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Groes, Christian

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Exploitation or appreciation? Intimate patronage and the moral grammar of sexual-economic exchanges between young *curtidoras* and older European expat men in Maputo, Mozambique*

Christian Groes-Green**

Abstract

In this article, I explore a particular category of young women within local systems of exchange as well as within a transnational urban landscape of intimate transactions. What *curtidoras* in Maputo elucidate and what anthropologists perhaps have not sufficiently understood about transactional sex is the power of female eroticism and how this power connects to kinship, gender dynamics, and moralities of exchange. Drawing on postcolonial feminist scholarship, I extend existing frameworks of analysis by addressing how *curtidoras*' sexual-economic exchanges with men are never fully divorced from moral obligations toward their female kin as well as characterized by diverging and converging moral economies in the intimate encounter between the younger women and older European men.

Palavras-chave: Gender, Power, Kinship, Sexuality, Exchange, Urban Africa.

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** Associate Professor, Department of Culture and Identity, Roskilde University, Roskilde, Denmark. cgroes@ruc.dk

Academic discourses have often portrayed women in transactional sexual relationships as powerless and vulnerable victims of economic inequalities and patriarchal privilege. Yet, in recent years, a growing number of scholars have shown how women's choice to engage in cross-generational and transactional sex can also be part of an economic strategy within unequal playing fields (Cole, 2010; Kaufman; Stavrou, 2004; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Mills; Ssewakiryanga, 2005; Newell, 2009). With this article, I add to such theoretical thinking by exploring a particular category of young women within local systems of exchange as well as within a transnational urban landscape of intimate transactions. What *curtidoras* in Maputo elucidate and what anthropologists perhaps have not sufficiently understood about transactional sex is the power of female eroticism and how this power connects to kinship, gender dynamics, and moralities of exchange. Drawing on postcolonial feminist scholarship, I extend existing frameworks of analysis by addressing how *curtidoras'* sexual-economic exchanges with men are never fully divorced from moral obligations toward their female kin as well as characterized by diverging and converging moral economies in the intimate encounter between the younger women and older European men. *Curtidoras* and their exchanges with white men can inform our understanding of gender, power, kinship, sexuality, and exchange in urban Africa and add to recurring debates in anthropology and neighboring disciplines on transactional sex and sexual economies (Cole, 2004; Cornwall, 2002; Haram, 2004; Hunter, 2002, 2007; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Luke, 2003; Maganja et al., 2007; Newell, 2009; Swidler; Watkins, 2007; Wojcicki, 2002). Yet, I also want shed light on these women's male partners, the sponsors who have hitherto received little attention in the literature.

This article discusses the moral grammar of these intimate exchanges by looking at how expat men and Mozambican women's perceptions of exchange reveal different moralities regarding giving and receiving material and affective gifts, such money, consumer goods, care, love, sex and company. I would like to make three interconnected arguments: First, I point to the

moralties of exchange that I encountered among *curtidoras* and how they can be understood against the background of notions of female entitlements and the value of women, stressing reproductive, sexual and cosmological powers and rights. Then I show how expat men's notions of intimate exchange differ by seeing monetary support of women as either exploitation and prostitution or as part of an obligation to support poor African women. Second, I argue that *curtidoras* negotiate these exchange moralities through "intimate patronage", involving asymmetrical ties and forms of what Erving Goffman (1959) called "impression management". Third, I argue that exchange moralities in these relationships can be seen as a micro-cosm illustrating larger global collision between moralities of development aid among Western donors and local conceptions of aid and obligations in the global south. As part of this, I address circulations within the sexual economy and why sexual-monetary exchanges are more acceptable than perhaps we are used to in many European or Western settings.

Fieldwork: Intimate studies, field sites, and key informants

The findings in this article are based on 18 months of anthropological fieldwork I conducted between March 2007 and December 2011. My primary ethnographic tools were individual interviews and participant-observation among young people between the ages of 16 and 28 years as well as among their families and sexual partners. The original focus of my research was on sexual cultures, gender relations, and HIV prevention among secondary school students coming from impoverished social backgrounds. But, as I spent more time with young women, the seduction of *patrocinadores* and having sex for money became a recurring issue. Its prominence prompted me to explore in depth the power dynamics of female sexual practices and the responses of the women's older and predominantly white and wealthy partners.

