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*Landscapes of Belonging: Female Ex-Combatants Remembering the Liberation Struggle in Urban Maputo**

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Mozambique's liberation struggle was fought mostly on the terrain of the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete. Yet, though the rural landscapes of northern Mozambique are intrinsically tied to the country's national history, the public commemoration of the struggle in the present-day context is a state-led narrative more closely linked to the urban experience of the predominantly male political elite. In this article, I explore how female veterans living in the national capital, Maputo, in southern Mozambique, conceptualise national space and belonging, and construct its gendered meanings. Though significant numbers of girls and women were mobilised by the FRELIMO guerrilla army to fight in the struggle, to date little research exists on women's accounts of their experience. This article is based on life-history interviews conducted in Maputo with female war veterans in 2009 and 2011. On the one hand, I show how the abstract space of the nation is made sense of and personalised through the women's experience of the liberation struggle, and further juxtaposed with their current experience of the cityscape. On the other hand, I discuss how the capital city as the spatio-temporal location of the 'history-telling event' continues to shape the memory of the liberation struggle, contributing to the enactment of a particular gendered spatiality of belonging.

Introduction

We knew that it was Mozambique. But we only knew Mozambique as the place where I am. For instance, we heard that here in Maputo, for instance, in colonial times, it was said that it was Lourenço Marques, here. It was called Lourenço Marques. But we are there. I am from there, from the north, there by the Rovuma [river], there. When they spoke about Lourenço Marques it was a thing of another world. I wasn't thinking that one day I could be there. And not only [that]. Because of the system of domination, for instance, there were some prisoners – some prisoners came from there. So, they came here to Lourenço Marques to the prison of Machava. So it was a thing that no one imagined, and [we] saw that it was very far away in another world. No one knew that that Mozambique was the same space I was occupying.¹

*An earlier version of this paper was part of the Space and Place Conference proceedings e-Book: D. Kılıçkiran, C. Alegria and C. Haddrell (eds), *Space and Place: Exploring Critical Issues* (Oxford, Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2013). My thanks to Isabel Maria Casimiro, Axel Fleisch, Tuija Saesma and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments. I sincerely thank the Centre of African Studies, Eduardo Mondlane University, for their support during my stay in Mozambique. Many thanks also to the Nordic Africa Institute and the Finnish Cultural Foundation for their financial support for this research.

1 Author interview: Maria Ema Anchunuala Cassimo, 8 July 2009, Maputo. Ema, as she is called, is a former mission student from Cabo Delgado. She received military training in Nachingwea in 1970. She also trained as a nurse and worked as a military nurse in Tanzania at FRELIMO's educational camp until the end of the war. Apart from one mission to Niassa, she never worked in the war zones. After the war she received a scholarship to do a laboratory course in Bulgaria, but she stayed only six months. In 1975 she was sent to Maputo, where she continued her studies in nursing. She worked in the health sector for many years until she was elected as a Frelimo party MP in 2004. She was later re-elected, and at the time of the interview she was still working as an MP. She is a widow with two adult children. All interviews were conducted in Portuguese and translated into English by the author. The interviewees requested that their real names be used.

Mozambique's liberation struggle, which extended over 10 years from 1964 to 1974, was fought mostly on the terrain of the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete. Throughout these years, thousands of young people living in rural areas, including hundreds of girls and young women, were mobilised by the guerrilla army, FRELIMO,² to participate in the military campaign and fight for national liberation. The rural landscapes of northern Mozambique are thus intrinsically tied to Mozambique's national history. And yet, in the present-day context, the public commemoration of the struggle is subjugated by a state-led narrative more closely linked to the urban experience of the predominantly male political elite. This article shifts the attention to an aspect of the liberation struggle so far unrecognised, and focuses on the experiences of women with the aim of discussing the ways in which national belonging is conceptualised in the personal narratives of female war veterans currently living in the capital, Maputo, in southern Mozambique.³

Drawing on the life-history narratives of 30 DFs – members of FRELIMO's Female Detachment – whom I interviewed in the capital city and the surrounding area in 2009 and 2011,⁴ I suggest, on the one hand, that the changed engagement of women with the physical space (of Mozambique) through the liberation struggle, coupled with FRELIMO's political narrative, played a significant role in the shaping of new landscapes of home-place, and that the abstract concept of the nation became a meaningful landscape of belonging. On the other hand, I discuss how the national capital as the spatio-temporal location of telling – the location of the women's everyday experience of the cityscape – continues to determine how national space is conceptualised and how its meaning is negotiated in relation to other landscapes of belonging.

My key concept in this article is landscape, which I take to signify a way of relating, both materially and imaginatively, to the physical and social world that we inhabit and experience.⁵ Despite its historical roots, landscape, as I apply the term in this article, is not conceived in a visual sense, that is, as a vista that can be observed from the outside. Rather, I aim to emphasise a conception of landscape that is experienced through embodiment; as Tim Ingold argues, 'through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of

2 In this article I make a distinction between 'FRELIMO', the liberation front, and 'Frelimo', the political party.

3 Previous research on women's participation in Mozambique's liberation struggle has mostly focused on women's various roles in the war campaign. See I. Casimiro, 'Transformação nas Relações Homem/Mulher em Moçambique 1960–1974' (Tese de Licenciatura em História, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 1986); A. Isaacman and B. Isaacman, 'The Role of Women in the Liberation of Mozambique', *Ufahamu: Journal of the African Activist Association*, 13, 2 (1984), pp. 128–85; K. Sheldon, *Pounders of Grain: A History of Women, Work, and Politics in Mozambique* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2002). An exception is Harry G. West, who discusses the role of FRELIMO revolutionary ideology in framing the violent war experiences of female ex-combatants in Cabo Delgado. See H.G. West, 'Girls with Guns: Narrating the Experience of War of Frelimo's "Female Detachment"', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73, 4 (October 2000), pp. 180–94.

4 According to the Maputo office of the Association of Former Combatants of the Liberation Struggle (ACLLN), only about 100 DFs live in the Maputo area. As the DFs constitute a small and relatively close-knit community in Maputo, the interviewees were identified through snowball sampling. All of them had originally moved to the capital area from other regions in Mozambique: the majority had come from the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado, Tete, and Niassa, but Zambézia, Manica, and Sofala were also represented by one person each. The interviews were semi-structured and conversational in nature; the main topics and key questions centred on the women's involvement in the armed struggle but also covered their childhood before the war and life after independence. Opening questions were descriptive and open-ended, and the women were given space to lead the 'conversations', which allowed them to expand more on issues they deemed important. Interviews lasted between an hour and a half and three hours, and most women were interviewed two or three times. The interviews took place at the women's homes, yards, work places or, on some occasions, the author's apartment.

5 T. Ingold, 'The Temporality of Landscape', *World Archaeology*, 25, 2 (October 1993), pp. 152–74; B. Bender, 'Introduction: Landscape – Meaning and Action', in B. Bender (ed.), *Landscapes: Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford, Berg, 1993), pp. 1–17; D.E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, second edition (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1998 [1984]; K.R. Olwig, 'Performing on the Landscape Versus Doing Landscape: Perambulatory Practice, Sight and the Sense of Belonging', in T. Ingold and J.L. Vergunst (eds), *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot* (Burlington, Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 81–91.

it'.⁶ The individual, furthermore, is placed within the 'simultaneous production' of various landscapes.⁷ In this body of literature, landscape is conceptualised conjointly in both spatial and temporal terms: Doreen Massey, for instance, defines landscape as 'spatio-temporal events',⁸ while Terence Ranger draws attention to how landscape is 'constituted by history and struggle'.⁹ Landscapes (in the plural) are thus in the process of constant negotiation, as Barbara Bender maintains: 'each individual holds many landscapes in tension'.¹⁰

The gender of history-telling and of history is a persistent theme throughout the article. Jan Bender Shetler, studying women's historical knowledge in the Serengeti District in Tanzania, argues that because of the different gendered spaces that men and women inhabit in their everyday social lives, they control and transmit different forms of historical knowledge.¹¹ Though I find her research intriguing, my aim in this article is not to compare male and female narratives, but to explore how gender is embedded and negotiated in the female ex-combatant narratives.¹² I am also interested in the narratives of female fighters, as they are generally not the 'already recognised protagonists in the public sphere'.¹³ War narratives are often male-narrated histories. Because of their non-central role as a group in the main activities of war, as Jean Bethke Elshtain maintains, women have not been the 'great war-story tellers'.¹⁴ Controversially, however, wars are often remembered as the defining moments of history; as Portelli points out, in our 'gender-determined' conceptions of history, 'having been in war is the most immediately tangible claim for having been in history'.¹⁵ This points to the fact that power relations are deeply embedded in history-telling, the important question involving the authorisation of speech, of who is heard when speaking.¹⁶ Tanya Lyons argues that women's participation in the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe did not pave the way for their voices and stories to be heard at independence; rather, derogatory representations of them filled the public domain.¹⁷ Also, in Mozambique, women

6 T. Ingold, 'The Temporality of Landscape', p. 154; See also D.W. Cohen and E.S.A. Odhiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (London, James Currey, 1989); T. Ranger, 'Making Zimbabwean Landscapes: Painters, Projectors and Priests', *Paideuma*, 43 (1997), pp. 59–74; S. Feld and K.H. Basso (eds), *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, School of American Research Press, 1996).

