the Angolan-Portuguese hip hop group Conjunto Ngonguenha together with MCK, Conductor and others (Alisch and Siegert 2012). When he was 13 years old, his cousin introduced him to hip hop (Interview 1). Later on, he began to view hip hop as an art of criticising the establishment. As he noted in a video interview, rap music gained more and more public support even without strong media presence. Thus, he began to use rap not only as critical commentary but as social activism (Wonacott 2012). He is one of the new wave activists who have criticised the dos Santos centralised regime through the medium of music since the birth of the new Angola in 2002 (Vidal 2015: 86).

Angola has not seen active citizens protesting for a common cause and openly engaging with political issues. The centralization of authoritarian rule has definitely not supported the formation of an open public sphere. Prior to 2011, there was no precedent of demonstrations or of activists protesting in the streets of Angola (Pearce 2015). However after a *longue-durée* of silence, on 27 February 2011, Ikonoklasta got to the stage as one of the first outspoken activists. He expressed his negative view of dos Santos's rule to thousands while the president's son, Danilo dos Santos, was present at the same live show of Bob Da Rage Sense. He sent his message on TV to dos Santos, urging him to leave the presidency (Vieira 2017). Lara Pawson (2014: 245) also mentions Ikonoklasta's unforgettable performance in her book about Angola's forgotten massacre. Ikonoklasta addressed a banner message to the president reading that 'Uncle Zé, get out: your time expired long ago'. As Justin Pearce (2015: 113) marks, at the same concert, Ikonoklasta invited the crowd to attend a demonstration on 7 March 2011, in an attempt to break the long public silence in Angola. After 32 years of silence, Luaty Beirão's activist-music performance can be marked as the first step taken toward a democratic vision of Angola.

Concerning the demonstration, Beirão noted in an interview that a manifesto emerged on social media encouraging Angolan people to take part in the resistance. It was

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<sup>12</sup> A person of mixed race ancestry.

circulated on a website entitled 'The new revolution of the Angolan people' (*'A nova revolução do povo Angolano'*) (Pawson 2014: 245). Inspired by the Arab spring, the website urged Angolans to join the protest against the corrupt regime of dos Santos. Today, the webpage is still working and the manifesto is also available online with the poster of the 7 March demonstration. The introductory section of the site also mentions that the young movement has been supported by Angolan diaspora from Brazil, Portugal, US, China, UK, Egypt, Morocco, Russia, Argentina, South Africa and elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

In this sense, the movement is not based on an identifiable group of people; it is a dispersed network of Angolans who wish for revolutionary changes in their country. Beirão stresses this point, saying, 'we don't want to be tied up to a movement's socially structured obligations' (Vieira 2017). He became an active member of a network without knowing about that, and without any clearly defined leadership (Ibid). Nuno Vidal (2015: 79) calls the activists 'ultra-confrontationists', and argued that they brought about new ways of resisting the government, including using communication and information technologies. He also notes that the movement was unable to reach beyond the urban population. It is not an accident, I argue, that something like an organized, mass-based social movement cannot evolve in Angola. I wish to discuss the circumstances which have injected fear into Angolans' everyday lives in more detail. Before I move on to unpacking the politics of fear, let me introduce here the silencing strategy of the regime.

A less organized network of activists means less control over actions and less predictability. This seems to be necessary in a regime where authorities violently respond to any critical voices and actions. That was essentially what happened at the 7 March demonstration, when approximately seventeen people showed up at the Independence Square of Luanda. The participants were swiftly stopped by the authorities, beaten up and arrested (Pawson 2014: 245). In the aftermath of the event, Ikonoklasta and his fellow activists have become the number one targets of the regime (Vieira 2017). Despite that, the activists continued to organize themselves in Luanda. Although the revolutionaries do not practice activism as highly profiled as Ikonoklasta's, we know more about them from Justin Pearce's research:

'People who had been present at the early demonstrations said that they had come into contact with each other through their involvement in music. Others had heard about the demonstrations through social media or via word of mouth, and had come along to participate and in that way got to know others. The core group of activists is almost entirely male, aged mostly from late teens to early 30s, and spans a range of social classes. They include the sons of both MPLA and UNITA supporters and of

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<sup>13</sup> See more on Nova Revolução do Povo angolano: <http://novarevolucaoangolana.yolasite.com/about-us.php>, 16/1/2018

and of families who admired Nito Alves, as well as others whose families never had any particular interest in politics' (2015: 114).

Drawing on this quote, one can notice that the new generation of youth are mobilising together despite the political divisions of the past that characterise their families' political allegiances. It also indicates that in 'new' Angola, the civil war's ideological divisions are not valid anymore. The authoritarian rule of dos Santos has become the major factor in demarcating a new line of political divisions, even within the ruling MPLA. As Justin Pearce notes above, music – that is, the underground rap scene and social media in Luanda – gave a platform for musicians and activists, such as Ikonoklasta and the revolutionaries, to meet. Nevertheless, music is not necessarily sufficient in itself to challenge the status-quo of the dos Santos regime.

However, anonymous threats do not make the revolutionaries' resistance an easy process, at least not for Ikonoklasta and those activists who have been at the forefront of the struggle. In the months following the 7 March demonstration, Ikonoklasta was attacked several times in the streets of Luanda. Later, he was targeted by a group of youths demanding money for their alleged involvement in the protests. Moreover, anonymous threats targeted his family members; thus, the intimidation strategy trespassed borders and changed targets. His partner was kidnapped in Lisbon while he tried to help his imprisoned fellow activists during an anti-regime demonstrations (Freemuse 2012). In 2012, a novel attempt of eliminating Ikonoklasta's activism came in the form of a framed drug smuggling case. He was arrested, this time, for carrying cocaine to Portugal from Angola in a bicycle tire. As soon as the case turned out to be framed, the Portuguese authorities released him (Hip Hop African 2015). In the following years, the dos Santos regime went further to threaten the rapper and his family members. The repressive overreactions of the regime, however, culminated in the events of 2015.

In June 2015, 15 activists, named as the *revúis* (Vieira 2017) got arrested again. A group of people had gathered to read critical literature in a book club. As one of the activists, Laurinda Gouveia stressed, the group intended to peacefully consider the ways in which they could fight a dictatorship. In so doing, they started to read a book from Gene Sharp, 'From Dictatorship to Democracy' and Domingos Cruz's book 'Tools to destroy the dictator and avoid a new dictatorship - Political philosophy of liberation for Angola'. The latter manual, published in 2015, was written by one of the detained activist-journalists, and circulated informally among activists and musicians (de Almeida Dias 2015). However, politicised music-making alongside the revolutionaries' meetings was immediately silenced and disbanded by the dos Santos government in June 2015. Angola's Criminal Investigation Services arrested fifteen activists in Luanda's *bairro* Vila Alice (Vieira 2015), including Ikonoklasta

(Voiceproject 2015) and two others rappers Samussuku and Cheik Hata (Martin 2015).

In the government's propagandistic representation of the events, the reading group was portrayed as if it had been planning to overthrow President dos Santos (Iyengar 2015). Following a long, illegal pre-trial detention which lasted more than 90 days, the judge identified Cruz as the leader of the activists in November 2015. Five months after being jailed, members of the activist group was charged with rebellion, an attempted coup d'état, criminal association and falsification documents and sentenced between five and eight years (de Moraes 2015). Amnesty International (2016) considered the activists prisoners of conscience.

After these events a peaceful demonstration attended by hundreds of people took place at the Sagrada Familia church. The people gathered there were peacefully protesting for the release of imprisoned revolutionaries with the signs reading '15+1+2=24.3' (Moorman 2015). The first part of the equation on these signs indicated the number of charged activists, while the 24.3 million referred to Angola's total population (Freemuse 2015). This symbolic sign was a message that the case of the arrested *revúis* could not be separated from the nation as a whole.

More precisely, it was a symbolic message that the Angolan people's future was also at stake. Following the activists' detention, twenty more people were arrested for calling for the reading group activists to be released (Iyengar 2015). Vigils surrounding the church began when Beirão was on the third week of hunger strike in the jail hospital. He was already in danger when a solidarity gathering was held in the Sagrada Familia church (Moorman 2015). The revolutionaries went on hunger strike together. Ikonoklasta continued his strike for 36 days, to symbolically refer to 36 years of dos Santos' rule (Wilmot 2016). In June 2016, the revolutionaries were released and granted amnesty, in accordance with the new Amnesty law of Angola that affected eight thousand prisoners (Vieira 2017).

In a brief email interview (Interview 1), I asked Beirão to tell me more about how he felt about the imprisonment, mostly about the repressive treatment the revolutionaries were subjected to. He also told me about how he felt about activism in the aftermath of June 2015.

'There was a magnificent outcry that started with Angolans and then crossed borders finding solidarity worldwide. We had been struggling through peaceful means for 4 years prior to our imprisonment so people knew we were no thugs despite of what government propaganda tried shoving down their throats. It felt as though being thrown in jail served as a catalyst for the awakening of civil society we had been striving for so unsuccessfully for so long. So we were quite OK with it.'

As he says, the imprisonment, after all, served the greater causes that they had been fighting for since the demonstration on 7 March 2011. After a few years of peaceful activism, the detentions, imprisonment, and Beirão's hunger strike rendered the activists' voice louder and stronger in Luanda's public sphere. There is no doubt that Ikonoklasta, as the 'most publicly visible member of the team' (Wilmot 2016), added much to the visibility of the campaign. Thus, the regime's interventionist agenda had paradoxically turned against itself. Instead of silencing and swiping unwanted voices out of the public consciousness, they become more visible and better-known revolutionaries. Consequently, the events of 2015 shed more light on the activists' agenda and claims, thanks to a growing network of both locally-based support and internationally growing solidarity.

Undoubtedly, the media attention that the *reviús* activists got since their imprisonment from human rights organisations and journalists helped circulate images and the story of the Angolan revolutionaries. Batida, Ikonoklasta's fellow musician, also contributed to the global campaign seeking for the activist's release. In the next chapter, I discuss this music-based politics and activism at length and offer a theoretical reading of the politics of fear and death that the Angolan regime maintains. Before I move on to the next chapter, let me offer a brief contextual overview of the revolutionaries' activism introduced here.

In Rancièrian terms (2006), intervention within Angolan music scenes and public sphere, either via oil-fuelled patronage or repressive manoeuvres of detention, is 'the distribution of the sensible' by which hegemonic power dynamics make certain entities visible and meaningful while it renders others invisible and scarcely audible noise. Invisibility and noise is central to the MPLA political propaganda which keeps critical voices under control via media or brutal forces. Some *kuduro* musicians are supported and recognized in the Angolan art scene, while other musicians, are boycotted and threatened. In this sense, the media visibility of high profile musicians, like Ikonoklasta, provides recognition and thereby protection from being removed or put to death by the regime. In this sense, the international circulation of his music and activism provides not only visibility, but also protection – against the necropower of the regime.

