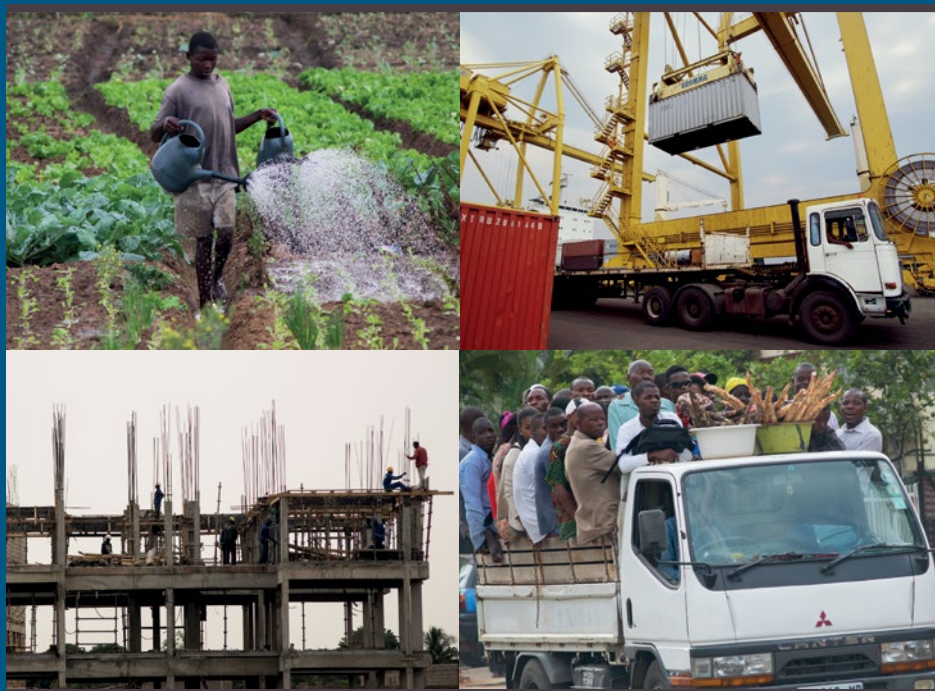


Questions on productive development in Mozambique

Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco, Nelsa Massingue & Carlos Muianga (editors)



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INHARRIME BY ITS ROADS: NOTES ON DECENTRALISATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES IN A DISTRICT OF INHAMBANE PROVINCE

Euclides Gonçalves

*Inharrime businessmen act like palm trees
they sweep faraway and let their district remain in filth
[they let] the roads remain with potholes and stones
[...]
They say that Champion wants to take Inharrime
They don't know what I want
Is it forbidden to ask questions?
I only asked: so who has taken Inharrime?
And many people began to scratch their heads, claiming that Champion wants
to take Inharrime
I felt embarrassed when, on Inharrime day, the administrator said: 'Long live
Inharrime' and many people could not raise their arms as [a] consequence of the
potholes and stones in the roads
When you're walking, even good shoes fall apart because of the condition of the
road.
[...]
You catch the minibus from Mocumbi Mission to Inharrime
On arrival the cars have their shock absorbers and headlights ruined
This is why I ask my question, because everything is done any old way
(Champion, Hi mani anga nghola Nharrime 2011)*

Introduction

If we proceed from the assumption that, in music, citizens find a vehicle for broaching matters concerning social, political and economic life,¹ the extract from the Champion's composition transcribed above offers an excellent entry point to analyse decentralisation and its relationship to the provision of public services. In asking, 'who has taken Inharrime?', Champion draws the government's attention to the responsibility for providing an effective transport service, taking as his starting point the road as a public good. At the same time, Champion turns the question of the quality of the roads into a total social phenomenon in referring to the economic losses, to the impact on the health of citizens, and to their effective participation in political events.

In this paper, I discuss decentralisation and the provision of public services in Inharrime district. In addition to the growing body of research which stresses the institutional and legal conditions (Uandela 2012; Weimer 2012) for the provision of particular public services (Rosário et al. 2011; AfriMAP & OSISA 2012; Forquilha 2013), I propose that analyses on the provision of public services should pay attention to the processes that occur during the preparation for, and supply and maintenance of, these services. By paying attention to these different, but interrelated, stages, we open the possibility for an understanding of the challenges, expectations and frustrations of the various actors on the supply and demand sides of public services.