7 See Cohen and Odhiambo, *Siaya*.

8 See D. Massey, 'Landscape as Provocation: Reflections on Moving Mountains', *Journal of Material Culture*, 11, 1/2 (2006), pp. 33–48; D. Massey, *For Space* (London, SAGE, 2005).

9 T. Ranger, 'African Views of Land: A Research Agenda', *Transformation*, 44 (2000), p. 60.

10 B. Bender, 'Introduction: Landscape – Meaning and Action', p. 2. See also M.C. Rodman, 'Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality', *American Anthropologist*, 94, 3 (September 1992), pp. 640–56. Rodman refers to the 'overlapping narratives of place'.

11 J.B. Shetler, 'The Gendered Spaces of Historical Knowledge: Women's Knowledge and Extraordinary Women in the Serengeti District, Tanzania', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36, 2 (2003), pp. 283–307. See also H. Gengenbach, 'Naming the Past in a "Scattered" Land', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 33, 3 (2000), pp. 523–42. On memory and gender difference, see S. Leydesdorff, L. Passerini and Paul Thompson (eds), *Gender and Memory* (New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 2005[1996]).

12 Gender is defined as a performative status – that is, no 'woman' or 'man' exists prior to the acts which constitute the culturally intelligible men and women. See J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, Routledge, 1999 [1990]); J. Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York, Routledge, 1993).

13 A. Portelli, 'Oral History as Genre', in *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1997), p. 6. Portelli argues that oral history is 'more intrinsically itself' when it 'listens' to the previously unheard voices.

14 J. Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York, Basic Books, 1987).

15 Portelli, 'Oral History as Genre', pp. 7–8.

16 G.C. Spivak, 'Subaltern Talk: Interview with the Editors', in D. Landry and G. MacLean (eds), *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (New York, Routledge, 1996), pp. 287–308.

17 T. Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2005), p. 215. In the last decade there has been some increase in research on women fighters' experiences of their participation in liberation movements in southern Africa, though much of the more recent research is yet to be published. In comparison to the Portuguese-speaking countries – where research has been hampered by civil wars – research on the Zimbabwean liberation struggle has had a head start, and some important research has focused on women fighters' experiences of the war. See also J.N. Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse? Women and Zanla in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2000).

have had to fight against persistent images of them as ‘prostitutes’ or ‘loose women’, for having children with different men. Yet, though the DFs’ personal experiences of the war have largely been silenced in the state-led commemoration of the struggle, their participation, I suggest, nevertheless gave them some authority in the public sphere to narrate ‘women’s history’ of the liberation struggle.¹⁸

This article is divided into five sections. The first introduces the DFs’ publicly enacted collective narrative of their participation in the struggle and compares it with the more private narratives of personal struggles told alongside the ‘heroic herstory’. The second presents what I call the ‘spatio-temporal-social framework’ of history-telling. The third, drawing on Alessandro Portelli’s three-layered history-telling analytical model, explores – through one individual ex-combatant’s interviews – the narrative processes involved in the negotiation of the narrative of the liberation struggle in the capital, Maputo. The fourth section situates the individual ex-combatant narrative within the broader dynamics of the collective remembering of the liberation struggle that takes place in Maputo. Finally, the last section draws together these discussions to interpret the gendered idea of Mozambique that emerges in the narratives, as ‘national space’ is juxtaposed with the personal spaces of the DFs’ life trajectories.

FRELIMO’s Female Detachment

Girls and young women were actively mobilised at the grassroots level to partake in the war effort from the first years of the war. Yet, officially, the role of women in the independence struggle remained largely undefined until 1966. Only when a radical faction – who defined the enemy through the analysis of colonialism and economic imperialism – gained more power in FRELIMO did the gender discourse of ‘women’s emancipation’ become more pronounced, and more effort was focused on formally incorporating women into the armed struggle.¹⁹ FRELIMO’s Female Detachment was officially created in 1966, and in February 1967 the first platoon of 25 girls started their political–military training at FRELIMO’s training camp in Nachingwea, southern Tanzania.²⁰

“No, Comrade President, We Want to Fight, Not Study”

In their narratives, the women that I interviewed assert a more active role for the female guerrillas than is apparent in the official male-narrated story. The women give little credit to the male leaders for the formal incorporation of women into the military, arguing instead that female militancy was not designated to them by men but required active agency on women’s part.²¹ In their narratives they describe how female guerrillas pressed for military training and

18 In Mozambique, a book recording the stories of some female ex-fighters and describing the role of FRELIMO’s Female Detachment during the war was published in 2012. The project was headed by Paulina Mateus N’kunda, former Secretary-General of the Organização da Mulher Moçambicana (OMM), Frelimo’s women’s organisation, and a former guerrilla fighter herself, and co-ordinated by Benigna Zimba. See OMM, *A Mulher Moçambicana na Luta de Libertação Nacional: Memórias do Destacamento Feminino* (Maputo, Centro de Pesquisa da História da Luta de Libertação Nacional [CPHLLN], 2012). In the publication, DF leaders were allocated space to tell their stories, but most of the lower-ranking DFs have only been listed by name, and many names have been ‘forgotten’ from the list.

19 See Isaacman and Isaacman, ‘The Role of Women’; A. Isaacman and B. Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900–1982* (Boulder, Westview, 1983); Sheldon, *Pounders of Grain*.

20 Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique (hereafter AHM), ‘Primeiro Grupo Feminino Vindo de (Cabo Delgado)’, 2 February 1967.

21 Compare with Anne McClintock’s analysis of women’s gendered agency in Frantz Fanon’s ‘Algeria Unveiled’. See A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, Routledge, 1995), pp. 365–9.

official permission to take part in offensive attacks.²² They argue that the girls who formed the first Female Detachment platoon were already involved in military activities at the guerrilla bases inside Mozambique before receiving military training. As the secretary of the first group, Paulina Mateus N'kunda, recalls, the FRELIMO leadership, based primarily in Tanzania, was unaware of the extent of women's participation.

When the Secretary of Defence arrived, he blew the whistle. We went to stand in formation. Then we received the Secretary of Defence, he spoke with us, met. After that he asked the [head of the] provincial organ: 'Those women that I see there, one company, who are they?' 'They are soldiers, didn't you see, with arms and everything!' 'What is it they do?' 'They are doing the same work that men do: they go on watch, they go on patrols, they go . . .'. Only we didn't go to combat. But rounds, watches, patrols – we were together.²³

Over the years, the 'women's story' of their engagement in the struggle has transformed into a glorified tale of female defiance and persistence,²⁴ serving to make the point that women were not puppets of male history but stood together with male soldiers, actively engaged in the making of history. This is a narrative which, though publicly constructed foremost by female ex-militant leaders, is referred to in varying forms in many of the narratives I examined. Its strength is not necessarily in its historical accuracy, and some experiences have no doubt been exaggerated and others forgotten. But it plays a strategic role in reworking popular conceptions of the DFs. In telling the story, three symbolic acts are often repeated: first, women's agency in demanding from the FRELIMO leadership that women receive military training; second, women's resistance when the Tanzanians insisted that instead of military training they be sent to Tanzanian factories to work and learn new skills and thus assist their country at independence; third, women demonstrating – by successfully completing the training program – to the doubting and even hostile male recruits and to the male leadership in Nachingwea that they were qualified for the job. Marina Pachinuapa, the political commissar of the first group, even maintains that the girls had to argue with the President of FRELIMO, Eduardo Mondlane himself, that they be taken seriously as soldiers.