I focus in this article on findings among 20 young women who self-identified as *curtidoras*, but I also draw on informal talks with ten family members and 14 white *patrocinadores*. The family members included mothers, aunts, and sisters as well as some male relatives, all of whom gave me invaluable knowledge about kin structures and generational relations. The *patrocinadores* I talked to came from Portugal, Italy, Germany, Spain, France, England, the United States, Ireland, Holland, and Scandinavia. They were businesspeople, entrepreneurs, and consultants or were employed in the development industry as UN personnel or NGO workers. As such, they were quite representative of Maputo's "expat community," a group of highly "privileged migrants" (Fetcher; Walsh 2010) who live in the most expensive parts of the city and often stay there for relatively long periods of time. Approximately half of the sponsors were single, one-third were married to women back home, and a few lived with their wives in Maputo. Besides having transactional sex with local women, these privileged migrants also shared a nocturnal lifestyle of visiting bars, discos, restaurants, cafes, and cultural venues in the finest parts of the city. I met and talked to sponsors in these social hangouts where I listened to stories of sexual adventures, love, desire, and frustration. Most of them were between 40 and 65 years old, but I also encountered younger sponsors who were in Maputo as students, tourists, or NGO volunteers.

Reaching a level of rapport that allows for open and confidential talks about intimate matters can be a time-consuming challenge that requires prolonged social interaction and a high degree of personal engagement (Groes-Green, 2009b). To become respected among *curtidoras* and to grasp the deeper meaning of young peoples' everyday life, I learned Mozambican Portuguese, youth slang, and basic Changana, the mother tongue of my bilingual informants. Having built trust among these young women over time, I was allowed to follow them and their friends in the social life of neighborhoods and families and to accompany them when they ventured into the city's pulsating nightlife to meet men. In the beginning, *curtidoras* regarded me as an odd white male

who asked embarrassing questions and who, much to their dismay, refused to take part in parties and drinking games. Later, I attempted to break down structural barriers of fieldwork related to race, gender, and class by participating in a variety of social and festive activities with them (Groes-Green, 2012). As a result, I was transformed from a distant observer into what they described as a “brother” (*irmão*), an expression that refers to my seniority as well as their confidence in me as an advisor on issues relating to love, money, and relationships. My largely asexual role prevented them from seeing me as a potential boyfriend, and therefore I posed no threat to male partners and family members. I was thus able to get a firsthand experience of the dramas that played out in the broader social network of *patrocinadores*, boyfriends, and kin. Learning Changana expressions for sex, love, and ancestral spirits also served as a “can opener” for more unfiltered discussions (Groes-Green, 2011, Groes-Green; Barret; Izugbara, 2011).

Throughout different fieldwork periods, at different fields sites, and with various informants, I followed a simple guideline: I tried to identify and trace the basic patterns of exchange between main actors in Maputo’s sexual economy and to understand these patterns by using theories consistent with informants’ world views. Privileging their views and observing everyday interaction in families and nocturnal dramas yielded results that challenged some of my initial research assumptions. Conventional theories of female subordination, prostitution, and commoditization in Africa failed to fully account for my findings. Instead, I began analyzing gender, power, and sexual exchange through postcolonial feminist perspectives on kinship, female power, and political economy.

The political economy of sex and gender transformations

If we want to understand transactional sex in Maputo today, we must first look at the way changes in the political economy have profoundly transformed people’s perceptions of and practices related to sex, gender, and family life. The devastating effects of neoliberal reforms in postsocialist Mozambique have been widely

described, and there is no doubt that globalization, culturally and financially, has had a great impact on the city. The government's implementation of structural adjustment programs enforced by the IMF since the 1980s and subsequent privatizations have led to deepening urban poverty and high unemployment rates among youth in the city. The reported increase in young women who engage in transactional sex in Maputo can at least partly be attributed to these changes.