### **Necropower: Politics of fear, politics of disposability**

In relation to the book club gathering which was cancelled by machine gun-holding officers, Luaty made the following comment: 'For a split second, I thought I was going to die' (Vieira 2017). Similarly, an article presenting Ikonoklasta's latest critical hip hop track and its lyrics was titled, 'The Angolan regime kills and nobody speaks!' (Sousa 2017). It may sound like an exaggeration, especially in the case of post-war Angola, but the reality of Angola is not far from that. In order to silence certain voices, the

regime's guards are not reluctant to apply brutal, sheer force against Angolans. One of the brutal cases that paved the way toward the revolutionaries' resistance happened in 2003, in Luanda. A car washer, Arsénio Sebasátio was forced to march to the Atlantic Ocean as he was caught singing a song by banned rapper MCK in front of the presidential guard (Wilmot 2016). The lyrics that Sebasátio sang make his death all the more grotesque: 'Who speaks the truth ends up in a coffin/ what sort of democracy is this'<sup>14</sup> (Cabinda, Music of MCK)?

In another song, Ikonoklasta's fellow rapper, MCK, described Angolan artists by using the expression of 'cadáver andante', which means walking corpses (Martin 2015). In so doing, the artist of the critical underground references the oppressive manner in which the Angolan government treats its citizens and residents of Angola. Of course, he was describing the contemporary hip-hop scene at first hand, but this state of zombieness can be applied to those who are politically silenced in some way as it tragically happened with Sebasátio. The material condition that informs this symbolism cannot be overlooked in Angolan contemporary politics. A hip hop song's lyrics might sound unimportant at first, but it is exactly what testifies the deadly nature of the power what the government imposes on the Angolan people. Subjected to power of this kind, one might be visible and living human being, but at the same fading silhouettes with little agentic capacity to organise in groups or speak up.

Also, Pedro Coquenão, expressed his concerns about the silence that is imposed on Angolan people from a diasporic perspective. In an interview published on Okayafrica, he stresses that Angolan people have a generalized fear in taking a position or expressing their opinions even in the virtual sphere, e.g. on social media. Following the activists' detention in Luanda, in June 2015, he posted a video where he had displayed posters of the detainees during his concert. He saw 70 thousand viewers on his profile but only a few left comments on the video (Vieira 2015). This lack of social media presence is also an example of how far the government is able to go in keeping its citizens in a self-imposed silence. However, what I call the frozen citizenship and the great public silence has its own history in Angola. While the repressive practices, capitalist accumulation and forceful intervention in Angolans' lives are able to constitute multiple deathscapes (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014: 25), the history of the young nation allows us to make sense of the fearful emotional landscape embracing politics in Angola. All this started during the civil war, of course, with the rule of the MPLA.

The MPLA's rule might be briefly described in terms of its concentration of power across media representations, historical memories, and flows of capital. In the previous chapter, I introduced the political economy of the ruling party, which has been best described, in recent publications, in terms of its patronage system. The

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<sup>14</sup> See more here: Music of MCK, [available at: <http://www.cabinda.net/MCK.htm>, 17,1,2018]

ruling elite relies on its capability to finance musicians and maintain the *kuduro* music industry, or its seductive power. Beyond these cases of patronage, however, the MPLA also exercises the old technique of silencing certain events in Angolan history. The ruling party is erasing those parts of history during which thousands likely died. In so doing, the ruling party uses the media to foster biased representations of both what happened in the past and the actual politics.

Thus, by maintaining the silence around 27 May 1977 (*27 de Maio*), the MPLA-led killings of thousands of people, the government has successfully kept Angolan citizens politically paralysed (Tomás 2014, Pawson 2014, Pearce 2015). 27 May was portrayed as a counter-revolutionary coup attempt organised by former minister, Nito Alves from the MPLA. Shortly after that, Angola witnessed unprecedented mass killing under the centralized power of the presidency, in the name of cleansing the political body of the MPLA (Vidal 2007: 128-9). This was the greatest taboo and tragedy of liberated Angola, and it became a 'cautionary tale' that held subsequent generations back from openly engaging with politics (Moorman 2016).

Civil disobedience, demonstrations and wider, organised forms of civil resistance, therefore, have remained rare in contemporary Angola. Recent action around the revolutionaries' visions and Ikonoklasta's activism remain subjected to state-led violence. Moreover, the experience of 27 May does not stand alone on the list of the brutal intervention of Angolan authorities. Although the date certainly recalls painful memories that many Angolans live with, as testimonials collected by Laura Pawson (2014) shows<sup>15</sup>, death and fear has been re-inscribed in Angolan politics by further bloodsheds committed by the MPLA-led authorities. In October 1992, the MPLA killed its opponents, and more recently the Mount Sumi massacre on 16 April 2015 (Allison 2015), both testify the MPLA's post-colonial politics of death (Mbembe 2003)

Death and killing creates the 'culture of fear' (*'cultura do medo'*) (Pawson 2014: 3) that permeates all social strata of Angola. In the aftermath of the war, it remains one of the modalities of power on which the MPLA's authoritarian regime relies. Nevertheless, the politics of fear seems to be a persistent phenomenon not only in Angola, but elsewhere as well. It is a widespread strategy in sub-Saharan Africa, as Alex de Waal and Rachel Ibreck (2013) argue in their article. Violent intervention of militarised police frequently occurs when demonstrators appear in the streets, for instance in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Given the similarities, Angolan politics has the paramount sign of what Achille Mbembe (2003) calls necropower. It is a form of sovereign power that is able to create deathscapes: Space for extermination without consequences. Within multiple

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<sup>15</sup> See more in her book entitled 'In the name of the people'. She conducted interviews with survival and family members of victims of the 27 May 1977 massacre. Given the public silence around the politically motivated extermination, Pawson reveals, through personal testimonies and life narrative, reveals the MPLA politics of death in Angola.

spaces of death, social existence is attached to a particularly vulnerable experience of life, a fragile condition of human beings what might be called living dead (Mbembe 2003, Gržinić and Tatlić 2014: 25), similar to MCK's rap poetics of '*cadáver andante*', that of walking corps. Put differently, the already-marginalized population, living in poverty, or discursively declared enemies are subjected to a certain politics of disposability that renders life merely a bare life (Mbembe 2003, Giroux 2006). Life becomes downgraded in peripheral socio-economic contexts, in spaces where sign of resistance appear, the authorities can kill, torture and silence the unwanted elements of the dos Santos regime. That is part of why activists can be arrested for reading books and an Angolan citizen killed for singing the song of MCK. It is in this sense that the Foucaultian biopolitical regime not only includes productive power which for instance refers to governing life such as demographic, legal enforcement or NGOs' financial aid. Rosi Baridotti (2010) and Achille Mbembe (2003) invite us to think biopower not only in terms of productive power over life, but the sovereign exerts power over dying as well. Mbembe talks about multiple powers that coexist in various constellations. For him, biopolitical and necropolitical power jointly constitute the sovereign. Baridotti, however includes death in biopower. In light of this extensive understanding of biopower, Baridotti (2010: 201) rather suggests including the emotional labour what loss and mourning requires from us when we encountered by a certain necropower.

### **Politics of hope and, transnational practice**

On the African continent, the Arab Spring has become a travelling trope of hope. On one hand, social analysis often uses it as a reference point for other movements. On the other hand, in practice, it seems to be a spark for actions elsewhere, fuelling hope in activist circles (Mamdani 2011 in de Waal and Ibreck 2013). Alex de Waal and Rachel Ibreck (2013) argue that the year 2011 has been marked by a wave of African resistance influenced by events happening in the Northern part of Africa. Anti-government, anti-leader protests erupted, among others, in Gabon, Tunisia, Uganda, Malawi and Zimbabwe. However, Angola is missing from de Waal and Ibreck's comparative analysis. Among the erupted demonstrations, the case of Zimbabwe resembles the most the recent events in Angola. The peaceful gathering of Zimbabwean activists and students was interrupted by authorities. Despite the non-violent nature of the discussion on the Arab Spring, the Mugabi regime's overreaction led to arrests (de Waal and Ibreck 2013: 303). The case of Ikonoklasta and his fellow activists, therefore, is not exceptional in the Southern African region, but meaningful in its own socio-historical constellation. The young revolutionaries brought hope to Angola by courageously facing the necropower of the dos Santos regime.



In Spinoza's terms, fear cannot exist without hope; and vice-versa. This is an assumption about that political life is structured by affective communication (Sharp 2016). In this respect, where the politics of fear overwhelms the public sphere, necessarily, there should be some coping mechanisms. Hope might take various forms in Luanda. For instance, some residents in the *musseques* are hoping to keep their cement houses that they built. But in the midst of reinvigorating Luanda, they are subjected to evictions (Gastrow 2007). Although my research does not uncover politics of hope in everyday life of '*musseques*' residents, I find it fundamental to acknowledge various micro-politics of hope through which the agency of people have articulated. In case of the cement houses, a novel mode of citizenship appears - what Claudia Gastrow (2007) coined as cement citizenship.

However, I argue that activism of artists, journalist and academics have embraced a different coping mechanism and strategy, thus a micro-politics, to overcome the culture of fear. Activism of the revolutionaries in the Angolan authoritarian regimes functions through a 'politics of hope' (Mbembe and Posel 2005), the practice of 'sense of possibility' (Newman 2015) to act and make claims for changes. Activism tries to envision novel assemblages of living together, beyond the sovereign constellation of necropower. The revolutionaries' activism is a practice impregnated with hope during the time when politics of death cultivates fears, and consequently what I call frozen citizenship. As Beirão stressed in an interview, fears should be conquered:

'People have been conquering the fear of challenging the arrogance of the authorities. The events of a couple of years ago were definitely a turning moment for all of us' (Vieira 2017).

What Ikonoklasa's musical presence and activist persistence in Luanda does is to recognise a necessarily positively framed political project. As Rossi Baridotti (2010: 210) suggests, for political subjectivities, for those who are living under the threat and fear of necropower, one possible path out might be to transform 'the negative into positive passion'.

Music might be the medium for positive actions that can foster a micro-political agenda of change, given that entertainment and social commentary can take place at the same time, as it happened during Ikonoklasta's concert before the 7 March demonstration. Although the self-commodification of musicians on stages does not seem to be an act of resistance at first glance, artists, such as Ikonoklasta, use their global visibility with the support of Batida to foster social changes (Lipsitz 1994). António Tomás (2014: 268) made a similar argument regarding *kuduro* production, stressing that, through social visibility, musicians link the local and global. In the case of critical hip hop production, I argue that visibility is a sort of protection for Ikonoklasta and his fellow activists against the condition of disposability. International media and human rights organisations help activists overcome the

conditions of bare life, of disposability, by rendering them visible. At the same time, transnational forces might influence the path that the struggle takes. Transnational support is both an opportunity and a constraint in fostering a struggle (de Waal and Ibreck 2013). This is what I examine in the following chapters, through the case study of Batida and a transnational network of NGOs.