When we finished our training in Nachingwea, President Eduardo Mondlane came. He didn't know what the level of these girls was. He had only heard 'Hey, a Female Detachment group from Cabo Delgado came, they are trained'. But the day that he arrived in the training camp of Nachingwea . . . when he met with us, he looked at us and said, 'But, oh, Samora, these here are children, they have to go to the centre to study'. We said: 'No way! We don't want to study'. [. . .] Eduardo Mondlane, when he said, 'No, you have to go to the educational centre to study, you are young', we said: 'No way, we are not going to the educational centre. We will return to Mozambique'.²⁵

22 See also Isaacman and Isaacman, 'The Role of Women'; I. Casimiro, *Paz na Terra, Guerra em Casa': Feminismo e Organizações de Mulheres em Moçambique* (Maputo, Promédia, 2004).

23 Author interview: Paulina Mateus N'kunda, 16 June 2009, Maputo. Paulina served as Secretary-General of the OMM from 1996 to 2011. She died in October 2013.

24 As Mozambique has changed through the years – institutionally passing from a one-party Marxist–Leninist regime to a multi-party 'liberal' democracy – so have the women's memories. During socialist times, the narrative of the liberation struggle, institutionally tightly regulated, was not the women's story to tell. Mozambican scholar Isabel Casimiro recalls how in the 1980s, when she was attempting to interview female ex-fighters, she was consistently met with a refusal to speak; both state censorship and associated self-censorship made certain memories impossible. See also Victor Igreja, 'Frelimo's Political Ruling through Violence and Memory in Postcolonial Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36, 4 (December 2010), pp. 781–99. Igreja explores how, in the first years of independence, the threat of violence was intimately linked to the Frelimo-state's attempt to control the remembering of Mozambique's recent past.

25 Author interview: Marina Pachinuapa, 25 July 2009, Maputo. She was working in the Cabinet of the First Lady of Mozambique at the time of the interview. Marina is one of a handful of female war veterans who hold the rank of colonel in the military reserve force.

Something stressed in most of the narratives is that it was through the very physical experience of doing ‘men’s work’, which was also linked to a new kind of gendered social interaction, that women understood that they were ‘equal with men’, and this gave them another kind of self-assurance. During the struggle, DFs worked as medics, nurses, teachers, political commissars, military instructors, and regular soldiers.²⁶ Moreover, their tasks also involved the political mobilisation of the population and the transportation of war material. Some DFs worked in the war zones but others worked at the FRELIMO bases in Tanzania.²⁷ And even though most of the women admitted that they had not partaken in combat,²⁸ they emphasised that they knew how to use their arms just the same as men, so having received the formal training of a soldier was a very important indicator of equality.

Narratives of Personal Struggles

On an individual level, the women’s narratives of the liberation struggle are more conflicted, pointing to some of the personal struggles that they underwent. For most of the women, their integration into FRELIMO’s military structure had not been, in fact, a matter of ‘female agency’, but a question of obligation and forced recruitment.²⁹ Most of the FRELIMO female recruits were young girls in their early teens. It was FRELIMO’s preferred strategy to recruit young girls who, although they had already undergone initiation, still didn’t have motherhood responsibilities.³⁰ Also, these girls were thought to be able to forget more easily about their past life experiences and adapt to the military structure and way of life. Only some of the older girls and young women spoke of joining voluntarily. But, as one DF called Maria insisted, ‘voluntary, obligatory . . . when we arrived there at the base, it was all the same’.³¹ This, she explains, was because of the political education they received on a daily basis. For many girls it was especially at the political–military training camp of Nachingwea that they were made politically conscious of the objective of the struggle and women’s role in it. Yet, despite the political education, negotiating one’s gendered space in the male-defined army structure was a continual personal struggle. As Geraldina reflects on in her narrative:

It wasn’t easy, Jonna, for me, to work with men because I . . . in my childhood, as I told you, there was separation of men and women. I came from the mission, isn’t it? So when we went there, to

26 The DFs’ tasks listed in the communiqué of the First Conference of the Mozambican Woman appears exhaustive; it mentions everything from fighting, mobilising, organising and defending the population, transporting material, security work, ensuring production, recruiting, taking care of nurseries to clandestine work, with an ‘etc.’ at the end. See ‘First Conference of Mozambican Women’, *Mozambique Revolution*, 54 (1973), pp. 22–4.

27 In the first years of the war, separate bases were constructed for women near men’s bases, but later these were either abandoned or destroyed. The male leadership came to the conclusion that women were too vulnerable on their own; DFs could be easily captured by the enemy.

28 Though there were women involved in the planning and execution of offensive attacks in the advanced sector, women’s military tasks in the interior engaged them primarily in the defence of the population in the first sector. See also Isaacman and Isaacman, ‘The Role of Women’; S. Urdang, *And Still They Dance: Women, War and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique* (London, Earthscan, 1989). In FRELIMO rhetoric, fighting was defined not only as participating in combat: teachers fought by teaching, nurses by taking care of the wounded soldiers, and FRELIMO students by studying.

29 One needs to bear in mind that FRELIMO exercised ultimate authority in the ‘liberated zones’, and the population, including the girls’ families, were generally fearful of disobeying FRELIMO and of being labelled collaborators with the colonial forces.

30 See also West, ‘Girls with Guns’, p. 186.

31 Author interview: Maria Manuel Nkavadeka, 30 July 2009, Maputo. Maria studied at a Catholic mission in Cabo Delgado, and was recruited by FRELIMO ‘because the army needed people who could read and write’. Before her formal military training, she worked as a first aider at a FRELIMO base in Cabo Delgado. She received her political–military training in 1971, after which she also worked as a military instructor in Nachingwea. She moved to Maputo with her husband in 1975. At the time of the interview, she was officially employed at the air force command post, but spoke of spending most of her time at her garden plot.

go live together with the men ... it wasn't easy. But, OK, it was an internal fight for me to leave the habits that ... those that I just talked about, to let go of my conception, I mean, that I can't be by man's side, I have to always be next to the woman. So, I had to fight internally to be able to integrate into that ambient: to live all day with men, to work together for the same aim! It wasn't easy. But, OK, I managed to stay side-by-side to men in order to be able to work. Because there it was necessary for us to have a consciousness, and for there to be this politics, we can say. They spoke about woman, colonisation of woman, emancipation of woman. So. Since when? How?³²

The DFs experienced many difficulties negotiating their different roles in the army, and the popular image of a female guerrilla fighter with a rifle slung over one shoulder and a child on her back is completely misleading.³³ Motherhood did not easily fit with one's responsibilities as a soldier. The guns of DFs who were pregnant were even confiscated, and returned to them only once they had left their child either at the FRELIMO crèche or with their own family. Though prohibited from engaging in sexual relations and getting pregnant, the reality was that, as the war dragged on, many DFs entered into relationships with male comrades at the bases, and had children. Still, the women's narratives also point to their struggles to maintain feminised respectability amidst the constant sexual advances of male combatants. Maria de Fátima, for instance, spoke of how she, as a new recruit, was advised by an older DF of her responsibilities to comport herself respectably as a woman; she was told that, although 'men always try', she was not supposed to 'fool around, have an affair with this, have an affair with that'.³⁴ However, as they were usually lowest in military rank, in a strictly hierarchical institution, some DFs were pressured into engaging in sexual relations with their superiors. Even so, one cannot over-generalise with regard to this matter: the DFs played multiple and overlapping roles within the guerrilla army; some of these roles were experienced as empowering, while other roles had disempowering effects.³⁵ In the remainder of the article, I will explore how the meaning of these personal experiences, as well as the history of the liberation struggle, continue to be negotiated 35 years after the end of the war.