Data for this paper was collected during six weeks of fieldwork in Inharrime district. In June, July and August 2013, I interviewed staff from the District Planning and Infrastructure Services (SDPI), heads of localities, community leaders, and residents in the localities of Nhapadiane, Mahalamba, Nhanombe and Chacane. In Nhanombe, Napadiane and Mahalamba, I interviewed key actors in the road-construction process and used the information they provided as the basis for my discussion. At the SDPI offices, I observed a session of opening of bids and, at provincial level, I interviewed representatives and staff of the Provincial Directorate of Public Works and of the National Roads Administration (ANE). At these institutions, I also consulted documents concerning the rehabilitation and maintenance of roads in Inharrime district.

The discussion is based on the processes of rehabilitation and maintenance of the Mocumbi-Mejoôte and Inharrime-Panda roads in Inharrime district. The first is an unclassified road, under the responsibility of the district government. Work on the road was interrupted midway when the contractor abandoned the

1 For works that develop arguments based on this assumption, see Vail et al. 1978, Mungumbe 2000, and Israel 2009.

job. The second is a classified road for which ANE is responsible. Although it was concluded and delivered, it left some users unhappy, for they believed that the job 'is not finished'. For years, both roads have been the subject of everyday conversation among the inhabitants of Inharrime and the songs of Champion, which I shall take up in detail later, are an expression of this.²

Starting from a perspective that assumes that the relationship between decentralisation and better public service delivery needs to be investigated rather than assumed,³ this project draws inspiration from studies which stress history and political economy (Trankell 1993; Colombijn 2002a; Nas & Pratiwo 2002; Nielsen 2012) and the interpretative dimension (Pina-Cabral 1987; Anand 2006; Dalakoglou 2010) of the planning, use and maintenance of roads. In these studies, the assumption that roads lead to development is called into question, and they explore the intentions and expectations of the various actors and the perverse effects of the construction and use of roads. As Colombijn notes:

A long decision-taking process precedes construction work; once the construction of a road is underway, the work may be stalled or halted, and after a road has been completed it stimulates people to seize the opportunity to adopt new patterns of behaviour and forces others out of previous customs, against their will. At each stage, before, during, and after the construction of a new road, the road leads to intense social interaction. (Colombijn 2002b: 597)

In this paper, I begin by verifying empirically under what conditions decentralisation in the roads subsector is materialised. Then, from field notes on two roads in the district, I analyse a stage in the construction process, as well as the uses of and discourses about roads in order to understand the perspectives of providers and beneficiaries of the transport service. Before concluding, I return to the debate on the relationship between decentralisation and public services and look at key factors in the relationship between providers and beneficiaries.

Decentralisation and the roads subsector in Mozambique

In Mozambique, roads are understood as essential resources for development. Most movement of people takes place along the road network linking, socially and

2 Even though many of the interviewees cited the songs of Champion and say they can recognise themselves within them, it is important to note that the songs are used here as illustrations, and not as faithful representations of the reality of the district or of the feelings of all the inhabitants of Inharrime.

3 Research in African countries has shown that there is not necessarily a positive correlation between decentralisation and the provision of public services. See, for example, Booth 2011, Uandela 2012 and Forquilha 2013.

economically, points of production and distribution of goods. It is also through roads that regions and resources in the country can be linked to supply and consumption markets. However, the roads subsector is one of those where progress in decentralisation has been slow. This slow progress is due in part to limited human and financial resources and the corresponding institutional arrangements in governments at district level. These constraints, publicly acknowledged by the leadership in the sector, are referred to in various guiding and programmatic documents, and plans and strategies to address them have been continuously redesigned.⁴

Currently, the Road Policy divides the management of roads between the classified roads (national, regional and district) and unclassified roads (vicinal – those roads that link tertiary roads, administrative posts and other population centres). The former are built and managed by ANE, while the latter are improved and maintained by the district government.