## Chapter 3

### Batida: kuduro, rap and the politics of a diasporic network

*'A young democracy rises after a recently ended war with some growth's pain but always with a smile on its lips and lots of rhythm on its hips.'*

(Pedro Coquenão, 'É Dreda Ser Angolano' on Vimeo<sup>16</sup>)

This chapter returns to the discussion of *kuduro* production, but this time we embark our journey from Portugal. What follows below is predominantly about the Lisbon-made *kuduro* of Pedro Coquenão, who may be better known as Batida. I dedicate a full chapter to his music and its social commentary to illustrate the internationalised network of activism that takes place on stages, through creative labour. Through the case of Batida, I revisit the extent to which resistance can be fostered and restricted in Angola. Given that Ikonoklasta and Batida are colleagues and 'brothers' (Interview 1), I first show how their work is intimately connected to their politically conscious music production. From the cultural labour they have done together, I move on to unveil the relationship between Batida and transnational NGOs. I found it crucial to uncover the possibilities and limitations of the revolutionaries' interventions in Angolan public space. Diasporic networks and hybrid social movements are key concepts what I adopt here. Both are fundamental to understanding what sort of crossroads emerged in conjunction with the young revolutionaries' and Ikonoklasta's activism. One might wonder why Batida is the subject of this research when its music was not produced in Luanda. Let me clarify how I came across Batida's music, and consequently his music making in conversation with Ikonoklasta's rap-activism.

A few years back I came across Batida's music project for the first time at Ljubljana-based world music festival. Batida was not more to me than an artist's name on the line-up of the *Druga godba*<sup>17</sup> festival in 2015. If I remember well, I had a glance at Batida's video entitled *Cuka*<sup>18</sup> before I travelled to the tiny capital city of Slovenia. As soon as I arrived, I opened a local Slovenian press website and read the artists' profile. It presented Batida to the festival's audience as a performance beyond the ordinary festival music-making. The Lisbon-based artist's project was described as an electronic music project which placed emphasis on the intellectual dimension of music and recalled historical moments from Angola, while creating its own fictional

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<sup>16</sup> See the full documentary here: <https://vimeo.com/14804042> [accessed at 15/01/2018]

<sup>17</sup> See more about *Druga godba* here: [http://www.culture.si/en/Druga\\_godba\\_Festival](http://www.culture.si/en/Druga_godba_Festival) [accessed at 15/01/2018]

<sup>18</sup> See the *Cuka* music video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLaj5rEzDvA> [accessed at 15/01/2018]

narrative about the African county (*Druga godba* 2015). At that time, when I was reading this music industry-made artist profile, I was barely able to make sense of the politically conscious art of this kind. I had little knowledge of Angolan politics and history, and probably even less of 'new' Angola. What I knew at that time was undoubtedly influenced and framed by a Euro-centric discourse on Africa.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the global music industry tend to simplify music and performances in a way in which international, mostly Western audiences, can make sense of it, without getting to know more about the context from which the music comes. Creative industries do not feel the urge to transmit histories and political messages to an audience or consumers in the first place (Kheshti 2011).

At the concert in Ljubljana, dancers, DJs and activists shared the stage with footage of the Angolan liberation war, filmed pieces from the *musseques*, and colourful drawings, which were also projected on the wall. The artists were covered by the moving images while they were dancing and Pedro Coquenão commented on what happening on the screen. In this performance, Batida revealed the core socio-economic problems Angola has faced, and also introduced President dos Santos to the audience as the cruel father of all Angolans. War veterans, women in carnival dresses, playful kids and professional dancers were cheerfully dancing to hard *kuduro* rhythm, symbolically carrying the burden of the death and poverty of the regime. That was my first time being educated about pitfalls of Angolan nationalism (Fanon 1963), and more strangely, experiencing both the pedagogical and activist aspects of music happening within the entertainment industry.

By this, I offer a reading of music production in which performances are not merely the result of subjective creativity; and neither are they purely market-serving commodities of the entertainment industry (Lipsitz 1994). It seems, rather, that Batida's *kuduro* music goes beyond these categories in order to consciously politicize its performances. It is a quasi-activist strategy of, as I later realized, critiquing the dos Santos-led authoritarian regime and joining it to an activist discourse that was already in the making at the time of the concert in 2015. However, Coquenão refused to identify as activist, he rather explained his action as obligation deriving from his citizenship. He has family and friends both in Angola and Portugal which allow him to be politically active (Interview 2) in both countries. By this, he draws attention to the affective aspect of political subjects and citizenship.

Thus, this chapter critically discusses the utilization of global networks by Batida and Ikonoklasta which is forged through friendship and has been used for political purposes. Given the diverse ways of silencing musicians in Angola, such as the

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<sup>19</sup> It is worth mentioning here that in my studies of international relation, any subjectivity of African countries was reduced to stereotypical images of victims and perpetrators. Thus, studying in Euro-centric institutions, I was subjected to a Western discourse which frequently deprives African subjects from their agency, and similarly, African history from a nuanced way of understanding.

cancellation of Ikonoklasta's and MCK's concert in 2016, the global stage of music seems to become a political platform for expressing hopes for politico-economic changes in Angola. Here, I ask the question of how successfully those claims can be raised and fostered via the medium of music, if they can be at all.

## **Batida, kuduro and political narratives**

To begin, let me introduce the brief etymology of the expression *batida*. Linguistically speaking, *batida* means 'beat', in terms of music and music production, in Portuguese. However, *batida* can also refer to physical violence, as in a body-to-body fight (Batida's bio, Soundway). Moreover, it is the name of the pirated *kuduro* compilations that are circulating within the informal economy of the *musseques* of Luanda (Clandestino Festival 2015). The music ensemble Batida recalls these layers of meanings in a video clip titled *Bazuka*, which shows footage derived from the anti-colonial and civil wars of Angola. Dancing and fighting appear together in Batida's audio-visual narratives. Additionally, the word *batida* refers to the dance battle in Angolan *kuduro* dance culture. Thus, Batida is fundamentally in touch with the dance-centric culture of *kuduro*, within which bodily expression is as important as the beat of the electronic music (Alish and Siegert 2013). Fights and beats co-constitute the *kuduro* aesthetic which Batida's members co-create during the politicized performances.

Despite the neutralising effort of consumerist music industry, Batida's political project has frequently been recognised such as its music which is propagated in music journalism and festival advertisements. Pedro Coquenão does not work on his own, but in collaboration with dancers and artists. An online review points out that Batida evolved from an Afro-Portuguese radio show called Radio Fazuma<sup>20</sup>, which aimed to bring together the contemporary music (*kuduro* and rap) and musical heritage of Angola (Katz 2012). Due to the radio Coquenão runs, Ikonoklasta's music as well were familiar to him what he played in his show (Interview 2). Batida uses cinematic, sonic, textual and choreographic forms of expression in order to communicate a complex narrative that operates on various levels. This multiplicity should be understood in terms of surrounding atmosphere, of phenomenological experience rather than as a linear, easily readable narrative. In order to create this effect Batida uses, speaking in a broader sense, the cultural archive of the Angolan nation.

By digging in the archival pool, Batida has created an experimental, musical narrative which reworks the violent past experiences of the Angola civil war. The MPLA ruling elite became responsible for massacres of Angolan oppositions and

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<sup>20</sup> See more on the radio's Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/fazuma/> accessed at 10/01/2017]

civilians between from 1975 up until today. The ensemble, by embracing the civil war years, has raised several questions about silenced and hijacked narratives about this period of time (Alisch and Siegert 2013: 55). Furthermore, due to its consciously applied archival technique, the group has been described as ‘the only kuduro outfit using historical visual references’ (Alisch and Siegert 2013: 60). Recalling the past occurs through music and cinematic archival memories in Batida’s performance. Remixing songs from the seventies, when the Angolan music celebrated its golden age (Killakam 2016), Pedro Coquenão, the DJ, producer and manager of Batida project uses unforgotten songs, mainly those which are less likely to be hijacked by the dos Santos regime. For instance, in the music video called *Bazuka*<sup>21</sup>, Batida remixes *kuduro* sounds with Carlos Lamarine’s songs. Lamarine was one of the leading voices in the Angolan liberation struggle (Nauma 2016). In the music video, Batida creates and performs a certain subversive power of mimicry which works at symbolic level (Evers 2014). The *Bazuka* video, as well as the live performance of it, intends to mimic the leadership, mostly President dos Santos, of the Angolan civil war.

Nevertheless, I argue that interpretations restricted to the symbolic and cultural realms only partially recognise the ensemble’s critical practice. Such interpretations do not offer a nuanced comprehension of Batida’s performances and activism because they do not contextualize it. By contextualization, I mean a broadened study of Batida’s artist network which includes the symbolic realm and the political capacity of the group’s music collaborations. The diaspora’s role and the connections between musicians within the music industry in which Batida’s cultural labour cannot be neglected. Thus, cultural and emotional labour are fundamental to further discuss how musicians foster their music and visibility in the global arena.

## **Diasporic music, politicized art**

The group Batida consists of several artists. As it is an open-ended music collaboration the musical genre of Batida is not fixed. *Kuduro*, as it is defined in most of studies, has often been taken as a genre. Pursuing Attali’s (1985) claim here, we can see that music mediates and expresses more than simplified musical classifications such as genres. Since genres of the global music industry pretend to carry fixed and homogenised meanings, we might overlook its social embeddedness and histories. Classifying *kuduro* according to a genre, with other *kuduro*, for instance from Angola or Brazil, does not allow us to look beyond aesthetic similarities. Rather, as I suggest in this chapter, diasporic collaborations deserve attention as they arise at the intersection of music and. In the case of Batida, *kuduro* and rap music come together via a creative,

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<sup>21</sup> See more here: *Bazuka* [available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14DBc5j1vmE>, accessed at 10/01/2017]

at times politically imagined music production, in a way in which Angola-based *kuduristas* might not have envisioned.

The Batida ensemble did several collaborations with Angolan hip hop musicians such as Ikonoklasta and MCK, who continue to comment on the dos Santos government in their poetic rap verses. Both Beirão and Coquenão shared with me that they met through music when Coquenão was a radio programmer and host (Interview 1 and 2). Radio Fazuma received two albums, one with Ikonoklasta's track which 'used a Fela Kuti sample and the story-telling' (Interview 2) - and another by Conjunto Ngonguenha, the first product of the collaboration of Angolan rappers such as Ikonoklasta, Leonardo Wawuti, Keita Mayanda and Conductor<sup>22</sup>. A few years later, Beirão and Coquenão have been working together through Radio Fazuma and have produced a docu-fiction in Luanda's *musseuques* entitled 'It's cool to be Angolan' ('*É dreda ser angolano*')<sup>23</sup> (Alisch and Siegert 2012).

This docu-fiction takes its audience around Luanda while *kuduro* and rap music are played on the taxi's radio. The radio host of the documentary comments on music, art, legacy of the war and the socio-economic surrounding. This production, as Coquenão explained to me, covered their expenses, and also provided some income to artists appearing in the documentary (Interview 2). In this sense, the musicians came to produce critical audio-visual narratives which helped them to be financially sustainable by commodifying the documentary.