The Spatio-Temporal-Social Framework of History-Telling

The narrative of the armed struggle is, I argue, a spatialised story, which is to say its meaning is differently negotiated in and through the various Mozambican landscapes. Here the underlying assumption is, as Elizabeth Grosz maintains, that the basis of all conceptions of

32 Author interview: Geraldina Valério Mwiti, 23 June 2009, Maputo. Before the war Geraldina had been teaching at a mission in Cabo Delgado. At the beginning of the war, she fled with her family to Tanzania, where she was recruited by FRELIMO in 1968. She was appointed to a teaching job at FRELIMO's educational centre in Tunduru, working there until she was sent for military training in Nachingwea in 1970. Apart from one mission to Cabo Delgado, Geraldina worked at the Nachingwea camp until the end of the war. During this time, she was promoted to head the Female Detachment in Nachingwea. After Independence in 1975, she was transferred to Maputo with her husband. She worked at the recruitment centre of the Ministry of Defence, and now works for ACLLN.

33 Campbell argues that FRELIMO was 'most effective' in its use of this image. H. Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2003), p. 281. See also C. Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London, Pandora Press, 1988 [1983]), p. 166.

34 Author interview: Maria de Fátima Muanza Pelembe, 29 June 2009, Maputo. Maria de Fátima was born in Tete and has a mission school background. She served as a military instructor and military nurse during the liberation struggle. In 2013 she was elected Secretary-General of OMM.

35 See also D.E. Mazurana, S.A. McKay, K.C. Carlson and J.C. Kasper, 'Girls in Fighting Forces and Groups: Their Recruitment, Participation, Demobilization, and Reintegration', *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 8, 2 (June 2002), pp. 97–123.

time and space is the corporeal subject.³⁶ The liberation struggle is thus mediated through the 'spatio-temporal location' of the remembering subject, with the real, lived, and gendered spaces of the city contributing to the content and form of the women's historical memory.

History-telling is, furthermore, not only a spatio-temporal event but also a socially framed practice. Remembering as the sharing of past experiences, as Maurice Halbwachs points out, is a collective group affair.³⁷ Still, I find it problematic that Halbwachs emphasises collective memories over individual memory; he questions whether individual memories can even exist outside their group context.³⁸ In contrast with Halbwachs, Alessandro Portelli – though agreeing with him about the social constructedness of memory – emphasises that it is the individual experiences and memories that provide history with content and meaning. Instead of a 'common memory', Portelli convincingly argues for the recognition of the 'fragmented plurality of different memories'.³⁹ As Lyons points out, referring to her research on the experiences of female guerrilla fighters in the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, 'women's history of the liberation war' is 'not just one story' but each individual has her personal story to tell.⁴⁰ However, Portelli goes further, to argue that dividedness is also constituent in individual memories; he reasons that the autobiographical narrative is never in actuality a purely first-person narrative but is always already embedded with the voices of others.⁴¹ Taking this dividedness of the autobiographical narrative as the starting point for my analysis, in the third section of this paper I shift my focus from the 'DFs' collective narrative' and the disparate individual narratives to explore the personal narrative of one DF. This will allow me, on a micro-level, to explore how one narrator negotiates between her personal memories and the institutional and collective memories of the liberation struggle. Though no broad generalisations can be made based on one narrative, I suggest that this analysis can contribute an important insight into the processes by which individual DFs engage in ascribing meaning to their personal experiences of the struggle today. I will also seek to demonstrate how this negotiation of memory is intimately linked to the negotiation of space.

Alessandro Portelli's model of 'three-layered history-telling' is a useful analytical tool to examine how memory and space are related in the narration of history. According to this model, three narrative modes – the institutional, the communal and the personal – can be distinguished in all history-telling events and, he argues, each narrative level is related to distinct social and spatial referents and to a specific point of view.⁴² Following Portelli's model, in the following section I focus on Mónica's narrative. Through four narrative events, I illustrate the multi-levelled constitutive relation between memory and space, and the social framing of this enactment. In the first event, I explore how the personal spatial referents constitute sites of memory; in the second, how the meaning of the institutional narrative, that

36 E. Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (London, Routledge, 1995). See also D. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14, 3 (1988), pp. 575–99; E.S. Casey, 'Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91, 4 (2001), pp. 683–93.

37 M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and V.Y. Ditter (New York, Harper & Row, 1980).

38 *Ibid.* Also M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, translated, edited and with an introduction by L.A. Coser, (London, University of Chicago Press, 1992).

39 A. Portelli, 'The Massacre at Civitella Val di Chiana (Tuscany, June 29, 1944): Myth and Politics, Mourning and Common Sense', in *Battle of Valle Giulia*, p. 158.

40 Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls*, p. 14.

41 Portelli, 'The Massacre at Civitella'; See also A.L. Smith, 'Heteroglossia, "Common Sense," and Social Memory', *American Ethnologist*, 31, 2 (May 2004), pp. 251–69. Smith argues that the 'internally contradictory' narratives of former non-French European settlers of Algeria should be conceived of as examples of heteroglossia in the Bakhtinian sense.

42 See especially A. Portelli, 'There's Gonna Always Be a Line: History-Telling as a Multivocal Act', in *Battle of Valle Giulia*, pp. 24–39; 'Form and Meaning of Historical Representation: The Battle of Evarts and the Battle of Crummies (Kentucky: 1931, 1941)', in *Battle of Valle Giulia*, pp. 91–113.

is, the official Frelimo state narrative,⁴³ is negotiated in relation to one's personal history; in the third, how spatial belonging is constructed; in the fourth, how one's place in history is negotiated through the collective narrative of women's participation in the liberation struggle.

Mónica's Narratives

Mónica is a 57-year-old retired nurse whom I had the privilege to meet, interview and converse with on various occasions in 2009 and 2011. She, like many other DFs from Mozambique's northern provinces, has a mission-school background. After receiving her military training in Nachingwea in 1967, she also trained as a nurse and, from 1968 until the end of the war, she served as a military nurse at FRELIMO's bush hospitals in the liberated and semi-liberated areas in northern Mozambique. After independence, she was transferred to Maputo, where she has now lived for over thirty years.

My motivation for focusing on Mónica's narratives is that, in comparison to the other DFs whom I interviewed in Maputo, Mónica is one with extensive experience of working in the front lines of the war. Moreover, she is not a public figure: she has never been a Frelimo MP, nor has she held any leadership positions within OMM or other political or governmental organisations. Also, she is not one of the more affluent DFs, but finds herself in an economically marginalised position today. Finally, her narrative represents one of the slightly more critical reflections on the Frelimo nationalist discourse, a perspective hard to come by in Maputo during the research. The following are four narrative events which illustrate how Mónica continues to remember and make sense of her experience of the liberation struggle and relate it to her current experience of life in the capital.

First Narrative Event: Personal Spaces

Us here, where are we? I am here in this yard. There are times that these neighbours talk: 'Oh, that is a former combatant, but she fought to suffer. She fought to suffer and is suffering until today'. Do you understand? But what will you answer? You don't have words to respond. I limit myself to saying like this: 'Hey, it's okay, I fought to suffer, but at least you are independent!' Yes [laughs]. That's it. We are here; there is no [other] way ... that's it.⁴⁴

In Mónica's narrative 'here' is the pervasive spatial referent, and although I, as the interviewer, try to keep her in the past, her story keeps returning to the present moment and her life in the cityscape. She often talks about knitting, which she had learnt as a young girl studying at the mission school on the Mueda plateau in Cabo Delgado, and which today is an important source of income on top of the state pension she receives as a war veteran.

Transferred to Maputo in 1976 at her husband's request, she presently resides on the outskirts of Maputo's formal 'cement city' in a tiny apartment in what looks like a run-down storage building, together with three of her six children and two grandchildren. She divorced her ex-combatant husband in 1989, and, as her family's sole provider, she often laments the fact that she is 'alone' without the support of her extended family. While her neighbours are

43 In the period of multi-party democracy since 1994, after the end of the civil war, the Frelimo party managed to strengthen its hold on the state apparatus in both political and economic terms to the degree that it became once again possible to speak of a Frelimo state. For instance, in the last presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009, Frelimo further strengthened its position by claiming 191 of the 250 seats in the national assembly. Moreover, Frelimo continues to dominate public discourse on the politics of citizenship, its narrative of national liberation legitimating its claim to state power.