While at central and provincial level, ANE receives external financial and technical support, at district level, local governments rely on the Infrastructure Fund to coordinate their interventions in the sector. However, it is important to note that the approval of the Organic Statute of the District Government,⁵ which sets up the District Planning and Infrastructure Services, is a recent creation. In the case of Inharrime, until 2009, the infrastructures were included in the District Secretariat. In terms of human resources, the services relies on a senior staff member with training in Planning and Territorial Organisation, with an emphasis on tourism, a staff member with a diploma in public works, a topographer, a stonemason, a plumber, an accountant with basic-level education, and three cleaners.

In principle, decentralisation in the roads subsector should be accompanied by a strengthening of local capacity in the districts, municipalities and provinces so that they can rehabilitate and maintain the network of roads that fall under their responsibility. This strengthening of local capacity should include technical and management training for agents of the sector and capacity development of small-scale contractors.

This principle of decentralisation in the roads subsector is echoed in the discourse of the provincial government, which refers to the ‘involvement of the local governments and communities in managing the access roads that link communities to administrative posts’ and to the ‘involvement of local contractors and independent consultants in road activities’ (DPOPH 2013: 3). In practice, the management of classified roads remains centralised at provincial level, with

4 See, for example, Resolution no. 50/98 of 28 July, Decree 40/2012 of 30 November and MOPH 2007.

5 See Decree 6/2006 of 12 April.

capacity-building activities for local staff and contractors in the districts being few and far between.

As for the participation of local contractors and the population in interventions in the districts, the practice is far from meeting the provisions in existing regulatory documents. The will of seeing the emergence of a private sector in the province and districts with the competence to meet the demands for road construction, rehabilitation and maintenance has not yet resulted in actions leading to the emergence of local contractors. In general, Inhambane depends on contractors from other provinces, particularly Maputo and Gaza, to undertake road works in the districts. In Inharrime, there is not a single contractor working on the roads subsector.⁶

The participation of the population in planning process for roads receiving interventions is limited to the contributions made during the elaboration of the Social Economic and District Budget Plans (PESODs) and the presentation of needs made when high dignitaries and state representatives visit the district. As for the rehabilitation and maintenance of roads, the communities are called upon to sell their labour to the undertakings on the basis of the principle that labour-intensive interventions generate employment in the rural areas and, consequently, reduce poverty and improve the living standards of the local people. Information activities and public education campaigns about interventions in the sector are rare.

Ultimately, interventions in the road sector in the districts happen at two speeds – one determined by ANE and the other by the district government. As ANE and district government staff mentioned during interviews, the district only ‘follows’ ANE’s work and participates to a minimal degree ‘if there is a problem such as lack of collaboration from the public’.⁷ As we shall see below, this institutional arrangement not only separates procurement, implementation and inspection work, but also alienates road users.

Two vignettes from Inharrime

Located in the Southern part of Inhambane province, Inharrime district is bordered to the North by Jangamo district, to the South by Zavala district, to

6 Even in provinces where there are comparatively more contractors, the actions of the contractors in the districts are still limited. This fact is generalised across the country to such an extent that, as a result of the findings about the problem during the open governance visits, the President of the Republic instructed the districts to take greater responsibility for road maintenance and management. See, for example, the article in the *Noticias* newspaper, *Em busca de eficiente manutenção: PR que distritos a gerirem estradas* (In search of efficient maintenance, the President wants districts to manage roads).

7 Interviews: Inharrime, SDPI staff member; Maxixe, ANE staff member.

the East by the Indian Ocean, and to the West by Manjacaze district in Gaza province, and Panda in Inhambane province. Covering an area of 2 744km², the district has 13 main roads. Of these, the district government considers that three are in a good state, five in reasonable condition, and five in a bad state (Government of Inharrime 2011). This scenario varies with the time of the year and with the quality of the maintenance work undertaken. For example, while the 50km of national highway (EN1) that crosses the district may be consensually considered to be in a good state, the stretch of road from EN1 to Závora Beach has problematic sections which are improved for short periods after maintenance work. Likewise, the Inharrime–Panda road, also regarded as in good condition, is discussed in this paper precisely because the perception of the users is different from that of the technicians of the roads subsector.