One of the most interesting creative collaborations which is worth unpacking here is the music video of *Cuka*<sup>24</sup>. This video unveils the interconnectedness of the musical genres which are primarily based on political critiques of the regime. In *Cuka* (which is the national beer of Angola), Batida and Ikonoklasta put together a short story of a *mastero*. In this reality-based fiction, the protagonist, who is Ikonoklasta himself, keeps asking people not to drink too much, since the alcoholic oblivion only benefits the competing political parties (mostly the MPLA and UNITA), and allows them to exercise more control over themselves. At the end of the story, the man, as a subversive noise of the regime, was simply shot (The Quietus 2012). Ikonoklasta was referring to dos Santos as the architect of the Angolan's people funeral<sup>25</sup> (*Cuka*, YouTube). It is an explicit reference to necropower which the dos Santos regime, even in the years of so called peace, has largely relied on in maintaining the MPLA's incontestable rule over the Angolan population. These creative products of the artists

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<sup>22</sup> See more at *Conjunto Ngonguenha's* Facebook page [available at: <https://www.facebook.com/conjuntongonguenha/> 18/1/ 2018]

<sup>23</sup> See the full docu-fiction here: *Doc 60" - É Dreda Ser Angolano* [available at: <https://vimeo.com/14804042>, 18/1/ 2018]

<sup>24</sup> See the video on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLaj5rEzDvA>

<sup>25</sup> In popular parlance, President dos Santos has often called as the architect of peace.

also allow us to think of the mobility of creative labour in between Lusophone countries and across genres.

The cultural transfer between Angola, Mozambique, Portugal and Brazil has been present since the beginning of the Portuguese colonial era. Music would disseminate between Lusophone countries in a matter of six weeks, before the internet accelerated the process. Today, music, tropes and ideas are undoubtedly travelling faster than ever (Alisch and Siegert 2012). Spreading music, videos and social commentaries of the Angolan regime happens through the diasporic network of Angolans. At this point, I wish to examine what diaspora means and does in relation to political commentaries and activism. First, the definition of diaspora is useful for analysing Batida's political engagement.

The diasporic networks can be theorized in Arjun Appadurai's (1995) notion of mediascape and ideoscape. These definitions encapsulate 'the non-placeness' of the diaspora. They also let us move away from the virtual-real dichotomy in describing how resistance has been mobilized in Angola. Appadurai (1995: 35-38) refers to the ideoscape as a political realm which tends to exceed the national boundaries of a nation-state. Instead, it can be better understood as the flow of ideologies, a space where dominant ideologies and counter-ideologies are constructed and contested. Drawing on this terminology, the projection of electronic capitalism (Appadurai 1995: 10)<sup>26</sup> allowed mediascape to transmit the nation to displaced communities. Following this argument, capitalism produces circumstances, such as the possibility for online interconnectedness, from which different ideologies, travelling tropes and cultural products benefit alike. Diasporas all around the world are able to be in touch with those circulated and easily transferable immaterial goods.

This post-national conceptualisation broadens the understanding of political and social interactions occurring within the deterritorialized and reterritorialized diasporic communities (Ibid). In other words, diasporic experience goes beyond the fixity of places, locations, nations, and cities. Through the mediascape, the diaspora might be locally identifiable but discursively moving beyond the newly established national boundaries. This high degree of mobility, therefore, creates rhizomatic postcolonial subjectivity (Spencer 2011: 20-28). This observation refers to the emergence of multi-positioned communities which leave the traditional boundaries behind, and rather creatively operate through channels of networks. As Myria Georgiou (2010) further puts it, similarly to Appadurai, diasporic communities are also not dependent on territoriality anymore, since they can share either a common artistic or political imagination through cyberspace. Batida's projects have emerged from a music community of in-betweeness (Bhabha 1994) in terms of physical

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<sup>26</sup> Appadurai here draws on Anderson's term of print capitalism which let the nation to transmit and spread its dominant ideology via books, journals, newspapers etc.



location, but more importantly, of rhizomatic, diasporic space (Georgiou 2010: 18-20). These general features of the diasporic community might provide it with a counter-narrative potential (Pinard and Jacobs 2006: 84-86), but at the same time, it cannot be taken as inherent to diasporic situatedness. I argue that creative labour of Batida and Ikonoklasta, by political conscious art production and commodification, is a not only symbolic but a social intervention, such the co-produced documentary in Luanda.

Batida is a transnationally operating DJ's collaborative music project emerging from a diasporic community across national borders. It maintains itself through the post-national mediascape, which provides it with the possibility to foster counter-narratives. The diasporic mediascape also offers a platform to speak up and circulate narratives that would otherwise fall under the Angolan regime's censorship. In the case of Batida's collaboration, the diasporic music community exists beyond the walls of Lisbon and Luanda's urban cultures. Although the aesthetic word of Batida's collaborations are more bounded to the urban peripheries of Luanda and Lisbon, Batida's and Ikonoklasta's collaboration shares a common ideoscape which incorporates artists with the same political imaginaries about Angola.

In relation to this, thinking about the *kuduro* of Batida, one might stress that electronic music within the diasporic space does not differ from *kuduro* made in Luanda. If one only aesthetically considers *kuduro*, one might perceive a myriad of similarities; but at the same time, if we use *kuduro* as an umbrella term we will fail to see differences in social positions and different ways of relating to power. Furthermore, audio-visual forms of expression can provide visibility to cultural and social meanings. Thus, it speaks to social embeddedness, individual experiences and the artist's position within the social strata (Sheperd 2013). It is in this way that *kuduro*-rap music production is more like a terrain for differently-framed activists' narratives, messages and demonstrations.

The diasporic musical network, following the events of June 2015, reached beyond simple music production itself. Musicians from the underground hip-hop scene of Angola have facilitated wider transformation in Angolan society through music that brings critical minds together. The activists have faced myriad challenges since organising demonstrations against the government, beginning with Ikonoklasta's performance in 2011. Over the past few decades, the government succeeded in upholding a necropolitical regime rooted in the massacre of 27 May 1977, 1992 and the very recent one of 2015. Although Batida's collaboration with Ikonoklasta and MCK intends to rework actual political questions through semi-fictional narratives, their artwork scarcely touches upon the mass killings. It has been a culturally constructed taboo, even within the diasporic ideoscape.

The dos Santos' necropower, which treats life as disposable and exterminable, maintains a culture of fear that Angolan citizens experience even in Lisbon. Lara Parwson's (2014: 9) informant, who escaped to Lisbon after the 27 May massacre, still lives under the threat of being tracked down by the Angolan authorities in Portugal. To protect herself, she identifies herself as Mozambican when she meets other Angolans. This insight from the life narrative of an Angolan expatriate illustrates the distance necropower can cover, creating deathscapes and fearscales beyond the borders of Angola. Thus I argue that, against these globally circulating fearscales, Angolans try to develop a coping strategy. Parwson's informant chose to remain in incognito, denying her Angolanness. She experienced the necropower first-hand when her husband disappeared and turned out to be killed by the Angolan authorities. Thus, silence, discretion and namelessness could be seen as coping mechanisms. However, musicians like Ikonoklasta, MCK and Batida, through the flows of the mediascape, opt for a critical confrontation. Since 2015, discursive and aesthetically composed critiques have been transformed into music activism by Batida.

### **Visibility against forgetting**

Beyond the critical diasporic narratives of *Bazuka* or *Cuka*, Batida has mobilised its gigs and social media platforms to call for free activists in Angola. In the aftermath of the activists' detention, Batida's and Fazuma's Facebook pages turned into a political activist page with the aim of keeping the Angolan activist's story circulating in the global mediascape. Batida shared his activist strategy in an interview he gave shortly after the June 2015 imprisonment of Ikonoklasta and his fellow activists in Angola.

'Those taking the fight to the street are imprisoned, so I just act to claim for attention towards them and to make a difference and for this not to be forgotten' (Vieira 2015).

In similar fashion, Ikonoklasta, reflecting on activism of the past few years, described the picture below (Appendix 3) that was taken at Batida's gig as follows:

'He was so engaged in fighting for my fellow activists and me to be released that he used all the tools at his reach to spread the message, including making long ass speeches on stage before starting his gigs' (Interview 1).



(Appendix 3.) 'Batida displays posters of the 16 detained Angolan activists' (Okayafrica)

Here, I would like to look at Lipsitz's postcolonial music theory. Lipsitz shares a set of core assumption about the diasporic music production in his book of 'Dangerous Crossroads, Popular music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place' (1994). Within diasporic culture, as he asserts, popular culture might be instrumental to a broader political aim. Unlike in bourgeois art circles, the commodification of music and commercialization of performances are strategically-driven steps in transmitting political messages, rather than sheer profit-oriented music-making. Often, this political mission, film and music making surf the new wave of social movement (Lipsitz 1994: 27-28). It is in this sense that music-making as creative labour can take place within the globalized network of electronic capitalism.

In the case of Angolan demonstrations, activists speak up against the dos Santos regime which either impoverishes Angolans by pushing them at the margin of the society or silences them through detentions and assassination. Chapter 1, for instance, illustrates this complex relationship of reversal distribution of capitalist profit through patronage. Ikonoklasta and Batida also rely on the circuit of neoliberal culture where music is a fashionable commodity. The creative labour of musicians both maintains and uses the assemblages of cultural industries and injects a political narrative about Angolan elite capitalism into these global networks. In other words, while they participate in a cosmopolitan, worldwide festival culture, they also seek to diminish a complex hegemonic power locally.

Without a doubt, musicians can give voice to their causes either through active political demonstrations or through circuits of cosmopolitan capitalism. Strong media presence, gigs all around the world and extensive social networks are available to musicians like Ikonoklatsa, MCK and Batida. These advantages not only include Lusophone channels of popular and underground youth culture, but a wider audience with mixed backgrounds. The cultural labour in which these artists participate produces a highly visible product, swiftly circulated online. This

circulation of images, sounds, noises, narratives, effects and messages commonly produces what Antonio Tomas calls social visibility in his article on *kuduro*. As he writes:

'[...] social visibility can only be achieved through mass mediation, especially the direct linkage between local producers and international audiences through the availability of technology to produce and diffuse music' (Tomás 2014: 262).

Visibility, similar to Angola-based *kuduro* production, is at stake in the diasporic music-making of Batida, Ikonoklasta and MCK. Produced images, sounds and political narratives are addressed to a globally imagined civil society including institutions, organisations and individuals who are, in return, involved in a certain 'ethico-political labour' of bearing witness to the circulated narratives (Kurasawa 2009). Put differently, media-fostered visibility requires different types of labour, such as creative labour (artists), intellectual labour (activists, human rights organisations), biopolitical labour (e.g. hunger strike) and witnessing labour as the receiving end of the visibility campaign.

I think these multiple forms of labours merit more discussion for a better understanding of the processes and exchanges taking place between them. Thus, in the next chapter, I unpack the practice of transnational representation and global witnessing in relation to human rights organizations. I found it necessary to discuss human rights in a full chapter, given that the revolutionaries and Batida alike engage with NGOs and prominent human rights organisations working transnationally. Therefore, I wish to unpack the often ambiguous presence of human rights language and visibility strategies in juxtaposition with the political context of the demonstrations. I also examine Angolan politico-economics and the extent to which these transnational NGOs are able to contest the dos Santos regime's complex power establishment, such as seductive power and necropower, which disallows critical voices.