44 Author interview: Mónica Chilavi, 24 June 2009, Maputo.

closely connected to her everyday living space through the common yard that they share, her relationship with them remains ambivalent. The yard is a space of social contention: surrounded by her neighbours – the non-ex-combatant city dwellers ('they') – it is the place where Mónica is pushed to negotiate and make sense of her personal space in the cityscape.

Second Narrative Event: Memories of War

The problem ... there isn't consideration. To work ... We worked ... a lot! What is it that we did? We really did something, but there isn't consideration. [Jonna: Could you explain a bit?] Fine, after the war ... there isn't a person that fought and can live in a house like this. It is a bit embarrassing! [laughs] Fine, this is my personal idea. It is a bit embarrassing for a person to live in these conditions, and to say I fought from 1964 to 1974. There is no logic! But there is no other way, I am living with my children, with my grandchildren, I don't know what, I am living. Even so I am living. When there are these things, aah, today is the commemorative day, it is the day, I don't know what, I go. I go. I can't abandon my party. Because my party, our party, our government – is ours. We can't leave it in whatever way. No. Until the last drop. [laughs] Until the last drop of blood, we won't leave. We are, I am living well, I am living badly, but I can't leave my party. That's it.⁴⁵

Here the narrative is driven in the personal narrative mode, centred on the personal space of Mónica's house and the social referents of her family, that is, her children and grandchildren. Yet, due to her experience in the liberation struggle, this space becomes intimately linked to the institutional spatial and social referents of the party and the state. The liberation struggle belongs not only to institutional memory, but also forms part of her personal history. War, Portelli argues, often appears in narratives as the 'most dramatic point of encounter between the personal and public, between biography and history'.⁴⁶ Through the ten-year war that she fought in, Mónica's personal life history is closely tied to the history of Mozambique. At the same time, Mónica's words suggest an ambiguous relationship between her personal biography and the state narrative of national liberation. Though Mónica, like the other ex-combatants I interviewed in Maputo, seems intent on narrating her story in accordance with the script of official historiography,⁴⁷ there are moments in her narrative, as in the excerpt above, that the tension between her personal experience of the cityscape and the historical narrative of the nation becomes tangible. When I ask her to explain what she means by there being 'no consideration', she departs from the communal mode to speak of her personal experiences. Her memories of suffering, as she often emphasises while talking about her experience in the liberation struggle, are not easily made sense of in a context where she is still suffering. Victory and independence were also, according to common understanding, supposed to bring an end to 'suffering' on a personal level. The victorious Frelimo narrative, far from being an internalised position, requires constant negotiation for her.

At the same time, an alternative history in the place of 'national liberation' is unimaginable for Mónica. The Frelimo narrative of liberation continues to frame the experience of the female ex-combatants whom I interviewed in Maputo. Interestingly, research conducted by Harry West in Cabo Delgado points to a different experience in the far north of the country. West argues that the cumulative disappointments that many former female fighters there experienced in the years after independence has led to the 'destabilisation of the narrative through which their war experience was narrated'.⁴⁸

45 *Ibid.*

46 A. Portelli, 'Introduction', in *Battle of Valle Giulia*, p. ix.

47 In the state's attempt to perform a single coherent temporality, remembering the FRELIMO narrative of national liberation is constructed as a duty of their ex-combatant citizenship. See Michael J. Shapiro, 'National Times and Other Times: Re-Thinking Citizenship', *Cultural Studies*, 14, 1 (2000), pp. 79–98.

48 West, 'Girls with Guns', p. 182.

In Maputo, as I discovered, even experiences of disillusionment in one's personal life do not translate into an 'unravelling' of the institutional narrative. In Mónica's narrative, this is exemplified in what is the turning point of this particular narrative event: when the tension between the different narrative modes is pushed aside and the institutional mode becomes merged with the private and communal mode ('my party, our party, our government'). Turning to speak about her participation in the public commemoration of the armed struggle, Mónica once again links herself affirmatively to the state apparatus and the Frelimo narrative.⁴⁹ Portelli argues that the 'choice of mode depends on the narrator's intentions'.⁵⁰ But what motivates this change in narrative mode? I suggest that it can be considered a performative act of belonging which importantly carries material implications. Linking the state narrative to her personal narrative is aspirational in character, a politics of desire; though situated in the present, her current experience of the cityscape, it is directed towards the future. As Mónica says, she wants her grandchildren to 'tell the story of suffering [referring to the narrative of national liberation] as a story, not while they are still suffering'. Her desire is for her family history to change for the better (even if it might not be in her lifetime). By participating in the public commemoration of the liberation struggle she reinforces her connection to the nationalist elite and their good fortunes. The personal narrative is thus intertwined with normative claims of socio-economic and political justice as citizens of the nation-state.

Third Narrative Event: Belonging

Because here there are those who don't know what is war. So, we are. When it was said, 'We will unite from Rovuma to Maputo', there are the others who don't want to know. The others don't want to know. There are even the others that say, 'Why did the government take people from there, from their provinces to here?' You see. I say, 'Look my sister, my brother, don't be deceived, now we are independent. You can leave from here, go to the north, there you will encounter brothers, sisters, there'. I left the north to come here! I'm not lost. I'm on my African continent. Ehh ... it's the African continent. I'm on my African continent. I'm in my ... in my city. I'm in my capital! Maputo. Our capital is Maputo. I'm here. Me, if I'm here, I'm not lost. My brother here, when he's in the north or in the centre he's not lost, he's in Mozambique. You'll recognise the people by their faces, by their behaviour; you'll know everything, all of Mozambique. And if you say, 'Ah, these here were taken from there ... they are here, they're lost', it is you who is lost.⁵¹

Again, the narrative is driven by the first-person narrator who engages in active directional movement: 'I left the north to come here'. Though the call for national unity came from the institutional level ('it was said') and even though her perception is that some townspeople see the ex-combatants as having been forcibly moved to Maputo from elsewhere ('Why did the government take people from there, from the provinces to here?'), Mónica emphasises the fact that she is not an object of other people's actions. Moreover, the spatial boundaries drawn by the famous slogan of the nationalist discourse, 'we will unite from Rovuma to Maputo', becomes, in Mónica's narrative, a space constructed through personal movement, both actual and imaginative. Her lived spatiality – that is, her engagement in the nationalist struggle in the northern province of Cabo Delgado and southern Tanzania and her later relocation to

49 These public events of remembering also serve to transmit national history to the wider community. See also Ana M. Santos, 'The Past in the Present: Memories of the Liberation Struggle in Northern Mozambique', in *7º Congresso Ibérico de Estudos Africanos*, 9, Lisboa, 2010 – 50 anos das independências africanas: desafios para a modernidade (Lisboa: CEA, 2010), <http://repositorio-iul.iscte.pt/handle/10071/2248>, viewed 3 October 2012.

50 A. Portelli, "'The Time of my Life': Functions of Time in Oral History", in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 70.

51 Author interview: Mónica Chilavi, 13 July 2009, Maputo.

Maputo – is established as the basis of a widened spatial imagination. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that places are known ‘both directly through the senses and indirectly through the mind’, though places of larger scale require more ‘indirect and abstract knowledge’.⁵² Unarguably the nation is constructed through collectively shared symbols and concepts.⁵³ Yet, in Mónica’s narratives, the emphasis in knowing is placed on experiential sensory knowledge linked to the spatial referent of one’s gendered body. Hence, a sense of national belonging, for her, is related to one’s personal embodied experience of the different landscapes and people.⁵⁴ More importantly, for Mónica, it is a sense of belonging that necessarily requires physical bodily movement through the space of the nation.

