

The Journal of Social Encounters

Volume 7
Issue 1 *Extractive Politics, Conflict and
Peacebuilding*

Article 2

2023

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Recommended Citation

Blanes, Ruy Llera; Rodrigues, Ana Carolina; and Gonçalves, Euclides (2023) "The Multiple Paths of Extraction, Dispossession, and Conflict in Mozambique: From Tete's Coal Mines to Cabo Delgado's LNG Projects," *The Journal of Social Encounters*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, 4-25.

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**The Multiple Paths of Extraction, Dispossession, and Conflict in Mozambique:
From Tete's Coal Mines to Cabo Delgado's LNG Projects¹**

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When it comes to extractive processes, conflict, and peacebuilding, the case of Mozambique has recently taken center stage due to the emergence of an Islamic insurgency movement in the liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in its northern province of Cabo Delgado. This is but one part of a complex process of highly conflictual extractivist projects unfolding in the country. In this article, we argue that, beyond the specific case of LNG, there is a logic of continuity and accumulation regarding extraction-related grievances that, over the years, has generated community resentment in natural resource rich areas. Multiple accumulating forms of dispossession have accentuated community grievances in Tete's coal mining areas and Cabo Delgado's extractivist projects (LNG or otherwise), driving conflict associated with extractive industry projects. This paper is based on multiple rounds of field research conducted with residents and displaced people from extraction areas in the provinces of Tete and Cabo Delgado between 2012 and 2022. The analysis contributes to current debates on extractive politics, conflict, and peacebuilding.

Keywords: Mozambique; Extractivism; Conflict; Community protests; Temporality

Introduction

Over the last two decades, Mozambique has entered the international spotlight due to the discovery and exploration of large reserves of coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the provinces of Tete and Cabo Delgado. This is but one chapter in a far longer history of extractivism, exploitation, and the commodification of land in this country. As several researchers have noted, the colonial and postcolonial history of Mozambique is intertwined with histories of extraction and domination, from the 19th-century colonial *companhias* (chartered companies) and *prazo* (royally attributed estate) plantations to the international mining consortiums of the early 20th century and the current extractivist revival (e.g., Brito et al., 2010; Direito, 2020; Eusébio, 2020; Ishemo, 1995; Vail & White, 1981). In this framework, the Vale S.A. coal mining project, for instance, was not a novelty for the Moatize region of Tete province. Open mines had previously been exploited during the colonial period until 1975 before being nationalized and then outsourced to Eastern Germany companies during postcolonial socialism (Schubert, 2020).

Recent developments, however, have raised important questions about the framework for understanding the current global processes of resource extraction and their consequences in terms of environmental sustainability, conflict, and insecurity. For instance, while coal exploration started in the colonial period, the industrialization of Mozambique's coal gained international visibility with the arrival of Brazilian multinational mining and logistics company Vale in 2011 (Cezne, 2021). Additionally, the 2010 discovery of significant natural gas reserves off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado positioned the country as a key

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supplier of the global LNG industry. In 2017, however, this last discovery was followed by the emergence of an Islamic insurgency movement that started in Cabo Delgado and has since led to massive displacements of local communities and the deployment of both international (Southern African Development Community, SADC) military forces and Rwandan troops to ensure the pacification of the region.

The correlation between the LNG industry projects and the Islamic insurgency has motivated countless debates about the situation in Cabo Delgado, generating multiple, sometimes conspiratorial, theories about the problem. Keeping in mind that there was no insurgency before the LNG projects began, one might question to what extent the development of the extractivist industry is associated with the conflict. While some pundits and commentators have situated the insurgency through the framework of a continental politico-military movement of jihad against Western interests (e.g., Rogeiro, 2019), others associate it with international trafficking networks in diverse sectors ranging from illegal logging to piracy, the drug trade, and human trafficking (Brincat, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2021). Others have directly identified the arrival of the transnational extractivist industry in the region as the source of the insurgency (Alberdi & Barroso, 2021).

Researchers such as Joseph Hanlon (2018), Eric Morier-Genoud (2020), and Jerry Maquenzi and João Feijó (2019; Feijó 2021), on the other hand, have argued that the insurgency needs to be understood through the larger frameworks of deprivation, marginalization, and dispossession taking place in the region. This is particularly applicable among the local youth, who are being increasingly deprived of livelihood opportunities, leaving them stuck in an endless cycle of poverty due to land and resource grabbing by external actors motivated by the development of a full-scale extractivist economy. In addition to natural gas, Cabo Delgado harbors significant reserves of gemstones, including rubies, and graphite. Other authors, such as Luca Bussotti and Charles Torres (2020), have argued more explicitly for a “fragile state” approach to this conflict. They outline a history of institutional neglect of northern Mozambicans’ needs which could explain the increasing popularity of an *al shabab* (youth) movement of resistance among local communities. In addressing the realities of a fragile-turned-authoritarian state in which people are deprived of their livelihoods, Mozambican historian Yussuf Adam puts it bluntly, asserting that “land only belongs to the state when the landowner is poor” (Miguel, 2019). Following this idea, Hanlon (2021) has also recently framed the Cabo Delgado conflict as a civil war process motivated by a powerful grievance against the “state”² and its role in the perpetuation of inequality and exploitation in the “resource-boom” era. The idea of a resource-boom in Mozambique refers not only to its natural gas reserves but to a more overarching process of transformation of the Mozambican economy over the last decades marked by the installation of modern transnational extractivist projects— from Vale to Anadarko, Total, Eni, Syrah, and Kenmare, among others—across the country.