## Chapter 4

### Transnational solidarity and politics of human rights

In the three previous chapters, I aimed to map the terrain of *kuduro* production in Luanda and an emergent wave of demonstrations against the backdrop of Angola's political economy and the politics of fear that affects Angolan people and civic organisations. Given the authoritarian political climate, constituted by various interventions of seductive power and necropower, a mass-based social movement in Angola cannot emerge with ease. The Angolan government's close ties with the private sector, such as Sonangol, enable it to maintain the productive power of patronage, as I discussed earlier in relation to *kuduro* music. Additionally, the centralized government employs restrictive, coercive strategies of silencing, killing, kidnapping and imprisonment that do not only govern targets such as Ikonoklasta and the revolutionaries, but govern anyone who speaks up or even sings a rap song in the streets of Luanda, as I showed in Chapter 3.

Furthermore, the revolutionary youth have already been portrayed as the ultra-confrontational generation of the Angolan civil society in comparison with the NGOs which emerged during the nineties (Vidal 2015). Nevertheless, their confrontation mostly consists of demonstrations and meetings, such as the book club, and remains limited to the urban youth networks living in Luanda (Ibid). However, the specific power matrix of seductive power and necropower that I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 poses a challenge to systematically expressing dissatisfaction in Angola and to establishing a nationwide mass-based movement (Pawson 2014).

Despite the co-option and repressive atmosphere that Angolan civic resistance encounters, it creatively manages to navigate the obstacles that the dos Santos regime erects through political speech acts and politicized music production. The regime responds by deploying its capital and authorities to intervene in space from which a slightly audible noise of criticism echoes. Arresting fifteen activists during a peacefully organized book club meeting demonstrates the great extent to which the regime is able to infiltrate networks that still fuel hopes for social change. That is, this chapter falls in line with the previous ones with the aim of shedding further light on civil organizations, especially those that advocate for human rights, such as Amnesty International. The transnational NGOs gave special attention to the events of June 2015 and their aftermath, when Ikonoklasta and his fellow activists were arrested.

Human rights organizations, transnational NGOs and locally active initiatives – such as Open-Society Foundation Angola, the Development Workshop, and SOS Habitat

- have long observed and monitored the Angolan government's performance in basic rights fulfilment, such as freedom of speech and the right to peaceful assembly (Vidal 2015). The events of 2015, however, attracted more attention to the scene of injustices. Amnesty International (AI) was one of those human rights organisations monitoring events in Angola which I would like to examine more closely, because both Ikonoklasta and Batida have been in touch with AI's Southern African Directorate since the detention of local activists in 2015 (Interview 1 and 2). Envisioning a global campaign and movement, the organisation describes itself in terms of political neutrality and independence from any political ideology (Amnesty International's website).

However, one might be suspicious what political neutrality means to AI. From a political economic perspective, Nuno Vidal (2015) has revealed that many Angola-based NGOs, such as the Development Workshop, enhance neoliberal institutionalism within the country by gradually implementing changes by technical, professionalised human rights enforcement. They maintain donor partnerships, mostly with the EU and UN, that both promote human rights standards and expertise in technocratic good governance (Vidal 2015: 80-83).

We still have cause to be suspicious, however, because the language of good governance, and its universal standards according to which a society is measured, contributes to and forges a post-political agenda (Mouffe 2005). Human rights are only on brick in the complex post-political imaginary of how to build a democratic Angola. What is crucial here to note is that, once a human rights framework is deployed to uncover and represent injustice, the language may diverge from original narratives and representations of the struggle under the guise of professionalism. It is in this sense that this chapter will discover the connection between the revolutionaries' political imaginaries and AI's so-called non-ideological representation. I suggest redefining the latter in terms of a post-political agenda and investigating how the post-political framing contributes to explicit political struggles of musicians and citizens of Angola.

Bearing this in mind, I assert that the moral vocabulary of human rights campaigns has the potential to hijack previous, locally-framed claims and critics. In the following, I further discuss this commonsensical assumption of critical scholarship according to which human rights might be successful on certain fronts and disappointing elsewhere (Moyn 2013). Disappointing might be interpreted here as human rights organisations either promoting neoliberal institutionalism or becoming powerless in offering solutions to symptoms of a neoliberal political economy, such as dispossession and poverty (Moyn 2014). What has been largely discussed within critical human rights scholarship is the decontextualizing and depoliticizing practices of human rights organisations, which tend to ignore historically-shaped struggles.

At the same time, some researchers persistently stress the usefulness of internationalized human rights discourses and mechanisms with which to apply them to fight injustice (Odysseos and Selmezi 2015). Such discourses and mechanisms are useful insofar as they can foster the goal of a local social movement or rights groups (See von Schnitzler 2016).

In light of this, I will examine what AI does by representing Ikonoklasta's profile and activism during the detention of 2015-2016. In analysing the AI role in the global campaign, I argue that, despite their rights-based approaches, NGOs infrastructure contribute to global visibility as a strategy to dissolve silence around injustices in Angola. Thus, the online networks of NGOs, artists and activists jointly seek changes within Angola, where people have been forced into silence either economically, through patronage, or physically, through beatings and detention.

### **What does a transnational campaign do?**

Although Nuno Vidal (2015: 88) argues that the young Angolan revolutionaries have not had access to any funds and supports, he acknowledges that the dispersed revolutionaries were predominantly a 'web-based social network'. He further argues that this strategy of online visibility and locally organized, small-group resistance differs from that of the previous generation, who chose to negotiate with the Angolan government. Vidal also believes that the new movement is unable to overcome the challenge of establishing a border social movement throughout the rest of Angola. Undoubtedly, online-based activism is a new generational platform that has been mobilized in order to reach out to the younger generation, surpassing territorial constraints. Against this backdrop, I argue that social networks and media-based networking strategies of the revolutionaries deserve more attention here, mostly in relation to online campaigns and representation of human rights organizations. The revolutionaries themselves have built transnational networks which were actively present, at least online, even before of the detentions of 2015. Regarding human rights NGOs' support, Beirão told me the following in the email interview:

'[...]we had immense support from civil society in general and NGOs, specially after we landed in jail. (Some) NGO's had been there for many years prior to that, but fellow citizens and musicians not really. [...] Frontline Defenders, Amnesty International, CIVICUS, Human Rights Watch, CONECTAS, OSISA. Essentially the aforementioned. Locally we are mostly in touch with Omunga, SOS Habitat, AJPD [...]' (Interview 1).

This quote demonstrates the extent to which activists are connected to a broad base of organizations. Most of the support seems to come from both locally based and internationally operating NGOs. Nuno Vidal (2015: 83) notes that Omunga, SOS Habitat, AJPD have taken a confrontational stance by rejecting dialogue with the

Angolan government and framing their claims in terms of social services. In contrast to that, AI and Human Rights Watch use language defining human rights as a global goal to promote and implement. As Beirão mentioned, they received more attention and support shortly after the events of June 2015.

The musician and activists achieved greater visibility because human rights organizations proactively spoke up for injustices, especially when they are based in a non-violent protest setting from which one could easily represent a binary relationship of victims and perpetrators (Odysseos and Selmeczi 2015). In the discourse of Amnesty International, which I look at more closely in this chapter, Ikonoklasta and his fellow activists appear as victims in contrast to the perpetrator, the Angolan authorities. The musician received significant media attention not only as the result of the June 2015 detentions, but also because his politicized music played a role in disseminating criticism against dos Santos. By combining music and activism, Ikonoklasta has become the global symbol of Angolan freedom of speech (de Morais 2016).

Amnesty International was one of the most active organizations in Angola using human rights language and marching at the forefront of the symbolic-discursive transnational struggle. After the activists' detention in 2015, the transnational NGOs' networks have monitored events in Angola, including the music scene. Departing from a hip hop concert, Southern African Regional Director of AI, Tjiurimo Hengari, urged the Angolan authorities to cease censoring music, freedom of assembly, and artistic freedom in his report (Amnesty International 2016). The report was prompted by the cancellation of Ikonoklasta and MCK's joint concert in Luanda.

The transnational NGO also noted that MCK was banned from travelling to and performing at a Brazilian festival for joining the global campaign for the release of the activists (Amnesty International 2016). Following the release of Ikonoklasta in 2016, a joint hip hop concert with MCK was surprisingly cancelled by the management of *Chà de Caxinde* cultural centre. The rappers explained the situation as evidence of a 'growing nervousness' (Freemuse 2016) acted out by the authoritarian regime. Ikonoklasta also noted that musicians, while voices of freedom, are not the only target of the government; fundamentally, Angolan society as whole is under threat (Freemuse 2016). Before I continue examining AI's representation of music and activism, this part is worth unpacking.

We must recognize the differences between separate representations of the cancelled hip hop concert in Luanda. While AI framed it as a violation of freedom of assembly and artistic freedom, the musicians pointed out the problem of a paranoid state attempting to impose widespread fear on every Angolan citizen. That is one of the reasons that many Angolans reluctant to join movements and civil actions in public spaces as it happened at demonstration of 7 March 2013. The NGO has only been



focusing on a specific rights violation, identifying what is morally good and bad. In so doing, AI moralises and narrowly frames an act of censorship that is highly political in nature. The language of rights cannot always make sense of the historically-formed culture of fear that produces silence and frozen citizenship. By remaining focused on specific cases, AI does not connect them to the wider necropolitics of Angola, such as the massacres of 27 May 1977.

In the first place, Ikonoklasta and his fellow activists have not marched for an explicit right, such as freedom of expression. Nor have they chosen to play victims or pointed to their subordinated, powerless situation when they organised demonstrations against the 32-years-long rule of dos Santos. Rather, they have emphasized the need for regime change, as I quoted in the previous chapters. These are local realities, hopes and wishes that AI depoliticized by implementing a professionally-framed vocabulary of rights. Those who analyse a certain conflict through the human rights lens could hijack new, locally-rooted and globally-represented strategies of activism in Angola.

I do not argue here that human rights arguments deployed by Amnesty International are inherently wrong in identifying the problem. Activism, indeed, is about making claims and dividing the public sphere between good and evil, victim and perpetrator binaries for the better sake of mobilizing people for their righteous causes. However NGOs, forging narratives merely in language of rights, could miss the multi-layered violence that constitutes the regime of new Angola, thus the opportunity to point to the context-specific solution (Odysseos and Selmeczi 2015). Moreover, as the enforcement of human rights is barely possible in Angola, given the lack of independent jurisprudence and tribunal mechanisms (Center for Human Rights), NGOs' discourse will probably remain ignored by the government. If this is the politico-legal reality, then what is the use of human rights NGOs and their presence in Angola and beyond? What can Amnesty International do for the activists? They definitely have some influence on the global political representations of Angolan activists, and they also strive to influence actors within the global music industry.

Since politically conscious hip hop music is produced in Angola, human rights organizations have assumed that freedom of expression and music production walk hand in hand. This assumption is mainly based their knowledge of the repressive regime's treatment of Ikonoklasta and MCK, which has also reached the Human Rights Foundation (HRF). Given the disseminated reports about the persecuted hip hop musicians in Angola, NGOs have taken things a step further by moving from a commitment to representational labour toward one of solidarity forging. The Human Rights Foundation, at least, advocated for the underground rap scene in solidarity with other musicians the diasporic music network of Ikonoklasta like MCK and Batida.