As the centre of political and economic power, Maputo is the ‘centre of meaning’⁵⁵ in the national landscape.⁵⁶ Though travelling in her mind with noticeable ease between different spatial planes – north, centre, Africa, Maputo and Mozambique – at the same time, Maria firmly locates herself ‘here’, in Maputo, and narrates her attachment to the city. Maputo is her dwelling place. As Mónica exclaims, ‘I’m in my capital! Maputo. Our capital is Maputo. I’m here. Me, if I’m here, I’m not lost’. In this narrative event, Maputo is the spatial referent that effectively orders the other locations and makes possible the imagining of dynamic relations that construct and assign meaning to the otherwise abstract concept of national space.⁵⁷ Moreover, through the triumphant personal pronoun ‘my’, the different spatial levels are pulled together and distance is eliminated. Local, national and global are brought into juxtaposition. Personal space is expanded from the private home to encompass not only Mozambique but also the whole African continent. A claim is made for global citizenship and ‘spatial rights’⁵⁸ that are not limited to the territorial space of Mozambique. Although arguably she is physically tightly bounded to the urban space she inhabits, in her mind’s eye she is a citizen of the world. This should be interpreted not merely in terms of fantastic imagery, but rather as an act of political, spatial creativity.⁵⁹

Fourth Narrative Event: Gender of History

Mónica rarely explicitly differentiates between male and female experiences of the war or the cityscape. When I ask her about her experiences as a woman in the liberation struggle, she shrugs it off, insisting that gender was insignificant. ‘War is war. No person thinks this here is a man; this is a woman, no. During work it is work. There is no woman, there is no man’, she says, reciting FRELIMO’s wartime gender rhetoric to the letter.

52 Y. Tuan, ‘Place: An Experimental Perspective’, *Geographical Review*, 65, 2 (April 1975), p. 153.

53 Tuan, ‘Place: An Experimental Perspective’; B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, Verso, 1991).

54 The memory of the liberation struggle is, moreover, inscribed in what Gaston Bachelard refers to as ‘muscular consciousness’. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, translated by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 [1958]), p. 11. On ‘the bodily experiences of memory’, see also C. Tilley, ‘Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 11, 7 (2006), pp. 7–32.

55 Tuan, ‘Place: An Experimental Perspective’.

56 See also J. Sumich, ‘Nationalism, Urban Poverty and Identity in Maputo, Mozambique’, in *Crisis States Working Papers Series*, 2, 68 (February 2010).

57 On the idea that space is made through dwelling, see Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, edited by David F. Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), pp. 354–63. See also Pauli T. Karjalainen, ‘Place and Intimate Sensing’, in *The Thingmount Working Paper Series on the Philosophy of Conservation 1* (Lancaster University, Department of Philosophy, 1999), pp. 3–4, <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/depts/philosophy/awaymave/onlineresources/place%20and%20intimate%20sensing.pdf>, viewed 3 October 2012.

58 N. Yuval-Davis, ‘Belonging and the Politics of Belonging’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40, 3 (2006), pp. 197–214.

59 See A. McClintock, ‘Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family’, *Feminist Review*, 44 (1993), pp. 61–80; N. Yuval-Davis and M. Stoetzel, ‘Imagined Boundaries and Borders: A Gendered Gaze’, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 9, 3 (2002), pp. 329–344.

One can argue, on the one hand, that the revolutionary discourse produced a gendered landscape of belonging in which women's 'proper place' was controlled through essentially masculine notions of gender equality and women's emancipation. On the other hand, the nationalist discourse simultaneously opened new performative possibilities for 'doing gender'.⁶⁰ Many women narrated a personal negotiation of their gendered lives in the liberation movement and within the context of a new gender discourse (see, for instance, Geraldina's narrative on page 545). In her narratives, however, Mónica emphasises individual choice, and is exceptionally keen to dismiss the whole matter of gender. This speaks of the different experiences of different women and the limits of grouping their experiences together to construct one coherent narrative.

Only momentarily, when talking about transmitting the memory of the liberation struggle, do gender and 'woman' become meaningful categories for her. She argues that, although 'military life now is not like during the war', women in Maputo need to train in order to know and continue women's history.

Our history has to continue ... because in war time we were there, men and women, working. And now it is time of peace, but it doesn't mean that in peace we leave everything. No. You need to make continuity. You have to continue. And what does this continuity mean? It is the continuation of the work, continuation of the history. It is to continue the history. Because the women also need to have a history ... continue the history, fine, for them [the women] to know, our children, our grandchildren to know that our grandparents, our parents, our mothers did a job with the men, worked, fought, to liberate.⁶¹

The DFs' collective narrative ('our history') links Mónica's personal history to institutional history. It articulates an understanding that women were brought into history through their participation in the liberation struggle. Mónica's words also point to the uncertainty of the continuity of this collective history, and, moreover, to the limits of this imagined collectivity.⁶² I will continue developing these ideas in the last section of this article; but next, I turn to looking at how the individual narrative is located in the broader dynamics of collective remembering taking place in Maputo.

The City of Memories

Maputo has a complex history and dynamically evolving landscape. Starting out as a small Portuguese settlement in 1781, it gained significance due to its port and increasing trade relations with South Africa until, in 1898, it was elevated to the status of capital city, as Lourenço Marques.⁶³ Spatially, the city was divided into racially segregated areas; the settlers lived inside the formal 'cement heart' of the city, while most of the African population lived in peri-urban settlements.⁶⁴ Independence in 1975 drastically affected the spatial layout of the city, as the majority of the Portuguese population (100,000–200,000)

60 'A male model', as Luisa Passerini points out, 'does not mean pure and simple imitation of the male'. See L. Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968*, translated by L. Erdberg (Middletown, Wesleyan, 1996), p. 96.

61 Author interview: Mónica Chilavi, 17 August 2009, Maputo.

62 See also M. Bloch, 'Internal and External Memory: Different Ways of Being in History', *Suomen Antropologi*, 1 (1992), pp. 3–15. Bloch interestingly distinguishes two 'folk theories' of the individual's 'place in history' which, he argues, lead to different conceptions of the historical actor. In one theory the individual is understood as external to history and remains unchanged by historical events; in the other, the individual, conceived as internal to history, changes with history.

63 M. Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (London, C. Hurst & Co, 1995); P. Jenkins, 'City Profile Maputo', *Cities*, 17, 3 (2000), pp. 207–18; M. Paulo, C. Rosário and I. Tvedten, 'Xiculungo' – *Social Relations of Urban Poverty in Maputo, Mozambique* (Bergen, Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2007), p. 22.

64 Jenkins, 'City Profile Maputo', p. 208.

fled the country. Concurrently, as bans on the movement of population were lifted, the city experienced a migrant influx and, by 1980, its population had grown to 755,000.⁶⁵ During this period also a number of ex-guerrilla fighters found themselves transferred to Maputo, the elite occupying the finer, by then deserted, houses in the wealthier districts. The majority of the new city population, however, occupied land in the peri-urban areas, where unplanned settlements grew rapidly.⁶⁶

At independence the army maintained a dominant political role, and many soldiers were transferred to Maputo as part of FRELIMO's state-building project. At the time, vast areas of land were still outside FRELIMO's control, and FRELIMO's 'liberated areas', where it had sought to construct a new social and political order, encompassed only a fraction of the population. The majority of the population had not been substantially affected by the struggle, or even heard of FRELIMO's nationalist politics. The soldiers, considered by FRELIMO to be the proto-citizens of an emerging nation-state, were expected to mobilise the population politically.⁶⁷ Drawing on a supposedly shared experience of colonial rule, they were to inspire in Mozambicans a sentiment of national unity. Linked to this was the special mobilisation of women to make them conscious that they, as women, were equally part of the nationalist project and should work towards its development. As Casimiro argues, OMM's task was to "reproduce" the experience of women's emancipation during the armed struggle'.⁶⁸ One DF, called Modesta, spoke of her experience of moving to Maputo in these words:

Everything leaves its longing. I missed the province, the places we passed through during the war. The comportment of our population was different. We had already gotten used, when we talked about politics, we all understood in the same way. The war ends, I leave to Porto Amélia, now Pemba. I encounter another new life. How to integrate with people whom we were not used to living with? We had to mobilise; our work was to mobilise those people to join our female movement, in this case, the struggle for women's emancipation. Independence had been won, now emancipation of woman. The woman must also carry out the work of constructing the country. So the change is another, I also adapted to Pemba. Some time [after], a transfer to Maputo. Maputo, a big city.⁶⁹

Though the city in itself is not alienating, Elizabeth Grosz writes of the disturbing effect that the sudden change of environment can have on a 'body inscribed by one cultural milieu'.⁷⁰ The city imposed another spatial organisation on the women's daily lives. Some women described the difficulties they had in adjusting to life in a city – for instance, to living alone in apartments and not having immediate contact with the rural landscapes in which they had grown up. The city demanded that one buy food instead of cultivating crops, and also pay electricity bills and

65 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

66 The civil war further affected the city, as people in the southern provinces sought refuge inside the city area from RENAMO attacks.