In poor suburban areas, many adult men can no longer provide for their family members, and younger men are unable to save up to pay the bride price (*lobolo*) and get married "the traditional way." This disempowerment of fathers and potential husbands affects young women in two central ways: As young men are increasingly unable to live up to the breadwinner ideal, they find it hard to convince a fiancée and her kin that they can support her in the long run (Granjo, 2005). Therefore, women sometimes leave their poorer same-age boyfriends to look for richer and more well-established men who can provide for them as lovers or as future wives. Furthermore, in the absence of a single male provider in the family, it becomes necessary for the mother, and also the daughters, to join male kin in income-generating activities outside the home, often as informal street vendors (Agadjanian, 2005). Therefore, unable to find a financially stable fiancée in the suburbs and trying to ensure an income for family members, many young women move to the city to look for jobs, education, and well-off partners. However, when they realize that steady work is almost nonexistent, that street trade is low profit and tedious, and that education does not lead to jobs, they are left with few other alternatives than to approach the people who have disposable cash in hand: white or local *patrocinadores* "hanging out" in bars, restaurants, and shopping malls in the city center. The transition from socialism to a neoliberal economy based on foreign aid and foreign investment has also paved the way for a growing Mozambican middle class and the arrival of relatively wealthy European men. Economic growth has not diminished poverty substantially but actually widened the gap between poor

and rich in Mozambique (Hanlon, 2010), and, as a result, poor Mozambican men are becoming economically disadvantaged in male competitions for the same women. Ironically, this reconfiguration of the gender, class, and race structure has opened a road out of poverty for a small percentage of poor women who choose to become *curtidoras*. They stand a better chance than male peers of achieving social mobility by utilizing their erotic resources in the thriving sexual economy. This is partly due to rich men's demand for sex with younger women and the dominant male ideal of supporting multiple girlfriends, but, as I show, it is also linked to women's application of erotic powers to extract money from men. Poor young men, on the contrary, remain stalled by unemployment and male disempowerment. The time when young men would go to work in the mines in South Africa or get a job in one of the state-owned factories has long gone, and, as I demonstrate, in these neoliberal times men instead end up being the beneficiaries of *curtidoras*' incomes.

***Curtidoras and patrocinao*res in Maputo's sexual economy**

As a consequence of these developments, young women are increasingly seen walking in the city center far away from their suburban homes and neighborhoods and out of sight of their families. This increased mobility, related to their role as street vendors and providers, is one of the basic preconditions for an expanding sexual economy, as Mark Hunter (2007) also notes in South Africa. Like female street vendors, *curtidoras* have become an ever more visible social group in Maputo's urban landscape. As a social group and category, *curtidoras* were first described by Kate Hawkins et al. (2009) as women who intentionally set out to meet men and engage in transactional sex. Besides being a colloquial expression among youth for one who "enjoys life" and exchanges sex and money, the origin of the word *curtidora* is unclear. Informants reported that the word has been used for a least a decade but that its meaning shifts between implying sex for money and "having fun."

In broader terms, the category also seems to be a product of a globalized city increasingly defined by a vibrant transnational nightlife and public consumption of food, drinks, fashion, music, entertainment, and erotica. Most *curtidoras* live in poor suburban or periurban areas; others migrate to the city from rural areas in Maputo province or from provinces in the north. At night, when the cafés, bars, and discotheques open, they take a *chapa* (local minibus) into the city and walk from place to place with fellow *curtidoras* to seek out attractive and wealthy *patrocinadores*.

Many families oppose the idea of their daughters going out to meet men at night and on the weekend. For this reason, young women often keep their amorous activities in the city during the week a secret, saying that they are sleeping over in a friend's house, working late, or staying at school until late at night. Yet, as I show, despite families' concern with their daughters' respectability, they tend to accept their excuses and disregard signs that they sleep with foreign men. This acceptance, however, often depends on *curtidoras'* willingness to bring gifts and money back home. Those who have steady *patrocinadores* usually meet to have sex with them in out-of-the-way places like hotels, men's private homes, or resorts, to avoid having neighbors and families see them.