The head of HRF, encouraged by the growing network of solidarity, asked Nicki Minaj in an open letter to cancel her Christmas show which was specifically organized for the dos Santos family. She was encouraged to support the imprisoned Ikonoklasta rather than entertaining Sonangol's director, Isabel dos Santos. Despite these efforts, the America pop diva posted a number of pictures on social media as evidence of the cheerful time she spent partying with the ruling elite family (Wilmot 2016). While the HRF tried to mobilise the singer by inviting her to support Angolan activist-musicians, those with power in the political economy of music were victorious. The Angolan elite family about Nicky Minaj's creative labour, just as they co-opted *kuduro* musicians. Meanwhile, the diasporic network of Batida represented the case of the revolutionaries through music-activism.

Similar to MCK, Batida also engaged in concert tour activism, as discussed at length in the previous chapter. His visibility campaign was intimately connected to Amnesty International's, which provided activists with protest banners that read 'free activists' in Lisbon. Batida was the one of those who mobilized people in Portugal for sympathy demonstrations (Batida, Facebook). In a similar fashion to Amnesty International's discourse, the demonstrations, along with Batida's concerts, only called for justice and freedom for the activists. In Pedro Coquenão's words, the revolutionaries have not done nothing more than voice 'the feeling that they don't stand a chance in achieving a fair and equal life in Angola' (Vieira 2015). Emphasizing the activists' emotions and goals in this quote, Coquenão also reinforced the importance of paying attention to locally-built narratives.

Thus, the transnationalized, widespread movement builds upon different layers of discourses, departing from the local revolutionary image in favour of globally-represented rights violations. While the revolutionaries attacked the dos Santos regime on their website, AI has represented the activists as 'victims' of the Angolan authorities who were arrested in June 2010<sup>5</sup>. Coquenão took a different tack, explaining the revolutionaries' movements in terms of emotions; he called it 'positivity' that he experienced as child in his family to dare to stand up for what he believe in (Interview 2). The emotional and positive aspects of local activism were not represented in AI's narrative. Yet, emotions in Angolan politics are crucial where hopes and fears coexist. I expand more on this claim in the conclusion of this thesis. At this point, let me to move to developing our understanding of the relationship between activists and NGOs.

Coquenão described his relationship with NGOs, saying:

'The most important was to have their credibility associated to our completely free, non-partisan and civil initiatives that would validate for the media presence in our

demonstrations just because a standard NGO would be there or communicate it through their official means. Amnesty Portugal and the Southern Department of African Amnesty were always available without stepping the line of their ethics but working a lot of extra hours' (Interview 2).

This quote illustrates well how internationalised demonstration in Portugal and Southern Africa was supported by AI's network. Coquenão engaged with the NGO in order to gain financial support and high media visibility. Although here we cannot know about representational differences, we can make sense of free labour that AI provided to musicians and activists in the global campaign. More importantly, the global infrastructure enabled the media to tell the story of the detention and its aftermath.

Again, talking about the social movement literature, I cannot bypass the seminal text on African social moments from Alex de Waal and Rachel Isbreck (2013). They point out that locally organized activism might call upon international networks. With the Luanda-based revolutionary movement, this was certainly the case; in their online manifesto the activists clearly refer to a diasporic network of Angolans with whom they are in touch. Batida's music production is one example of how activism has been forged and fostered through music. It also demonstrates how musicians can utilize their overall visibility (online and offline) to transmit their message to basically everyone: activists, human rights defenders, politicians, other musicians, journalists, researchers, and Lusophone and Anglophone audiences alike.

De Waal and Isbreck (2013) further assert that transnational networking could be instrumental to locally-framed causes, which may use it to gain more visibility and thereby more support from international institutions and organizations who have the power to put pressure on the Angolan government. At the same time, de Waal and Isbreck also remind us that images, videos, stories and news which portray as the greater good of professionalized human rights organizations can strengthen only the hegemony of human rights as 'a common global language of civic activism' (2013: 315).

Moreover, the globalized, rights-based language of activism is a universalizing one. The universal impetus of rights injects visible pictures, narratives and individual's faces onto the global civil society stage; but at the same time, the local struggle also shaped by the liberal norms of universally framed claims. In this sense, universalized narratives are hybrid ones that are able to mobilize across multiple localities and cultures where similar struggles appear, thereby forming bridges between different cultures (Tsing 2005: 5-8). Making bridges through the universal is the way to achieve better representation within the NGOs' network, and consequently greater visibility across global media, human rights organizations and activist circles.

Coquenão explains the type of support that was possible to mobilise after the detention of Ikonoklasta and his fellow activists:

'Step by step, families, friends, artists, journalists, even politicians, got together and did their best not to let it be forgotten by the media agenda. We made the noise we could make and resisted. Not only in Luanda' (Interview 2).

Making noise and gaining more visibility, despite the human rights language, was more important to achieve in global electronic media. Thus, in the case of transnationalised representations of the detainees, the framing was less important than the network of NGOs, artists and journalist who could disseminate the story of fifteen arrested activists.

## **Human rights, violence and silence**

The universality of language may be useful for fostering visibility as a counter-act of the Angolan regime's silencing and forgetting. However, it also poses some challenges, which I again stress through the Amnesty International case. The report of the Southern of AI described the recent events in Angola as follows:

'The worsening economic crisis triggered price rises for food, health care, fuel, recreation and culture. This led to continued demonstrations expressing discontent and restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The government misused the justice system and other state institutions to silence dissent. Housing rights and the right to health were violated' (Amnesty International Report 2016/17: 65-66).

Given that AI uses rights-based language in pursuit of an idealistic agenda, their framing and, consequently, the focus of their subject is narrowly defined. Their argument against the Angolan government, Marissa J. Moorman (2015) points out, is predominantly framed in terms of political rights. To this end, I am not convinced this critique is valid in light of the above quoted. Rather, language itself narrows a systematic problem down to the extent to which it fits in one of the prefabricated categories of political, economic, social, cultural rights. As the aforementioned report illustrates, AI allocates rights to certain issues such as speech, assembly, housing and health, instead of adapting a holistic view of injustices committed in Angola. And more interestingly, AI remains obscure about its stance on the emotional aspect of resistance of activism and that of politics of fear.

Preparing a list of seemingly separately violated rights is what Žižek (2008) calls the urgency of liberalism. By theorizing violence, he explains that liberal norms, such as human rights practice and politics, are more attentive to the most visible form of violence, or what he coined subjective violence. The language of human rights, thus, disregards the symbolic and objective forms of violence such as emotion – for example, cultures of fear and seductive co-optation. More precisely, liberal vocabulary

and strategies are less able to forge their narratives against the complex web of violence which has been historically produced and locally manifested in Angola. This vocabulary can allow us to make sense of only certain symptoms of violence. What is experienced as public silence and taboo generated by fears in Angola, is translated as a violation of freedom of speech and assembly in human rights language. What is a neoliberal reengineering of the city of Luanda (under the guise of a cosmopolitan aesthetic) accompanied by evictions and the removal of marginalized populations, for a human rights activist is a matter of housing or access to healthcare. Therefore I argue, following Žižek (2008), that a liberal, universal human rights regime cannot address the causes, interconnections and consequences of violence that is symbolic, material, emotional, and sometimes visible. However, local activists can frame their struggle in a way that recognizes the complexity and historical rootedness of violence. For example, activists in Luanda would recognize that the symbolic date of 27 May 1977 and the material conditions of the neoliberal city jointly constitute the sphere of state-committed and state-facilitated violence on the Angolan population.

Amongst these activists is Rafael Marques de Morias, a journalist who was similarly detained without trial for his political writings (Pearce 2001). He notes in one of his articles that, since the June 2015 book club detention, there was a war taking place on social media. More precisely, he notes that given the scattered nature of the activist network due to the regime's control over everyone's lives, the internet became a terrain for war between activists and the president's circle. Online activism merits attention because it is one of the few possible ways to counter the political propaganda, centralized control over Angolan media and 'the golden rule of silence', and the silencing of dissidents by the dos Santos regime (de Morais 2016). In light of this, online activism and human rights campaigns must be understood as joint strategies to fight the silence. As Coquenão noted, to make noise and remain visible in the global media is the best way to resist the regime's politics of fear and imposed frozen citizenship.

What indeed the new 'ultra-confrontational' activism (Vidal 2015) does in Angola is to enhance online, and thus global, visibility. This affords activists a better chance of dissolving the silence around existing critical voices and the different political imaginaries of those who dare to speak. What I earlier called frozen citizenship, or what MCK poetically depicts as 'cadáver andante,' refers to the great silence encountered by Angolan citizens. It renders them politically unorganized and inactive, unable to practice their citizenship in the newly born, liberated nation. It is in this sense that online networks of individual activists calling for change, such as Ikonoklasta or the revolutionaries' website, became radical within a country like Angola, where people have been forced into silence.

Therefore, breaking the silence requires overcoming the fear triggered by the necropower of the regime, which creates and recreates deathscapes such as the one that occurred on 27 May 1977. Avoiding physical extermination, but not harms, could be translated as an act of facing the culture of fear. It is what the new modes of activism did in Luanda when artists dared to expose their voices and bodies to the Angolan authorities. As Beirão notes that, at the end of the day, he and his fellow activists were fine with the detentions. Their detention and his hunger strike were a 'catalyst for the awakening of civil society' in Angola (Interview 1). In other words, overcoming the silence of bare life, the human condition of disposability and precarity of life (Butler 2004), was paradoxically an act of exposing oneself to governmental forces. Nevertheless, the strategy of exposure to a demonstration situation, for instance, does not happen without any risk taking; this was seen during the demonstration of 7 March 2013, when dozens of protestors were beaten.

The necropower of the regime, however, infuses violence against even the slightest noises, such as musicians' ones. Thus when activists seek visibility in Angola, they choose to subject themselves to the different forms of violence practiced by the authorities. However, global visibility can bring a kind of protection to activists in the age of the global. Fuyuki Kurasawa (2009) calls this 'witnessing fever', which takes place through global media and is fostered by electric capitalism. Witnessing requires the emotional labour of a global audience capable of recognising the voice aspiring to break the silence, of remembering against forgetting, as Coquenão noted, and of practicing empathy through solidarity. Fighting injustice in global human rights regimes is a twofold process. First, the activists must make themselves perceptible to journalists, NGOs and human rights defenders and represent their case in the global media. Secondly, the testimonial audience must respond emotionally, financially or otherwise.

However, selective empathy and the fatigue of bearing witness can be challenges in the global arena where we are exposed to watching others' suffering (Kurasawa 2009). In this sense, the human rights campaign may fail to produce material changes in Angola or to mobilize the economic power needed to boycott the regime's wealth accumulation. But I wish to insist that, without the visibility campaign, the activists risk subjection to further 'unlawful' procedures and violent treatment at the hands of the regime. Visibility due to the high-profile media presence, however, puts witnessing eyes on Angola, even if they do so because of disseminated pictures and narratives circulated through global electronic capitalism, such as social media, YouTube etc. This attention particularly spotlights musicians touring across Lusophone countries and beyond. The government can sense the power of their visibility but refuses to recognize their rights, despite calls for the latter by NGOs like AI. Thus, I argue that globally expanded NGO's infrastructure fosters the politics of hope and is therefore instrumental to local activism in Angola.