67 See S. Machel, 'President Samora Moises Machel's Message at the Investiture of the Transitional Government, 20 September 1974', in T. Henriksen, *Mozambique: A History* (1974), pp. 253–67.

68 I. Casimiro, 'Samora Machel e as Relações de Género', in *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 21 (Maputo, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 2005), p. 64. Branded as the new 'emancipated' women, the DFs were presented as role models for all others, and also chosen to lead the women's organisation to help other women to 'emancipate' themselves. Even after independence, the Female Detachment continued to constitute the core of OMM, and many DFs continued working closely with OMM in mobilising and integrating women into the process of nation-building and construction of socialism. And after the adoption of multi-party democracy, OMM continued as the Frelimo party's women's organisation.

69 Author interview: Modesta Daniel, 30 June 2009, Maputo. Modesta was working as a teacher at a mission when the war started in Cabo Delgado. During the war she worked as a teacher, political commissar and as a reporter. She worked many years in the 'interior' before receiving full military training in 1972. After independence, she moved to Maputo with her husband in 1976. She had a long career in politics, though she no longer holds any political posts. These days she teaches at a private school.

70 E. Grosz, 'Bodies-Cities', in H. Nast and S. Pile (eds), *Places through the Body* (London, Routledge, 1998), p. 48.

so on. Especially for those that were demobilised soon after independence, the transformation was even more abrupt and many found themselves struggling to start their independent lives in the city. Thus independence later became associated with their experiences of isolation. In the interviews, many women wistfully reminisced about the army days and the sense of togetherness they shared. In the context of increased urban poverty and inequality in the city (also between ex-combatants),⁷¹ the nationalistic unity and egalitarian way of life are nostalgically remembered and juxtaposed with the sense of alienation and loss experienced by many in the capital.

Nostalgic remembering is intensified through temporal and spatial distance from the places where the war events happened.⁷² Even ex-combatants differently and unequally positioned in the cityscape are connected (though somewhat loosely) in a collective remembering of those distant landscapes. Though the ex-combatant community is not restricted to Maputo, and in a sense the different ex-combatants in different parts of Mozambique are linked to a mnemonic community, I suggest that Maputo as the space of remembering is a crucial component of the history-telling event. The city unites more than it divides. Maputo is the centre of economic and political power in the country, and the ex-combatants located in the city are closely tied to the political project of Frelimo. This is illuminated in Fátima's narrative:

I am proud, I as a woman was a soldier, but until now I am a woman. Whatever thing that needs to be done as a woman or as a man – I can do! By chance I am ... Here where I am, essentially, I am a soldier, me. But I am a woman who is different from the woman who didn't take up arms, from the woman that is in the city, in the community. She is different, the thinking is different. How? How not? [...] But you, having been a soldier, know what life is, you know what a soldier is, to be a soldier – it is not whatever way that you can meddle in politics. 'No, I want that party, I want ...'. No, no. [...] If you don't go there to mobilise the people, those that have ... Ohh, then is a serious problem. They will go vote where they go: 'I want someone, ohh, I want that party, I don't know ...'. It is like this. But I know what I am doing, who I am. What is my life, what was my life, how I left the bush to be here in this city here, in this house. It was suffering. We fought for us to have this here. To liberate the people.⁷³

The DFs in Maputo continue to demonstrate that they are committed Frelimo women, though many are no longer actively involved in party politics. Still, as Fátima's narrative shows, the DFs argue that they have a superior understanding of politics because of their soldiering background and experience in the liberation struggle. Their life trajectories and current being-in-place in the capital is, moreover, narrated as being purposeful through their war narrative.

Many of the guerrilla fighters that were 'brought' to Maputo were either part of the nationalist elite or closely connected to those in power. Often, they had a relatively higher level of education and class status than many of those 'left behind' in the rural areas. In the case of the women I interviewed, many had mission-school backgrounds, and some had received further training during the struggle. Also, some DFs came to Maputo after marrying men who held positions of power in the liberation front and in the new nationalist government. Many also owe Frelimo a debt of gratitude for their professional careers and the educational opportunities of their children. Even those who speak of struggling economically

71 Maputo has a Gini coefficient of 0.512, while the national estimate is at 0.414. Ministry of Planning and Development, *Poverty and Well-Being in Mozambique: Third National Poverty Assessment* (Maputo, MPD, 2010), p. 118.

72 See also I. Brinkman, 'Landscape and Nostalgia: Angolan Refugees in Namibia Remembering Home and Forced Removals', in M. Bollig and O. Bubenzer (eds), *African Landscapes: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (New York, Springer, 2009), pp. 275–94. Brinkman explores the links between violence, landscape and nostalgic remembering.

73 Author interview: Fátima Afonso Banda Canda, 29 July 2009, Matola. Fátima was born in Zambia in 1949, and her family moved to Tete in Mozambique when she was 10. She had no opportunity to study before the war. In 1967, she ran away from her family to join the guerrillas. She did her military training at a base in Tete. During the war, she served as a foot soldier, mostly mobilising the population and carrying war material.

are receiving their war veterans' pensions. Thus identifying themselves as former combatants, the DFs are able to claim access to the state's rights and resources. At the same time, in doing so, they affiliate themselves with the ex-combatant community and the Frelimo party and the state.

Contemporary Maputo is, of course, a meeting place of a 'multiplicity of trajectories' (to borrow Doreen Massey's words),⁷⁴ of which the ex-combatant population forms one small minority. The DFs' lives are diversely located in the cityscape. Amongst them there are MPs and people with government jobs. Others are employed at the women's organisation. Some still hold jobs at hospitals and health centres. Still others are formally unemployed, surviving mostly on their state pension. Through the years, their lives have unfolded alongside Maputo's physical cityscape, which in turn has been reworked by larger social, economic and political shifts. Politically, as noted, Mozambique has passed from one-party Marxist–Leninist rule to multi-party 'liberal' democracy. With growing private investment in the country, new shopping malls, luxury houses and high-rise buildings, all symbolising a modern middle-class urban lifestyle, have become prominent in the city centre. Subsequently, inequality has increased. Rising rents and increases in other living costs have forced many poorer people, including many ex-combatants, out of the central and better districts towards the city's 'peripheries'.

On one hand, the city is constructed as a landscape of belonging, especially through the routines of everyday life. On the other hand, it is a contested landscape, its meaning negotiated in relation to other landscapes of belonging. As Paulina puts it

Here in Maputo, we came here to work. But here is not our land. We are Mozambicans, but it isn't. [...] We are here to work. We are Mozambicans but home is in Mueda.⁷⁵

In this short narrative act the national landscape is set against the cityscape and the narrator's homeland in Cabo Delgado. Here, Maputo is argued to be a place of work ('here is not our land'), while Mueda is identified as a landscape of belonging. Yet at the same time it is emphasised that narrating one's home as Mueda (and not Maputo) does not cancel out Mozambique as a landscape of belonging ('We are Mozambicans but home is Mueda'). The FRELIMO rhetoric famously asserted well into the 1980s that there were no 'tribes' in Mozambique; as Samora Machel envisaged, the 'tribe' had to die for the nation to live.⁷⁶ In its nation-building phase, Frelimo worked energetically to oppose people's identification with ethnic communities, enforcing national unity at the expense of pluralism.⁷⁷ Difference was judged negatively and other landscapes of belonging negated. Multiple landscapes of belonging have of course always existed, but today more freedom exists to remember them. Generally the women spoke of missing their homelands, but, owing to the expense of travel, not all had the opportunity to make regular visits. Those who had such opportunity spoke of going once a year to visit their living relatives and the graves of those who had passed on. They also spoke of the land and the chance to enjoy the fresh fruits and local cuisine. Some

74 Massey, *For Space*. See also M. Crang and P.S. Travlou, 'The City and Topologies of Memory', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 19, 2 (2001), pp. 161–77.

75 Author interview: Paulina Mualabo Makala Bungallah, 23 July 2009, Maputo. Paulina was born in Tanzania and went to school there, but moved to Cabo Delgado before the start of the war. She trained in Nachingwea in 1969 and later worked in a FRELIMO crèche and as a first aider at a camp for political prisoners in Cabo Delgado. After independence she trained as a nurse and worked in Nampula for several years. She was transferred to Maputo in 1983 to be with her husband. She was still working as a nurse at a local health centre at the time of the interview.

