

Centro de Estudos de Antropologia Social (CEAS)  
Centro de Estudos Africanos (CEA)

Palestras  
e  
Conferência Internacional

# **Youth and Modernity in Africa**

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L. Bordonaro, C. Carvalho, E. Gable, C. Rodrigues, R. Sarró, H. Vigh

Lisboa, 10-12 de Outubro de 2007

SALA B104

ISCTE

Av.<sup>a</sup> das Forças Armadas 1649-026

Informações e inscrições:

[www.ceas.iscte.pt](http://www.ceas.iscte.pt)  
E-mail: [ceas@ceas.iscte.pt](mailto:ceas@ceas.iscte.pt)  
Fax: 217903940.  
Telefone: 217903917

**Palestras**  
**(sujeitas a inscrição gratuita até 5 de Outubro)**

Quarta-Feira, 10 de Outubro

**ERIC GABLE**  
**(University of Mary Washington, USA)**

10.30-13.00  
*Youth and Social and Cultural Theory*

15.00-17.30  
*Youth and responsibility*

Quinta-Feira, 11 de Outubro

**HENRIK VIGH**  
**(RCT, Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims, Denmark)**

10.30-13.00  
*Youth as Being and Becoming*

15.00-17.30  
*Social Death and Violent Life Chances*

## **Conferência Internacional (acesso livre)**

**Sexta-Feira, 12 de Outubro**

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10.00h-13.00h Primeira Sessão

Clara Carvalho (ISCTE/CEA) *Introduction*

Eric Gable (University of Mary Washington, USA) *Worldliness in Out of the Way Places*

Lorenzo Bordonaro (CEAS, Lisbon) *Beyond victimization: youth and the appropriation of 'development' in the Bijagó Islands (Guinea Bissau)*

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14.30h-17.30h Segunda Sessão

Henrik Vigh (RCT, Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims, Denmark) *Crisis and Chronocity: reflections on everyday conflict and decline*

Ramon Sarró (ICS, Lisbon) *Youth, Memory and Heritage*

Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues (CEA, Lisbon) *Youth in Angola: keeping the pace towards modernity*

The purpose of this event is to unsettle the apparently obvious relationship between youth and modernity in Sub-Saharan Africa. The link between generation and change will be problematized and contested, refusing linear periodizations implicit in the notion of modernity, and underlining instead the ambiguous and troubled relationship between youth and social and cultural change in contemporary Africa. The challenge we take up is therefore that of proposing new theoretical frames to reassess the role of youth in contemporary Africa, getting rid of the pitfalls of modernity or modernization theory but without overlooking concrete and dramatic processes of change. Actually, if it is indeed problematic to understand contemporary youth in Africa in terms of 'modernity', we cannot overlook neither that the African present has much to do with the impact and reaction to expansive markets, mass media and commoditization, and with the colonial and postcolonial Euro-American expansion; nor can we ignore the powerful hold that the *idea* of modernity has in many popular fields of discourse, both in local contexts, state policies and international institutions. Notions of being and becoming modern, aspirations to become modern, are a palpable and potent ideology in many if not most areas of Africa.

Dealing with the relics of post-independence modernisation agendas and struggling with the contradictions of the ecumenical ideology of globalization, young people have appropriated notions of development, modernity and progress, reworking them and at the same time reassessing their future through them, trying to make sense of their present and dire condition. If we consider the question of youth in Africa, in fact, we rapidly realise that the controversial role of youth in politics, conflicts and rebellious movements is one of the major challenges in the continent today. The issue is that of the problematic insertion of large numbers of young people in the socio-economic and political order of post-independence Africa. African youth, while forming a numerical majority, largely feel excluded from power, are socio-economically marginalized and thwarted in their ambitions. Despite these constraints and structural violence, young people throughout the continent have shown a stunning capacity of local agency, creating, manipulating and inventing new identities and strategies, transforming urban and rural contexts in surprising and unexpected directions. In war zones, migratory paths, villages and shanty towns, young people are strong emerging actors and a consistent theoretical concern comes out, in order to show how they are active agents in the construction and manipulation of the forms of sociability of contemporary Africa.

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