The benefits of having a *patrocinador* include access to otherwise inaccessible luxuries such as fashionable clothes, mobile phones, and money to spend in the nightclubs. Some *curtidoras* get the opportunity to travel with partners to richer countries. People told stories of women who had moved to Europe with their partners, as lovers, wives, or sex workers and who returned with money and a good education, but there were also stories of abuse, loneliness, and shattered dreams. Many *curtidoras* negotiate with their men about receiving a *mesada* (monthly allowance), which is transferred to their bank account so they can dispose of the money as they wish. One *curtidora* demanded that her *patrocinador* pay her extra when he traveled to South Africa on business or visited his family in Europe. The *mesada* ranges from \$200 to \$3,000, depending on the number of partners and the steadiness of the

relationships. In the case of one-night stands or more casual relationships, *curtidoras* either ask for payment after each sexual encounter or convince the partner to pay for expenses such as medicine for a sick relative, school tuition fees, or a new dress. Sexual liaisons with white men are often more lucrative than those with rich Mozambican men, but some women have relationships with men in both groups. As a social group, *curtidoras* often distinguish themselves from women they call “prostitutes” (*prostitutas*), “tramps” (*vagabundas*), or “whores” (*putas*) as well as from poor female peers who do not have a *patrocinador*. Prostitutes working in brothels or on the street, they said, “cannot choose who they want to be with.” By contrast, they described themselves as “classy women” who love the excitement of nightlife and men and who see what they do as a lifestyle choice, not, they said, as a consequence of “need or greed.” At the same time, they distanced themselves from female acquaintances without a male provider – scorning them for not being smart or attractive enough to seduce a man who will support them with money. Despite their tendency to identify themselves in opposition to other social categories of women, I noticed no clear-cut boundaries between categories. In fact, some informants traversed multiple categories, shifting between being sex worker, being a *curtidora*, and staying out of the sexual economy to study or be with a boyfriend. Notably, the number of *curtidoras* going to nightclubs and bars is much higher than the number of sex workers who sell their services on the street or in strip clubs in the city’s more scruffy downtown area. What they had in common with women doing sex work or those involved in more “normal” love affairs, though, were the exchange systems within which sex and money are objects of exchange.

Everywhere in the Mozambican capital you are likely to see these young women hanging out with white expat men working in city as development workers in NGOs and the UN, as diplomats or as businessmen making the most out of the country’s booming mining and tourist sectors. The *curtidoras* call these men their sponsors because they shower them with fashionable clothes,

dinners, drinks and financial support. These relationships are often casual and temporary but sometimes they do lead to romance and marriage, and sometimes they pave the way for social mobility and migration to these men's home countries in Europe or the US. Maputo's sexual economy and the exchanges between *curtidoras* and sponsors include a range of objects, bodily gestures and practices, and interactions between bodies and materialities. The intimate scene in Maputo where foreigners and locals meet and make out, the sexual hot spots we might say, consists of restaurants, bars, night clubs, malls, streets, parks, the beach and hotels, all placed in the inner city. In these hot spots there is a circulation of eye contact, body gestures and flirtations, young women sending notes to older men and passing close by touching them with their hips and curly hair, older Italians sending them drinks and air kisses in return, dancing or chatting for hours, expats offering women a lift home in their big four-by-fours, women standing on the street corner discussing to how seduce the rich and handsome German guy by the ice cream shop.

The moral grammar of transactional sex

During my fieldworks some expats condemned affairs between European men and locals because, as they said, "the money involved clearly shows this is prostitution, and exploitation of poor women". Other expats thought it was a good way of integrating with the rest of society and many expat men adored these women for their exotic looks and beauty and wanted to help them money-wise. *Curtidoras* almost always had a different perspective. They talked about the money and gifts they received from expats as a sign of appreciation, support or love or explained men's generosity as an effect of their charm and power to seduce men (Groes-Green, 2013). *Curtidoras* were remarkably clear about what they expected from richer men. Sponsorships were justified because men (especially richer men) in their eyes are obliged to give support to those who have less. As 24-year-old Percina, who dated 51-year-old Enrique from Spain, told me: "When he has

[money], the man ought to pay the woman who doesn't have anything. He can't just keep it to himself". The idea that men with capital must support women financially was widespread both within and beyond the sexual economy. *Curtidoras* would proudly tell me about these men as their *patrocinadores* (sponsors or donors). But I realized that this logic to some degree applied to all intimate relationships and sexual-material exchanges, from loose and semi-professional exchanges in sex work to lover relationships or even marriage: Men with money were obliged to redistribute wealth to intimate partners, especially poor younger women (see also Swidler; Watkins, 2007).