76 S. Machel, 'Educate Man to Win the War, Create a New Society and Develop our Country', in S. Machel (ed.), *Mozambique: Sowing the Seeds of Revolution* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981), pp. 37–41.

77 See P. Virtanen, 'Defining the "Other": Democracy in Mozambique within a Historical Perspective', *African and Asian Studies*, 2, 3 (2003), pp. 233–58.

spoke of how they would like to return there but, because of their children, they were tied to Maputo.

Landscapes are, moreover, importantly constructed through the interrelation of ethnicity, class, religion and gender. For Maria, the Makonde community in Maputo is an important social referent, but also a gendered female space.

I don't know; I just stay. I don't go, no. Sometimes ... it was last year ... these my friends, this friend Isabel: 'Let's go campaign, campaign!' I campaigned, but after that returning, sitting. I don't go, I stay at home, I go to the *machamba* ... or even just being together in the community! I usually go to the Cabo Delgado community or the Makonde community. I go there. To catch up with that [person], with that! I like. That I like. [Jonna: Is it a big community?] Yes, it's big because we have our tradition that a child grows up, at a certain age ... if a girl is 12 we will have her undergo the initiation rite. So, I also, my children I am accustomed to sending there. But ... I usually go there to converse with the others. Because I only had two girls, and boys also, already a long time ago. Now I go only to accompany the others [laughs]. To accompany the others, yah. This time, ahhh, I'm always there. Talking with this, with that, and everything. I like that [laughs].⁷⁸

As Maria says, when she first arrived in Maputo her husband's family did not accept her, because she was a northerner. 'There is this tension between the south and the north', she explains. Also, they didn't like her, as she was a woman who had been in the army. These days Maria feels more at home in the Makonde community than the ex-combatant community. For her the female initiation rite is a space in which she can come together with others and remember the other more distant landscape of home-place. Furthermore, it is a female community: as Signe Arnfred has argued, the initiation rite is 'the ritual celebration of a shared female gender identity'.⁷⁹ Through the initiation rite, moreover, one is taught how to position oneself as a woman in society; undergoing the rite one becomes a member of the Makonde community. It is interesting to note that, in the first years of independence, OMM together with Frelimo campaigned politically to repress the initiation rituals.⁸⁰ The multiple landscapes in and through which the ex-combatant women negotiate a sense of belonging are thus also differently gendered spaces. One's gendered place in the cityscape is negotiated also in relation to different social groups. In Maria's case, difference is narrated between oneself and the other townswomen who do not share her military experience; yet at the same time, a sense of community is narrated together with a group of townswomen of the same ethnic or geographical origin.

Conclusion: Landscape, Gender and Historical Memory

Remembering the liberation struggle is still considered a patriotic duty, and the official history of the liberation struggle is not significantly contested in the narratives of the female ex-combatants in Maputo. Instead, it is constructed as a meaningful narrative that helps make sense of one's life trajectory and current place in the city. This is not to say other landscapes of belonging are not remembered, or constructed as equally significant.

78 Author interview: Maria Manuel Nkavadeka, 30 July 2009, Maputo.

79 S. Arnfred, 'Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics', *Review of African Political Economy*, 15, 40 (1988), p. 8.

80 S. Arnfred, 'Women in Mozambique'; S. Arnfred, 'Conceptions of Gender in Colonial and Post-Colonial Discourses: The Case of Mozambique', in S. Arnfred, B.K. Chacha, A. Gouws, J. Ahikire, A. Ogundipe, C. Pereira, M. Prah, C. Ukeje, F.A. Yieke (eds), *Gender Activism and Struggle in Africa* (Dakar, CODESRIA, 2005), pp. 108–28; K.E. Sheldon, *Pounders of Grain*; S. Machel, 'Defining Woman's Enemy', in B. Munslow (ed.), *Samora Machel: An African Revolutionary: Selected Speeches and Writings* (London, Zed Books, 1985), pp. 169–78.

The women's relationship to the cityscape remains ambivalent. Through their daily lives – living and walking the streets, working in hospitals, offices and in their gardens, or connecting with neighbours, work colleagues and other ex-combatants – Maputo has become their home-place. Yet their narratives also show how they have at times struggled to establish a sense of belonging to the city due to their ex-combatant history. Spatially, their histories are anchored to multiple places: the various lived and imagined landscapes of childhood, the war landscapes and later the cityscape. This is only a bare outline. During the liberation struggle a number of combatants had a chance to travel even more broadly. These experiences of 'far-away' places have been shared within the ex-combatant community and have, to some degree, become part of the shared body of memories of the liberation struggle. Though spatial belonging in the various narratives is constructed in nuanced ways, it is characterised by a sense of movement, both real and imagined.

The official (male narrated) history is complemented with a collective women's narrative of their participation in the liberation struggle. This collective remembering seeks to assert women's place in national history. No matter how their personal lives have played out, women argue that the legacy of their participation in the armed struggle is visible especially in the high number of women occupying positions in the country's parliament and government. As far as many of them are concerned, women's equality with men was gained through the liberation struggle. A lot of research on women's participation in the liberation movements, as Lyons points out, has focused on the question of how independence failed to lead to gender equality.⁸¹ I think, however, that it is important to look at how gender equality is conceived of in the first place. In the narratives of the Maputo DFs, gender equality is understood in terms of equal opportunities, of women having access to jobs and work positions that, according to their childhood cultural norms, belonged to a gendered male domain.⁸²

On an individual level, the memory of the liberation struggle has another gendered meaning. Many of the women I interviewed argue that their own gendered self-knowledge was transformed through the struggle. This is a more precarious memory to secure, and the women worry that they will not be able to transmit this knowledge to future generations. And though the duration of memory is linked to the duration of the group, as Halbwachs argues,⁸³ I suggest that some of the memories considered most important by the DFs are also fixed to the spatial referent of the body and ultimately belong to individual embodied memory. A rather commonly shared fear is that the history of the liberation struggle will disappear when the ex-combatants die of old age. This has a specific gendered undertone. Many DFs express the concern that the new generations of women will not be able understand their 'new' gendered position in society if their bodies have not physically experienced the training, the marching, the building; all those things that contributed to a slightly different way of doing gender in their own lives and consequently made possible the imagining of a different kind of gendered trajectory to that of the mother's generation. A certain discontinuity is thus narrated between the time before the struggle and after. In a sense people outside this particular community of memory are thought to be living a different history.

Maputo as the spatio-temporal location of remembering is a crucial component of the history-telling event and mediates the DFs sense of national belonging. Yet, what is the relation of the city to the rural landscapes of northern Mozambique – where the liberation

81 Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls*, p. 41.

82 There used to be a strict separation between male and female tasks. Girls would learn from their mothers how to cook, pound grain, carry water and perform other 'female tasks', while boys would learn from their fathers how to perform 'male tasks', such as constructing houses and hunting. Yet FRELIMO's gender discourse and the practice of military life challenged these norms.

83 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

war was mainly fought –situated up to 2,000 kilometres away from the capital city? In the DFs' narratives they have become part of nostalgic memories. For instance, speaking to one DF called Lúcia about my intentions to go and visit her home province, Niassa, she warned me of how remotely her home village, Chiconono, is located.⁸⁴ Laughingly she exclaimed that once there, in the bush, I would surely forget that I am still in Mozambique. This seemed to me a curious remark; after all, it was in those bush lands that the ideas of the Mozambican nation and national unity first took root in the minds of the young soldiers. Living in Maputo, however, the former war landscapes have already been distanced in memory; they have become 'another world', a faraway experience.

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84 Lúcia Mustafa had no opportunity to study before the war. In 1967 she trained in Nachingwea with the first group from Niassa. She worked for a time at the FRELIMO bases in Niassa until, in 1969, she was chosen to study at FRELIMO's educational centre in Tunduru. After that, she was sent for a second time for military training to Nachingwea, and she also received first-aid training. In the final years of the war she worked as a nurse in Nachingwea. In 1978 she was transferred to Maputo, where she has continued to work in health care.

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