At the same time, the cases of both Tete and Cabo Delgado easily align with discussion of the “resource curse” (Norman et al., 2010) or “presource curse” (Cust & Mihalyi, 2017) that accompanies extractive development, which positions resource abundance and its anticipated or ongoing exploitation as inevitably leading to increased poverty and conflict. This can provide a framework for understanding how extractive infrastructural developments such as LNG and coal projects contribute to conflict despite transnational corporations’ investment in developmentalist and growth-oriented peacebuilding strategies which feed into “Eldorado imaginaries” (Chambisso 2021), social responsibility actions such as building schools and hospitals, and transparency initiatives like public consultation (Bachmann & Schouten, 2018). From this perspective, extractivist projects usually enhance what Thea Riofrancos (2022) has

called the “sustainability-security nexus,” both in terms of promoting social development and protecting owned assets and investments. But, as Nicolás Acosta (2022) recently argued, despite the discursive and practical investment of corporations in peacebuilding and democratization, the tension between industrial development and local socio-environmental necessities is an unsolved challenge. As Roy White (2013) duly noted, when it comes to the gap between expectations and real consequences, resource extraction always “leaves something behind,” producing what Gavin Bridge (2004) defined as inherently “contested terrains” due to, for example, increased speculation and tensions regarding land use and ownership.

In this article, we propose moving beyond the LNG/insurgency debate and argue that in the past twenty years, Mozambican industrial development discourse, policy, and practice has generated multiple forms of community resentment in natural resource rich areas. Much of this resentment has been voiced by Mozambican environmental civic society organizations, peasant activist groups, research groups, and human rights actors who have contested state and corporate actors’ triumphant narratives regarding extractivist projects. Members of many of these groups contributed to the formation of the *Coligação Cívica sobre Indústria Extractiva* (Civic Coalition on Extractive Industry or CCIE), an organization focused on monitoring the development of extractive industries in Mozambique, in 2018. At this point, it is necessary to note that while critical perspectives on extractivism from activists and academics usually highlight the negative environmental and social consequences of these industries, this does not mean that all people affected by such projects necessarily experience them negatively.

In Tete’s coal mining areas and in Cabo Delgado’s LNG project zones, diverse forms of dispossession have accentuated community grievances associated with extractive industry projects, creating additional conflict at the intersection of extractivism and development (Olsson & Gooch, 2019). We show that the recent history of coal and LNG in Mozambique cannot be disconnected from a longer temporal and larger geographical context of extractive-developmental expectations and territorial dispossession—and resistance to dispossession—that has marked the experiences of local rural communities across Mozambique (Porsani et al., 2017; Shankland & Gonçalves, 2016; Walker, 2021). As argued by several authors (e.g. Aalders et al., 2021; D’Angelo & Pijpers, 2018; Ferry & Limbert, 2008; Jacka, 2022; Lesutis, 2021; Weszkalnys, 2014; Wiegink, 2018), extractive, industrial, and infrastructural endeavors rely on powerful temporal economies of anticipation and imaginative design. More often than not, it is in the disconnect between the anticipated and the actual experience of these endeavors that grievances and resentment emerge, as reflected in the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Mozambican National Resistance or RENAMO) attacks. Through the lens of spatiotemporal continuum and accumulation proposed here, we argue that it is necessary to expand discussions of extractivism and conflict to include both memories of past events and territorially contiguous examples. This perspective was continually brought to mind throughout our fieldwork with civic society and environmental organizations in Maputo, which often emphasized connections between current experiences related to LNG and past experience with coal in Tete.