Now, in order to illustrate this logic of intimate exchange among couples and the misunderstandings that occur, let's turn to Mariana, a 24-year-old woman from the suburbs. Mariana explained how she and her 56-year-old Portuguese sponsor had an argument about money. She told me how he became angry when one day she asked him to pay for a pair of expensive shoes. According to Mariana he reacted by saying, "hey, don't act like whore (*puta*) with me. Don't take advantage of me". Mariana was very offended. "Why can't he just give me this gift and be polite? After all I give him?". Thinking about who was taking advantage of whom, I asked my Swedish friend in Maputo what she thought. She said, "Obviously, the older man is exploiting her." "How so", I asked? "Well, he is basically buying her, he is forcing her to have sex, paying her to be with him". A week later, Mariana came to my table in the local restaurant where I was writing my field notes. Almost breaking into tears she told me about another man she met. "I went home with this German guy, Hans, he seemed so nice, he had a really beautiful apartment by the sea. We had sex, but then in the morning he asked me to go, just like that. I felt really bad, he didn't even give me anything". "Like what?", I asked her. "Well, he could have given me a gift, showed me that he liked me, that it was good", she said. "You mean money?", I asked. Mariana replied, "Yes, just showing that he cared. Instead I felt like he didn't appreciate me at all, I felt like I had been abused. He just used me for sex, but gave me nothing in return. He used

me and threw me away the next day, like a toy. If he was a good guy he would have helped me, right? Knowing my bad situation”

As we see, Mariana’s experience points to two opposing notions of prostitution, exploitation and appreciation. While many men saw payment of money or gifts in relation to sex as a sign of prostitution and “buying women” or “purchasing a body”, many *curtidoras* believed that not giving money to a woman with whom a man has sex is indeed as form of exploitation because he does not show visible appreciation, and does not give her what she expects and deserves. Emotional gifts, kind words, kisses and other sexual physical contact from a man does not count as much as offering material gift, which can give a *curtidora* benefits that reach beyond the sexual encounter, such as beautiful clothes, a phone, money for a birthday party, for travelling or to support her children or kin. Such colliding views of sexual-monetary exchange between expats and *curtidoras* are negotiated through what I call “intimate patronage”, a logic ensuring that couples interests converge around a common agreement. This logic is often developed gradually in a lover relationship, where both parties substitute notions of exploitation and prostitution with more positive and legitimate notions and narratives. “Intimate patronage” requires a great degree of impression management (Goffman, 1959), secrecy and role playing, especially by the *curtidoras*. The common denominator of “intimate patronage” is the idea of the rightness of “helping the needy”, in the sense that it is appropriate for persons who have the financial ability and wealth to give material support to intimates who need it and that this is morally justified. But apart from sharing this moral notion, the Mozambican women and Western men generally have quite diverse explanations of this exchange logic. While the women see receiving money from rich men as their right as *women*, as being *less well off*, and as being *intimate partners*, the men see their gifts to *curtidoras* as an expression of a moral higher ground and ethical responsibility, not first and foremost as a duty as men, rich or Western, but as *moral agents* giving aid to disenfranchised black women in a poverty-ridden Africa with whom they share intimacy.

Some women explain the rightness of receiving gifts and money as a result of women being more valuable than men, and point to the bride wealth custom as a gendered tradition. In their interpretation bride wealth from the groom's family to the bride's family is an act of compensation for the loss of a woman and her reproductive and cosmological value in households, and not as some would argue, an act of "selling" the daughter to the husband's family. They argued that women's entitlement stems from their worth as mothers giving birth to future generations and who are therefore more central to the world of ancestral spirits than were men. However, *curtidoras* often realize that white expat men do not regard prestations as a response to an entitlement, but more often as an action of altruism and benevolence. Thus, the women quickly find a way to adapt to the role of the poor, disenfranchised and abused African woman that expat men imagine they are aiding. For example women often hide the fact that they have saved up money in the bank, that they receive some support from a wealthy uncle, that they have part time jobs on the side or that they have another sponsor or sometimes several other sponsors: in general they cover the fact that they have other incomes. Also, instead of asking their sponsor for money directly, *curtidoras* often told the men stories of a harsh childhood, hunger in the family or absence of parents or kin who could support them. For example they would tell men about a sick aunt who needs medicine to survive or express frustrations about lacking opportunities to pay their school fees. This common script feeds expat men's self-image as benevolent saviors helping the sick, the poor, the uneducated, a self-image that prevailed among most expats in Maputo. And in fact, many of the expats told me that they had moved to Mozambique to work in the development sector with the intension "to help the locals". *Curtidoras* are highly aware of the necessity of presenting their neediness as part of their impression management (Goffman, 1959). However, if they are not careful *curtidoras* can sometimes be unsuccessful in their management of expat men's impressions. In some cases when the expat men found out that *curtidoras* had been exaggerating about