Inharrime residents, local state representatives, and visitors all comment on the state of the roads in the district. During work visits by state representatives and by the President of the Republic, residents systematically refer to the unsatisfactory conditions of the roads, to the constant delays and to the abandonment of roadworks in the district. As a rule, local authorities and contractors point to rain as the main reason for the delays in roadworks and for the rapid degradation of roads.

In June 2013, a reporter from the daily newspaper, *Notícias*, noted that ‘the level of degradation of the roads is such that it is impossible to move along them in a vehicle or on foot’, and quoted the district administrator’s explanation that ‘January rains undid all our efforts since we had just completed maintenance and rehabilitation works, notably on the road that links the district government headquarters to EN1, was one of the best roads in town, the Inharrime–Cogono and hospital to EN1 roads’ (*Notícias* 2013).

In Inharrime, talk and debates about roads are not always about their negative aspects. There are roads that are considered to be good and passable during all seasons of the year, such as the road from the Mocumbi intersection to Cogono. This road is generally considered to be an example to be followed of other road interventions, particularly the works to be done on the stretch from the EN1 to the Mocumbi intersection.

A fruitful discussion of the decentralisation process and of the provision of public services must take into account the views of state representatives and of road users. This debate also needs to be enriched by notes on the history of local settlements, the context in which national policies are conceived, and a presentation of specific empirical cases. In what follows, I anchor my discussion on two roads, namely the Mocumbi–Mejoôte and the Inharrime–Panda roads.

Mocumbi–Mejoôte: An abandoned road

As a result of the continual appeals for regular maintenance of the Mocumbi–Mejoôte road made by the community of Mahalamba locality during work visits by the district administrator, preparations began in 2004 for an intervention along the 14km stretch that links the two settlements. In November 2007, the tender was awarded to a contractor from Gaza province who took responsibility for undertaking ‘regular maintenance and localised improvements’ to the road. The contract envisaged that the work would be concluded in four months. The contractor proposed an approach that combined labour-intensive work and the use of machinery.

In January 2008, with the support of the local state representatives in Mocumbi and Mejoôte, the contractor met with a group of residents willing to provide labour for the development in exchange for a remuneration. On the Mocumbi side, a group of 20 residents agreed with the contractor for weeding, and cutting and removing trees, with the use of shovels and hoes. They would be paid 50 meticais a day. On the Mejoôte side, the same process was repeated and another group was formed to undertake the same activity up to the border between Chambá and Mejoôte settlements (6km). Both groups agreed to start working while contracts were being drawn up. But, unlike the group from Mocumbi, the Mejoôte group agreed to use their own tools for the job. In practice, the workers on both sides also removed the soil from the 10-metre buffer on the road and opened ditches, since the equipment for these activities arrived late.

Owing to the delay in the arrival of the equipment, the intervention, initially scheduled to last just four months, was extended for a period of nine months. In addition to the delay in concluding the work, there was an additional problem: the groups hired locally were not being paid. After several complaints and threats to strike, they received a sum corresponding to the payment of three months. Later, after they had lost contact with the contractor, they took the foreman who used to sleep in the camp hostage. When they realised that he was in a situation similar to their own, they released him.

Contacts with the administrative post headquarters and with the district government did not produce the desired results. They then tried blockading the road, but local state representatives quickly convinced them that, as residents of the area, they would be the people most affected by the blockade if the few public-transport vehicles that ventured onto that road stopped doing so. Eventually, the few machines that were stationed in the campsite built for the contractor were removed under cover of night and, with the machines, went the hopes of local residents receiving the money owed to them. The work was not completed and, in

late 2009, the district government reluctantly recognised that the contractor had abandoned the project. This situation, dating from 2008, remained unchanged up to the time fieldwork for this paper was conducted in August 2013.

The issue of abandonment of roadworks is probably one of the issues in the public-works sector which has attracted the most media attention. For the Mocumbi–Mejoôte road, it was decided to hire a contractor who would complement heavy machinery with labour-intensive work in order to simultaneously reduce costs and create jobs, thus reducing poverty, as recommended in the sector's guiding documents (MOPH 2007). In this case, neither objective was achieved because maintenance and localised improvements to the road were not delivered and the local residents who provided labour were not duly paid.

