John Schubert (London)

**Disaggregating the Commodity Crisis: Towards an Ethnography of the Port of Lobito (Angola)**

Infrastructure projects centred on the Angolan port of Lobito and its transport corridor epitomise the ruling MPLA government’s developmental visions, as well as its transnational economic entanglements. As such, the economic crisis the country is facing as a result of a downturn in world oil prices since 2014 is at the same time a political one, as it reveals the material limits of the regime’s hegemonic project. Past, present, and future economic interests and political visions are made concrete in Lobito’s maritime logistics infrastructures, while revealing the limits and failures of these concrete politics and an oil-dependent economy: nothing works, or at least not as promised, and the imports of goods have run dry. How do the ‘thingness’ and relational qualities of port infrastructures, and their symbolic and aesthetic values change if they seemingly ‘fail’ to fulfil their intended (political and economic) purpose?

A state of crisis has arguably been a permanent reality for a majority of Angolans for most of the past 50 years. If incompleteness is normal, do people living with and through this economic architecture see it as failure? This paper look at how various social actors in and around the Angolan port of Lobito to interrogate and disaggregate the notion of crisis as an emergency, to try and study its effects in people’s everyday lives.

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