lacking incomes and childhood poverty, I heard them accusing the women of being manipulators, and sometimes as undeserving of support. In some cases they dropped their economic support or broke up with them. For this reason *curtidoras* are particularly tactical in their effort to hide certain parts of their lives and pasts. Thus, they avoid giving men a version of their life story that might decrease men's "generosity" and willingness to support them. Not only do they hide their alternative incomes they also hide their expenses and desire for luxury and going out a night. This is very important for example when negotiating the amount of the monthly allowances that they receive from sponsors, and which to *curtidoras* symbolizes a more serious relationship.

Many expat men experience a certain anxiety due to their role as the sole provider but they also express a deep felt obligation. Does their exclusive financial support give them the obligation to decide over their lover's use of money? Since they often regard themselves as moral advisors they frequently persuade women to use the money carefully and to take an education, invest in a shop or save up for the future, all seen as a timely advice ensuring that the female partner grows out of poverty, becomes educated and modern. This should be seen against the background of a European self-image as a person obliged to enlighten and guide poor undeveloped Africans, a self-image partly based on an inherited missionary ethos of colonial times, civilizing primitive people, seen as the white man's burden as well as more recently the ethics of development, where Europe has for centuries seen it as a moral duty to provide development aid to Africa. Just as development aid, personal aid to *curtidoras* is generally not seen as responding to a demand, or an exchange, or an entitlement. In many European men's own self-image aid to Africans is a moral imperative of Europe as the great benefactor. Many male European expats, I argue, are a personalized extension of this logic vis-à-vis *curtidoras*. As a 54-year-old Dutch man confided to me when I asked him why he kept supporting his girlfriend financially, "Leticia is my own personal development project".

Seeing transactional sex as guided by the same logic as patron-client relationships, Swidler and Watkins (2007) argue that redistribution of resources through sexual affairs is not just a matter of sexual satisfaction. It is also about keeping good connections and being respected by society. Sponsoring younger women is applauded as morally good and rewarding, whereas an older rich man who keeps money to himself, hoarding his resources, or who 'eats alone', as the local Malawi saying goes, is gossiped about and vulnerable to witchcraft (Swidler; Watkins 2007). In Maputo, similar notions prevailed, sometimes in a vulgarized fashion, as in a popular song called "*Patrão é Patrão*" (Patron is Patron) by local music star MC Roger, where young women are asked to be more grateful for what they receive from rich men. Although I mostly encountered these notions among Mozambican patrocinaiores, I began noticing how many expatriate European men also shared the idea that wealth entails obligations towards female lovers. Curtidoras also nurtured this 'helping imperative' in their white lovers by explicating how their love and sexual desire hinge upon the man's willingness to contribute financially. "If he really loves me, he will also help me", one women said. Adding to this picture, I heard many expatriate men working with development organizations, embassies, or the UN talking about themselves as benefactors coming to Mozambique to "save Africa" and "eradicate poverty". Sitting in a bar one night, I heard two British development workers convince each other that sustaining their lovers and their families was a big sacrifice. As one of them said, "Lara is my personal development project". The expat men also often expressed a deep sense of love and care for their younger Mozambican partner. As a 40-year-old German NGO worker said, "She is like a daughter to me. The one I never had. I need her and I have to take care of her. It's not her fault she grew up in a poor country. She deserves better". The men regularly convey their generosity in a language of care, love, and responsibility. These feelings of care and obligation are often mutual. As 24-year-old Tatiana said, referring to her patrocinaior, "He took me out of the

misery, and he helped my family, so you know, I owe him. I love him for all he did”.