The Mocumbi–Mejoôte example also shows that, while in line with the administrative decentralisation process and the district management of unclassified roads, there is deficient communication and a lack of accountability, monitoring and follow-up on the involvement of the communities. Communication between local-government representatives and communities was limited to the moment when the contractor was introduced to the communities and local residents were selected to provide labour. Once work started, local state representatives did not return to the community to follow up on the work being done. Also, when the contractor abandoned the project, no official information was given to the communities. Repeated requests for an explanation and for payment of the outstanding debt, made at public meetings during visits by local state representatives, only obtained promises as answers.

The inspection of works under the responsibility of the district administration is done with difficulties, given the limited number of competent staff available. Thus, community leaders and local state representatives who occasionally visit areas where interventions are taking place are the ones who do the technical follow-up concerning the work being done. As a result of the inspection model adopted, it was not possible to protect the interests of the residents who offered their labour for the development, to mitigate the effects of the abandonment of the project, or to find a solution for paying the money owed to local workers.

Inharrime–Panda: A durable road

One of the three roads in Inharrime district currently considered to be 'in good condition' is the Inharrime–Panda road. Following a sector guideline which advises that, whenever possible, local materials should be used for building roads, ANE undertook tests and built a road based on limestone soils, which seems to offer a model to be followed in the province. Unlike the predominant soils in the

region, limestone soil better conserves its integrity and the result is a road that requires few resources for maintenance and is passable during all periods of the year – a durable road.

The view of ANE's technical staff is in contrast with that presented by the residents and road users interviewed in the Inharrime district. Although they never questioned the passability of the road, many citizens regarded the work as incomplete because, as a resident in the town of Inharrime, explained:

in its current condition, the road lasts and resists the rains but the surface removes all quality from the work undertaken because the vehicles do not resist. You won't put your car for one or two years on that road.⁸

Another interviewee noted that the road is passable, but at the same time dangerous:

My brother turned over on that road but he was lucky. That road is very dangerous and there have been many accidents even when motorists are not travelling at high speed.⁹

The complaints of the Inharrime residents are captured in detail in one of the songs of the successful musician, Champion, in 2013:

*I bought a car; it was ruined by the road
I bought a motor-bike; it was ruined by the road
I bought a second; it was ruined by the road
I bought a third; it was ruined by the road
Now I have bought the fourth, which will also be ruined by the Panda road.
In Inharrime we are suffering because of the road
Poor us, we are suffering because of the Panda road.
Everything we do turns out wrong
You know, here in Inharrime there are youths who bought cars but parked them
because of the road*

*When we travel by minibus
Look at the suffering that happens
When we crash
Look at the suffering which is happening*

⁸ Interview with resident of Inharrime town, 13 June 2013.

⁹ Interview with resident of Chacane, 14 June 2013.

As we are jolted

Chorus (twice)

Inharrime, we cannot improve ourselves [grow]

We are not going to improve ourselves

Inharrime, we are not going to flourish

Because of the Panda and Mocumbine road

Old men no longer father children because their reproductive system is affected by the road

The pelvis is displaced because of the stones,

When a person walks, the pelvis is warped

I no longer see people making pregnancy appointments at the hospital since they no longer become pregnant because of the stones

We are asking for the stones to be removed

It's worth bringing a digger to take out all the stones and leave the old sand ... it would be better

Aye Inharrime we cannot develop because of the road

One of these days when going from Panda to Inharrime I found stones in a meeting

One group asked the other: you from the Panda–Maxixe road, what are you doing [producing]?

The Maxixe stones: we have managed to ruin 16 tonnes of taillights

Then the Inharrime stones said they had managed to destroy 15 tonnes of tyres

Then they ended [the meeting] with applause ...

It was then that I realised that poverty has entered [established itself] in our land ...