In the last chapter, I wish to conclude my research by examining the politics of hope and fear through Rossi Baridotti's (2010) theoretical work on necropower. I wish to discuss why music and activism play a crucial role in Angola, where seductive power and necropower are at work and produce frozen citizenship. I highlight the complexity of resistance which paradoxically use channels and network of neoliberal NGOs and electronic capitalist media to speak against the local elite which cemented its control through neoliberal political economy. Through online and diasporic networks, activists can act out a proactive citizenship which is possible to do so via global visibility enhanced by electric capitalism.

## Toward conclusion

In this research, I dealt with music as a medium for various political imaginaries in Angola. However, this dissertation did not explore different genres and musicians from various scenes of traditional music in Angola, such as *kizomba* or *samba* which, without a doubt, have their own micro-politics in Angola. I took *kuduro* music as the vantage point in order to uncover the political landscape of Angola where critical voices struggle to emerge. I argued that *kuduro*, the globally known and disseminated electronic-dance music has been hijacked by the dos Santos government's populist narrative, became an ideological audio-visual aesthetic for the new Angola. It has been possible for it to do so because *kuduristas* like Tony Amado (the King of *Kuduro*) are offered financial support by MPLA-related business men and military personnel. *Kuduro* musicians are seduced by the promise of economic prosperity and a better life. Co-option is a socio-economic practice in new Angola, but also political in the sense that it attracts Angolans closer to the ruling elite. This mechanism of economic power, which Sanyal (2007) coined as reversal of primitive accumulation, is a useful concept; but it falls short of fully explaining practices of patronage. Thus, I suggest seductive power as an extended concept, in order to understand co-option as both an economic and a cultural practice.

In contrast to *kuduro* musicians in Luanda, the rap scene has remained critical of the socio-economic realities of Angola, and thus of the dos Santos regime that neglects the daily problems of poor Angolans, such as inadequate water supply, lack of housing and forced removals in the heart of Luanda (Gastrow 2017). Many rappers use their lyrics and audio-visual materials to criticise the government and to mirror the socio-economic realities of Angola via music. In contrast to *kuduro*, the rap scene has remained an underground and DIY culture in Angola. This quasi-marginal position has allowed some musicians to emerge as critical, recognisable voices within and beyond Angola. I only restrict my analysis to Ikonoklasta and MCK's music-making because they are the two most represented in the global media. Resistance and demonstrations are also often linked to Ikonoklasta's music. However, the recently emerged revolutionaries' movement cannot fully identify with the Angolan rap scene (Martin 2015). Through Ikonoklasta's activism, detention and music production, along with MCK's music, I showed the extent to which the Angolan government keeps a culture of fear alive. Through necropower, a term coined by Achille Mbembe (2003), this politics of death and fear produce what I call frozen citizenship. Necropower is a complex matrix of dispossession, vulnerability and precarity of life, where the extermination of groups is almost always possible. From this chapter, I moved to the diasporic collaboration of Ikonoklasta and Batida.

Before the revolutionary youth were arrested, Ikonoklasta and MCK collaborated with Batida, a Lisbon-based *kuduro* ensemble. This diasporic music production,



which I illustrated in Chapter 3, indicates that genres are fluid and that political imaginaries and their audio-visual representations are crucial to making collaboration possible. The ideaspaces (Appadurai 1990) of electronic capitalism rendered the artists' narratives available to one another. After getting to know each other, Ikonoklasta and Batida produced critical music like the song *Cuka* together. Moreover, following the detention of musicians, local journalists and academics, Batida began to use its global music network and platform to tell the stories and the political context of the Luanda-based revolutionary movement. Repurposing its shows in the world music scene, DJ clubs and social media posts, Batida ensured that the activists' narratives were disseminated to transnational NGOs. Frontman Pedro Coquenão, and his fellow musicians in Batida, have organised demonstrations using the global infrastructure and intellectual labour of Amnesty International.

In the Chapter 4, I further discussed the role of NGOs, focusing mostly on the Amnesty International. I draw on critical human rights scholarship that considers human rights language and representation as a global hegemonic framework with which to engage injustices. Moving from these assumptions and preconceptions, I briefly discussed the extent to which transnational NGOs, such as Amnesty International, both constrain and enable local activism. Despite the human rights language of Amnesty International, economic injustices are framed in similar vain to political rights.

However, the emotional aspects of activism and the culture of fear have been overlooked by the NGO. Although organizations within the human rights network seem to be less powerful in putting the Angolan government under pressure, they have the financial and infrastructural means to disseminate the images and moralized stories of good/bad, victim/perpetrator. Ikonoklasta and Batida, beyond the media attention that their music received, foster visibility through NGOs' infrastructures. I argue that this visibility provides global attention and protection to the high-profile activists targeted by the dos Santos regime. However, the media consequences of global witness fever (Kurasawa 2009) prevent activists from being forgotten. It seems to offer an escape from what I call 'frozen citizenship', through positive practice of politics of hope (Baridotti 2010).

### **Micro-politics of hope for the future**

In this closing section, I wish to spend a bit more time with the concept of frozen citizenship and politics of hopes. I think the former is an escapable condition of citizenship in Angola by the practice of the latter. I argue that, after all, the revolutionaries' activism and the musicians' songs, videos and claims jointly speak to a politics of hope. In Angola, following the devastating war of independence and the civil war, mass killing still exists. The events of 27 May 1977 and killings in 1992 and 2015 demarcated the politics of death of the dos Santos regime. The kidnapping of Ikonoklasta's family members and the detention of activists indicate the extent to which the sovereign power treats life as disposable from the pedestal of authoritarian

regime. The activism of the revolutionary youth attempts to escape the silence produced by the politics of death.

Activism in new Angola might be defined as ‘politics of hope’ (Mbembe and Posel 2005). It is a political practice which, simply put, resurrects commitment to human dignity (Ibid). It reclaims life and agency for all, instead of accepting the hierarchy imposed on humanity in terms of the disposability of life and the condition of living dead. The living dead is one who cannot fully enjoy and practice their citizenship under the necropower of the sovereign. Achille Mbembe and Deborah Posel (2005) unpack politics of hope in post-colonial settings where, as they argue, dealing with violence, oppression of the colonial past, post-colonial persistence of the colonial racism, and hierarchy between lives is politically necessary. Without recognition of the persisting violence of the post-colonial state structure, denials and perpetual victimhood will dominate postcolonial societies. In Angola, frozen citizenship thus refers to an affective constraint upon dealing with violence of the past and present. It is an affective condition in which subjectivities attached to negative emotions may prevent citizens from mobilising their agentic capacity. Instead of considering themselves actors of change, a state of victimhood persists, particularly in Angola where a culture of fear maintains the inactivity of citizens. Moving from this insight toward Rosi Baridotti’s philosophical concepts, I offer to take emotions and feelings as fundamental in a politics.

Politics of hope is a political practice which takes emotions and imaginations seriously. Hopes include both positive emotions and imaginaries. It is a kind of ‘dreaming forward’ that permeates life and gives motivation for certain actions (Baridotti 2010: 217). Put differently, hopes create a ‘sense of possibility’ (Newman 2015). Through them, one can try to envision novel assemblages of living together. In the aftermath of the war, through navigation between the obscene violence of the regime, hopes are still persistent in Angola. They may be articulated in various ways, such as building cement houses in the *musseques* or occupying public places in order to make claims publicly, as I discovered earlier in this research. Hopes can fuel various innovative modes of micro-political activism (Baridotti 2010), which is a different form a silenced form of frozen citizenship.

As Baridotti (2010: 214-216) suggests, the negativity of pain should be transformed into positive actions. It requires a move from the frozen effect of pain to a proactive affirmation. Also, subjectivities might find their bodily and emotional limits in order to positively act their freedom out. Understanding the bondage that one encounters is, ironically, the best way to experience freedom. Given that this limit can take multiple forms in one’s life, the positive action also differ in their scope. Along this line, I cannot generalise politics of hope which might articulate various way to cope with a repressive regime. This research only intended to uncover activism within Angolan-Portuguese *kuduro*-hip hop circle which are spurring transformative, positive action in Angola – where frozen citizenship has long been produced and maintained. By challenging public silence in Angola, the revolutionaries and artists

dare to push their limits at the price of their bodily integrity. Being beaten up and arrested by the Angolan authorities might be a way to practice freedom, envision social transformation and to keep the positive practice of hope alive.

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## List of Appendix

### Appendix 1 – Interview 1

#### Interview questionnaire (Ikonoklasta)

[You find 8 questions below, and I also attached a picture. Please feel free to contact me with any questions and comments you have.]

**Can you please tell me about your music and activism in Angola? How did you get into activism in Angola?**

I was introduced to hip hop by my cousins when I was around 13. My life has never been the same since. At first it was the dress code, the lean walking, the attitude and then, with the coming of age, it ended up shaping my whole personality and view points on society and my place within it.

**Can you please tell me about what happened after you and your fellow activists got arrested by the authorities in 2015?**

There was a magnificent outcry that started with Angolans and then crossed borders finding solidarity worldwide. We had been struggling through peaceful means for 4 years prior to our imprisonment so people knew we were no thugs despite of what government propaganda tried shoving down their throats. It felt as though being thrown in jail served as a catalyst for the awakening of civil society we had been striving for so unsuccessfully for so long. So we were quite OK with it.

**How do you see? What have the consequences of your arrest and your hunger strike been?**

I subjected to several tests and analysis months after the hunger strike and apparently there were no consequences to any organs. It's been over two years now and I feel just fine.

**Did you get any support from fellow citizens, musicians and NGOs in the last three years in fighting against governmental injustices?**

Yes. Like I said previously, we had immense support from civil society in general and NGOs, specially after we landed in jail. (Some) NGO's had been there for many years prior to that, but fellow citizens and musicians not really.

**Have you been in contact with any NGOs or human rights organisation lately? If so, which organizations?**

Frontline Defenders, Amnesty International, CIVICUS, Human Rights Watch, CONECTAS, OSISA. Essentially the aforementioned. Locally we are mostly in touch with Omunga, SOS Habitat, AJPD and OSISA.

**How did you meet *Pedro Coquenão*? How would you describe your relationship with *Batida*?**

We met in 2004. I was a fan of his work a few years before we met and we just clicked and started doing things together since. He was a radio programmer and host. One day he received two albums from a hip hop label from northern Portugal. The first one, a compilation had a track that stood out for him because it used a Fela Kuti sample and the story-telling was, in contrast with the majority of tracks therein, quite cheerful. It was one mine. The second album was Conjunto Ngonguenha's debut and it struck him to the point of him reaching out to me. We have been steadily building a very solid relationship that goes way deeper than regular friendship, a brotherhood I would say. To me he's a real brother.