In a sense the dynamic and logic of intimate patronage can be seen as miniature models illustrating the broader moral grammar of development aid from Western donors and its reception in the global south. They reflect the notion that aid must, at the surface, be seen as benevolent “help” and altruistic “assistance”. It cannot be regarded as self-interested investment or even worse as giving in to a demand from poorer countries or due to a notion of aid as a right. And the uses of this aid must be monitored carefully. Western donor’s opposition to unconditional development aid and direct money transfer systems illustrate this point: Poor countries cannot themselves manage the money they receive and they cannot claim economic support as a basic right from more wealthier countries (see Hanlon; Barrientos; Hulme, 2010). Instead, Western donors tend to justify aid is an obligation of the moral superior who must therefore also monitor how the aid is spend. If we stretch this analogy we will see how recipients of development aid around the world are time and again being feminized by Western donors who perpetually take on the role as their male provider and head of the global household.

Now let me move on to my argument about the logic of circulation in Maputo’s sexual economy. As I have argued (Groes-Green, 2014) “transactional sex” in Maputo must be understood as part of broader relationships of patronage – not just *curtidoras* vis-à-vis male sponsors but also vis-à-vis *curtidoras*’ families and wider social networks. The logic of sponsorship in these relationships is not inherently different from obligations to support one’s mother, a brother or a good friend or neighbor. The imperative to support the less well off and distribute one’s wealth and incomes among a broad network of intimates is very common in the poor suburbs of Maputo. However, gender difference and age disparity further reinforces the obligation to give (among older men) and the right to receive (among younger women). This logic can be agreed upon by both parties because it simultaneously grants the expat man a sense of moral superiority and altruism while still ensuring

that the *curtidora* receives the gifts and support she believes she is entitled to as woman and less well off. The obligation to redistribute accumulated wealth carries a similar logic when it comes to relatives. Hence *curtidoras* often feel a need to redistribute a considerable portion of their incomes from sponsors to their kin, especially female kin, in exchange for their support and guidance. Supporting kin, thus, is seen as unconditional and reinforced by ancestral obligations. Their contribution to households has become even more important in the wake of neoliberal reforms restructuring the economy, resulting in massive unemployment, especially among young men. Thus fathers and boyfriends are also key recipients. Female kin on the other hand play a key role in generating an income for *curtidoras* by providing them with erotic knowledge, powers and tricks in their efforts to seduce men in Maputo's nightlife (Groes-Green, 2013).

As Maurice Bloch argued with examples from Madagascar, receiving cash from an intimate in Africa is not necessarily sanctioned to the same extent as in Europe. Rather, intimacy can produce a sense of obligation to support the person economically. In "intimate patronage" this also entails degrees of indebtedness toward the giver, among *curtidoras* expressed in sexual performance but also in affection and responsibilities of care. The amount of money and gifts that women expect to receive from men is relative; it depends on the wealth, age, status and attractiveness of the man. The more you have the more you must give, but the amount of support may increase if a man is older and has more status while it may diminish if the man is good company, affectionate, a good lover or sexually attractive. Sheila, a 24-year old *curtidora*, was dating an older sponsor from Ireland when I first met her in 2009. He was buying her all sorts of gifts and transferring a monthly allowance to her bank account. At the same time she enjoyed going out to local bars dancing with her friends and occasionally looking for new sponsors. One Friday when we went out together she met a younger Italian man that she liked. He was handsome, a good dancer and charming and he made her laugh the whole night. But he was clearly no wealthy man or a

man of status. She went home with him and they had sex. The next day when we met for coffee I asked her if he paid her or gave her a gift or if they were going to see each other again. She said, "Why should he? He has no money. It was just for fun. You see, he is very attractive, everybody [the other *curtidoras*] wants a piece of him. It was nice to feel that I could have him if I wanted to." So occasionally men's obligation to give women money in compensation for sexual intimacy did not apply, especially if they had good looks, and a status based on beauty, youthfulness and fashion, or what Hakim (2011) and others would call erotic or sexual capital (see also Martin; George 2006; Groes-Green, 2009). In these cases sexual capital and the status that *curtidoras* received from being able to "catch" or "score" them was enough to make monetary aid less important.