We are not going to do well because of the stones

It would be better to take away the stones and leave the natural soil that used to be here

We were used to our soil that was here, rather than the jolting that exists now

When you travel in the minibus listen to what it does ... girigirigido, girigirigido, girigirigido ... bam, bam, bam ... bá ... pfoklho! (Champion, Rua Nharrime–Panda 2012)

To the questions Champion raises in the song above, residents of Inharrime add the fact that the surface becomes excessively slippery when wet and that the white dust thrown up by traffic is damaging to a person's health. The same questions about the quality of the road were asked in the Panda district. This led prosecutors in both districts to raise the matter with the Inhambane Provincial Attorney's Office. As a result, the Inhambane Provincial Directorate of Public Works set up an assessment team composed of technical staff from several institutions to assess the matter. This multidisciplinary team concluded that the road camber users say to be one of the causes of accidents, 'corresponds to what was prescribed in the project, in order to drain the storm waters' and that 'the technique of using limestone presents no danger to public health ... however, inhaling dust of any kind can cause respiratory illnesses, and so care should be taken with any type of dust' (ANE 2011). The same document recognises the need to erect traffic signs to prevent vehicles from travelling at high speeds.

The difference in views concerning the Inharrime–Panda road between the beneficiaries on the one hand, and ANE and the provincial and district governments on the other, shows the extent of the alienation of the beneficiaries of the road. On the side of the government, the road is a success story that should be replicated because of its low-cost construction using local materials and its durability thanks to the use of more consistent soils based on limestone. But the users propose, in the extreme example of Champion, that the 'natural' road would be preferable because it would not cause accidents, health problems and economic losses. In the final analysis, this shows the inefficiency of the social work undertaken *a priori* and *a posteriori* regarding the participation of, and information given to, the community, thereby failing to place users at the centre of the provision of public goods and services.

Communities and public service provision

The district government prioritises its interventions based on production capacity, on the existence of a health post or school, or the size of the population. Planning the rehabilitation of access roads is done through visits of state representatives to the communities as well as through the exercise of participatory planning headed by district technical teams. In this type of planning, the channels of communication between the district government and the communities are not fluid and there are cases in which local state representatives also feel they have been marginalised. As one community leader and member of the local council explained:

We, as local leaders, feel that in the eyes of the communities we are implicated. The plan should go from the grass roots to the top. This is done and the plan is approved by the Local District Council. The problem is that when we turn to implementation, the plan is never implemented at 100%, both for roads and for water supply. One of the reasons is that there are always chargebacks but they don't tell us why.¹⁰

The communication service should also be rooted in the local history and imagination of the communities. Several interviewees considered the existing roads insufficient and presented preferences for some access routes used since the colonial period and which, if rehabilitated, would bring additional benefits to the local economy. In Nhapadiane, a primary teacher explained:

We have roads that we think are priorities. For example, the rehabilitation of the Mutamba-Coguno-Manjacaze road is always mentioned when members of the government visit. We have the Chicodoene-Mavela route. We have the road that goes from here [Nhapadiane] to Mocumbi. If these roads were rehabilitated, the surplus produced by the population would be able to find a way out. Even public transport operators would come in.¹¹

If the provision of public services is the State's responsibility, the supply of such services cannot be made to respond only to plans and statistics determined by the State. It is also the State's responsibility, as the existing regulations require that communication takes place between the service providers and their beneficiaries. In the case of the roads sub-sector in Inharrime, this communication is not taking place in a way that services offered meet the multiple expectations of beneficiaries.

Conclusion

Decentralisation in the roads subsector is still in its infancy. While the decentralisation project is expressed at the level of official public statements and documents, in practice there is just a deconcentration to the districts of activities and resources regarding unclassified roads. In face of the needs of the district, the infrastructure fund has not yet produced the desired effects in terms either of making the district responsible for the roads network or of the emergence of local contractors.

10 Interview with a member of the Nhapadiane Locality Council, 20 June 2013.

11 Interview with primary teacher, Nhapadiane, 20 June 2013.

As has been shown in the cases of the Mocumbi–Mejoôte and Inharrime–Panda roads, the planning, execution, monitoring and maintenance of roads in the district do not place the users at the centre of the process. On the contrary, there is a distance separating the ANE from the SDPI, and separating both institutions from the users of the roads. For Inharrime and other districts in Mozambique, development will require the inclusion of the history and imagination of the beneficiary groups in the planning and offering of public services.

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