

The New Portuguese Presence in Angola
Traces, Emplacements and Interactions of a Postcolonial Encounter

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Abstract

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Propelled by the impact of the Euro-crisis in the Portuguese economy and job market and the booming economy in Angola, during the last decade a great number of Portuguese workers migrated to the former colony. At the same time, Angolan investors made important acquisitions in key sectors of the Portuguese economy. Together, these inverse flows of people and capital marked a revivification of the economic, political, and socio-cultural ties connecting ex-colony and ex-metropole, forty years after independence

Framed as an ‘ethnography of postcolonial encounter’ (Faier & Rofel 2015) and based on fieldwork carried out between August 2015 and February 2016 among Portuguese living in the city of Benguela (central region of Angola), the aim of this thesis is to explore and reflect on these migrants’ experiences and subjectivities.

Addressing classical anthropological concerns with issues such as the postcolonial reconfiguration of power relations, perceptions of continuity and change, constellations of (un)belonging, and contested and competing past presencing discourses, the analysis deployed follows three interconnected threads: it identifies and explores *traces* of the past which shape the contemporary Portuguese presence; it points to the symbolic and material connections of mobile subjects to the Angolan space/place, and the different types of *emplacement* enacted by them; and finally, through a set of critical *figures* of power embodied by the subjects, it investigates Portuguese-Angolan power relations as they are played out in everyday life *interactions*.

Proposing a situated postcolonial perspective on these topics, the thesis locates itself in the interception of three fields of scholarship: Lusophone postcolonial studies; North-South migration studies, and research on whiteness and white subjectivities in Africa. With regard to the first one, its main contribution lies in following key themes such as ‘Lusophone postcolonial identities’ and ‘semi-peripheral condition’ as they travel outside of Portugal. To the latter fields it contributes empirical enrichment brought about by the distinctive features of a case that, at different levels, challenges that which has come to be seen as the ‘normalized’ structure of a transnational distribution of power.

Keywords: (post)coloniality, North-South migration, ‘Lusophone’ space, emplacement, belonging, power relations