Generally though, in this sexual economy not distributing wealth is equal to being cynical, less human, and abusive and more generally non-distribution is also perceived as a sign of lacking ability to appreciate women's beauty. White expat men (and women) often think of love and gender in opposite terms: that true love is severed from necessity and free of material interest. Love and sex do not mix with money. This is a common sense notion in large parts of Western countries (Zelizer, 2007). And so is the conviction that cash gifts to a woman are somehow equal to prostitution, the opposite of true love and marriage. It contradicts the tenets of gender equality and Western notions of romance, which creates a range of dilemmas. Some sponsors break up because they believe they are being taken advantage of or exploited by sexually powerful black beauties. Other expats believe it is these expat men who are exploiting young women, seen as victims of poverty and the sex industry. Either way, money mixed with intimacy equals exploitation and corruption of intimacy. As Bloch argued, criticizing Marx and Mauss, this discomfort among Europeans about giving money in intimate relationships stems from the fact that money is surrounded by a different morality in European individualism where money accumulation defines success in life, while in many other parts of

the world, specifically African societies, money accumulation is often subsumed under other ideals, that of reproduction of the collective unit, family, partners etc. Referring to what he called short- and long cycles of exchange, he argued that so as long as money is at some point distributed to the collective it can be sought for and accepted in intimate relations even if generated through illicit activities. As he pointed out, in many parts of Arica there is a taboo against individual accumulation, not against exchanging money (or other gifts) within intimate circuits. Among *curtidoras*, neither money nor sex constitutes a problem in itself. The problem is the relationship between short- and long term cycles of exchange, i.e. between personal accumulation and consumption and processes of redistribution to others: For *curtidoras* this is expressed in the way they navigate between earning money in the sexual economy and giving back to kin and the broader collective. As long as their activity in the short term cycle of exchange, with expats and in the sexual economy contribute to the reproduction of life and family and living up to ancestral obligations in the long term cycle of exchange “sponsorship” and sexual affairs with white men are often accepted. But, as Bloch, argues, the two cycles must be kept separate to avoid symbolic pollution, so *curtidoras* try to avoid showing up at home in expressive dresses or with a new iPhone in their hands. They dress more modestly and instead of handing over cash to kin in the neighborhood they prefer sending it to their bank account so that the aid remains invisible as it may also provoke envy and conflict. If *curtidoras* “forget” to send money to kin or show off their wealth in public without distributing it a range of consequences may follow: Sometimes a brother or sister is sent to tell her “not to forget her family and obligations” or to bring her back to the neighborhood for a talk with the elders. If the daughter continues being disobedient and only spending her income on clothes or goods for herself the family may choose physical punishment or other sanctions. Nadia, a 26-year-old woman who lived with her sponsor and planned to travel with him to Germany, experienced such sanctions from her kin. She had not helped them financially in the six months since she met her

new lover. Also, she insisted that they should not interfere in her plans to travel to Germany and start a new life. One day her father, aunt and brother drove to her lover's house, walked into the living room and when she refused to leave the house they forced her out and put her into the car. She was then isolated in the aunts house for a couple of weeks while they convinced her about her obligations and told her she would be excluded from the family permanently if she did not help her kin and if she "forgot her origins and ancestors". The young women also fear the spiritual consequences of not giving or not being able to give gifts or cash to their kin. In some cases where they had not supported kin for a while, they told me how they sensed that the ancestors were beginning to castigate them and send them "bad luck" (*azar*). An illness, an unsuccessful affair, or a just having a bad day can be interpreted as a result of ancestral forces reacting to their lack of kin support.

The circulations of gifts, material, sexual and emotional, in the sexual economy are build primarily around female structures and transmissions; when it comes to seducing expat men and getting control over the exchange situation of intimate patronage there is a highly significant inter-generational exchange of *knowledge*, erotic and social, *gifts*, beauty objects and magic herbs, and ritual or *spiritual support* through sessions of support or mutual advise. The female elders provide knowledge, gifts and spiritual support and in return the female elders receive remittances and land from the *curtidora* daughters in order to support the reproduction of the lineage. As this illustrate, and what Oyewumi and Amadiume have argued, there is a need for a matri-focal analysis of gender in these sexual economies. Likewise, emerging sexual economies across Africa are not merely signs of expanding capitalism, a commoditization of intimacy or patriarchal forces. They might also be structural reactions to globalization, immigration of wealthy white expats, growing social inequalities, transforming gender structures and reinforcing female-centered exchange cycles.

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