**Ricardo Miguel Vieir wrote in his *OkayAfrica* (31 January, 2017) article that you '*started working closely with Batida in a global, futuristic music language that broadened Ikonoklasta's protesting reach against the government.*' Can you please tell me more about this? I would like to know more about how your resistance and *Batida's* activism are came to meet?**

We share a lot of viewpoints on many issues and, like I said, we just clicked. He loves my lyrics, I absolutely love his and Clementina's creativity (his sidekick and partner and also a great human being), he's got a vision of things and how they can be broadened without necessarily watering down the message, the music, the



essence of our art. I just trust him so much that he seldom convinces me to get out of the box and explore new horizons. That helped both of us grow spiritually.

**Can you please tell me about your thoughts and feelings in relation to the picture below?**



*Batida displays posters of the 16 detained Angolan activists (Photo Credit: Luís Macedo)*  
(Source: <http://www.okayafrica.com/batida-a-producers-quest-to-free-16-detained-angolan-activists/>)

It's a powerful image that further depicts how close we are. He was so engaged in fighting for my fellow activists and me to be released that he used all the tools at his reach to spread the message, including making long ass speeches on stage before starting his gigs. I obviously feel VERY lucky to have a brother such as Pedro, yet another of my many privileges.

## **Appendix 2 – Interview 2**

### **Interview questionnaire (Batida)**

[You find 8 questions below, and I also attached a picture. Please feel free to contact me with any questions and comments you have.]

**Can you please tell me about your music and activism related to Angola? How did you get into activism?**

I do not consider myself activist. I am a citizen with two nationalities. Angolan born and also have the Portuguese one as my family is mixed.

On activism: There are people who do it as a job, others who are fully committed and updated all the time, some as a way to forge their way into a political career, others because they have that time and heart and relate to a particular cause. Off course, then you have the biggest group, who are simply numb or just too entertained, too comfortable to take any risk and to try to leave the world a bit better than when we got here.

My connection with Angola is a blood one. Family. Affections. No nationalist feelings. Actually I have a big soft spot for South Africa too. Remember having discussions as a child, simply because Apartheid did not look right for anyone.

I could relate with the histories of colonialism and all the relativization made to justify the unjustifiable: inequity. I think you are called activist once you start standing for things you believe in. I think that is part of our citizenship.

Some of us learn later, I remember try to act positively since I was a child. I remember being really impressed by the movies, documentaries or just new about figures like Luther King, Gandhi and Mandela. The positiveness of my grandfather was also a great inspiration.

I love South African art in general. Music was a big influence on me. Before I had to accept that the 70's music from Angola touched me deep and before I understood it was not older peoples music only and that actually that music was part of the sense of identity of what it meant to be Angolan at the time, I was recording Metro Fm and buying early Kwaito records because you could feel there was a strength in that dance. It was deep. Not only for youngsters. The marching feel of the beats, a fresh and unique flow telling you things and sometimes pointed by the choirs sounding as a big wave of hope and demanding at the same time, always moved me. Always.

So Music is family, instruments were always around in my teenage life, music is about getting together, eating, dancing and sure that for a South African I don't have to explain how they can all be brought together in one. How powerful it is. I later searched back for the records who had the same dream of a better and free country in Angola, and they too moved me then. It's not a decision. It's just unavoidable for who does or react to it. It's not courage. It's love and aiming for better.

So all I did was being sensitive to music and stories I heard when I was a kid. That and being able to observe and think for myself. Then it's between you and your conscience. Between being inspired or exploiting those memories. For me it's about respecting them and try to find what are the essential ideals that prevail. Tradition is to be renewed. And apply it in the most fair way we can. An equal access to water and education are the basis we must achieve. Then a much better division of the wealth. And respect the most important thing: nature and each one's life and freedom.

**Can you please tell me about what happened after your fellow musician, Ikonoklasta and activists got arrested by the authorities in June 2015 in Luanda?**

It was not the first time. You always think you are prepared to deal with the hide and seek game but you are not. But you fight for it. You try to use constitution and media exposure as your weapons. For a good time no one knew exactly where they were, how many were arrested, what the exact accusation was, etc. After knowing

the reason of the arrest: conspiracy to kill the president, to make something you only see armies making, then we felt it was serious and at the same time, desperate from the regime to give so much importance to such a small group.

There was solitary, aggressions, all sorts of attempts to intimidate. Step by step, families, friends, artists, journalists, even politicians, got together and did their best not to let it be forgotten by the media agenda. We made the noise we could make and resisted. Not only in Luanda.

**Have you been in contact with them following the detentions?**

I was closer to some than others. Gladly, some old friends and artists that make part of this generation that just demands better, want to talk, to dialogue, fortunately many of them were not in that group, so that allowed us to keep working together and I may say better than ever to make a statement. There were basic needs to be fulfilled, babies, water, food, taxis, so the main worry was to keep families going to keep them strong, close and to support as possible so no one was left out.

**Have you been in contact with any NGO or human rights organisation lately? If so, which organizations?**

Many helped providing the most basic needs and asking nothing in return. The most important was to have their credibility associated to our completely free, non-partisan and civil initiatives that would validate for the media presence in our demonstrations just because a standard NGO would be there or communicate it through their official means. Amnesty Portugal and the Southern department of African Amnesty where always available without stepping the line of their ethics but working a lot of extra hours. There were many civil actions of people that will never be credited because they don't need to. We don't need to. I am because we are, right?

**Have you been supported by any NGO or human rights organization in organising demonstrations?**

The demonstrations where always civic organized. Even the requests on the municipalities where always signed by individuals. All our pocket money. Some associations would join too, like Solim or Sos Racismo, Integridade e Transparência, all solidarity associations that fight against discrimination, racism, immigrants' rights, transparency in the oil businesses, etc, each would bring their supporters but no one would self-promote.

Some would paint sayings, others would bring megaphones, Amnesty would later provide the small PA system for anyone to talk, no hierarchies, and would have their team from the director to internships to show their solidarity, but it was always a civic initiative.

We got more coordinated with time and could attract more media and just people who were now taking the case as theirs too. Together we got stronger, sure. But for us it was essential to keep it clean of any party or public figure to take advantages. All the supports achieved were fully sent to the families that were really in daily difficulties to keep everyone healthy and strong.

**How did you meet Henrique Luaty da Silva Beirão? How would you describe your relationship with Ikonoklasta?**

We met has mutual listeners. He was listening to my radio show and I was playing his records. When we both found that, we decided to meet. Since then we got closer and closer. We are brothers by option. He is my family. His family is mine too. Love them all. And I still love the music he does and I am happy to have the same from him. And still having great laughs on top.

**Ricardo Miguel Vieir wrote in his Okayafrica (31 January, 2017) article that Luaty 'started working closely with Batida in a global, futuristic music language that broadened Ikonoklasta's protesting reach against the government.' Can you please tell me more about this? I would like to know more about how Ikonoklasta's resistance and Batida's activism came to meet?**

We met and turned to be friends, brothers, family, accomplices. We started making a documentary that was going to be about his band and ended being a regular day spent in Luanda hearing stories from random people on the street as well as other artists. It is called *É dreda ser angolano*. You find it on Vimeo. It was rare to find indie docs in Angola at the time (2005) first steps after the end of the war and we felt compelled to do it just with our pocket money and borrowed equipment.

Rap was telling a perspective you could not see in any media. National or international. So we felt we should try. It is very raw but it went well. We got prizes and attention for the city. We also did a soundtrack compiling underground artists and some of them got played in Europe because we managed to put them on *Fnac* stores. The whole plan was not to give profit and just keep pushing it till the maximum exposure.

Luaty kept doing his raps. I started trying to create music that would challenge my friends. I felt there was a gap between dance music and music that included social commentary like rap did. First I did *Bazuka*, mostly putting all wars in one song and mixing Angolan leaders, alive and dead, together with Portuguese president as well as dance moves, old and new. Perspectives. Symbols that couldn't be touched or mentioned together. Mostly percussive and very minimal but very direct if you see the video.

Then it came *Cuka*, and for that one I have challenged Ikono. To develop a character that turned to be an old drunk leader of a military orchestra. He is great developing characters. Check the video too. It is subtitled. There no formal association or compromise between us. There are common sensibilities and aspirations for Angola

and the world. Admiration, love, for ourselves, families, art. We have good laughs together when we are not getting grey hair. Maybe that is the biggest commitment possible. He definitely is involved in many civic initiatives in Angola and is one of the loudest and most heard voices of his generation.

**Can you please tell me about your thoughts and feelings in relation to the picture below?**



Batida displays posters of the 16 detained Angolan activists (Photo Credit: Luís Macedo)

(Source: <http://www.okayafrica.com/batida-a-producers-quest-to-free-16-detained-angolan-activists/>)

There was a point that I could cancel all my shows because I was not in the mood for them having Luaty arrested, or I could just make his song on my set, wearing his face and singing for him, having with me always volunteers with masks I pointed and started working as demonstration kits everywhere as I put them available on line on a small group, all groups were small, to show that there were more people involved: 2 girls that were usually forgotten as well as an older case in the north that also needed attention. So this was the option: ok I do the shows but I have to occupy them denouncing what is going on, being the show in Denmark or Brazil.

The idea would be to film and send back to Luanda and spread on social media to give the sense that the whole world was watching and to put pressure on the regime.

But it was mostly made for the ones arrested. We can only imagine what a photo like this makes you feel when you are forgotten in prison. I am holding Luaty as the song was his, I am doing his part and he is my brother. They were actually 17 arrested.

**You said: You try to use constitution and media exposure as your weapons. What does it mean to use the constitution as weapon? Is it about the Angolan one?**

It's about the fact that the constitution is mostly disregarded when you have someone in charge for so many years. So by that, I mean, instead of demanding something new, most of the activists started asking just for basic rights. Like the right to think and

speak different. This is totally about the Angolan context but unfortunately, as we know, many countries have the same practices. Maybe more discrete, or not, but they do. I meant using the basic rights, that last year was strong on remembering all of us it's not a sure thing for anyone around the world. But it is essential to look out closer first, with the situations each deals with daily and knows.

**In relation to the documentary (*É dreda sera Angolano*): We also did a soundtrack compiling underground artists and some of them got played in Europe because we managed to put them on *Fnac* stores. Is it due to the documentary?**

Actually we finished the soundtrack first. So we used it as a teaser and because it had a value on its own. We gave away half of the release (500) in strategic events so the music would reach out for media and general people that don't know the reality outside their condo or SUV and distributed the other 500 in regular big stores like *fnac*. Fortunately it got great reviews on some media, some airplay and at some point it promoted the doc too but it started happening the opposite when the doc was released: people started looking for the soundtrack. It was done in a way that if it sold out it would only pay the costs of production and professionals along the way. Sold out. Both CD and DVD. I have a few copies here at home. Now it is open on Vimeo.

### **Appendix 3.**

**Picture:** *Luís Macedo's photo* in Vieira, Ricardo Miguel (16 September 2015): 'A producer's Quest to free 16 Detained Young Angolan Activists', *Okayafrika*, [available: <http://www.okayafrika.com/batida-a-producers-quest-to-free-16-detained-angolan-activists/>, 10/1/2018]