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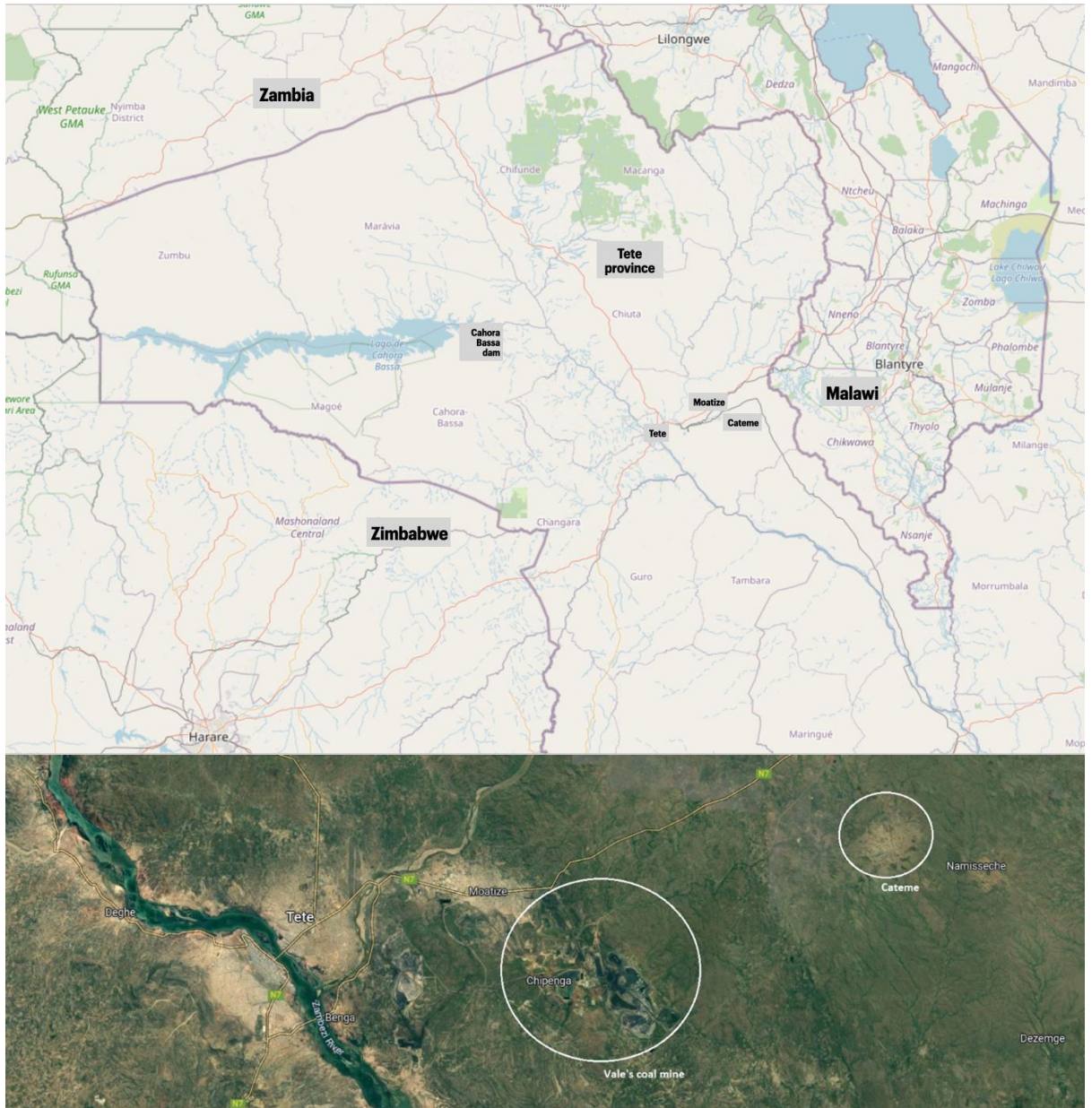
In the following text, we present the cases of Tete and Cabo Delgado in order to compare the forms of community resentment in each province.

Development Utopias in the Coal and LNG Industries

Tete

Figure 1

Map of Tete Province and Relevant Areas



Note. Edited from Open Street Maps and Google Maps.

In 2004, when the Brazilian mining company Vale was granted a concession for the coal mines in Moatize, a district in Mozambique's northwestern province of Tete, political and corporate discourse heightened expectations around development of the region. The government largely endorsed such discourse by presenting economic growth as a continuation of peace efforts (Kirshner et al., 2020).³ In this narrative, population resettlement was presented as a necessary sacrifice and an opportunity for communities to benefit from economic growth. In this manner, the Mozambican post-socialist, concession-based extractive industries of the early 2000s were

built on top of the ruins of its colonial-era coal extraction economy (Alexopolou & Juif, 2017; Andrade, 2022; Frei, 2021). In other words, developmentalist ideology validated communities' displacement despite inappropriate legal and administrative frameworks for conducting resettlements in response to foreign direct investments such as that made by Vale (HRW, 2013; see Walker, 2021).

Although Vale was not the only mining company affecting communities in the region, its reactivation of Moatize's coal mines displaced 1,313 families, more than any previous mining project in the region. Around 717 families belonging to four communities were moved to the rural resettlement of Cateme, located 40 km away from their original location and where, among other issues, housing infrastructure proved unable to withstand the first rainy season. Low-fertility soil and a lack of streams to supply water also prevented families from continuing essential livelihood strategies such as agriculture, brickmaking, and fishing, which resulted in poverty and the degradation of community life. Affected families had their environmental rights severely violated when they were forced to give up their *machambas* (small plots of land, usually 1–2 ha, cultivated by families mostly for self-consumption) around the Zambezi Valley.⁴ This impacted people's food security as well as their ability to generate sporadic income by selling surplus produce on the roadside. In 2013, for example, the resettled communities of Cateme were impoverished and strategies to restore communities' livelihoods failed (Rodrigues, 2014). Later studies in Cateme suggested that around 30% of families had abandoned their homes and that this could be understood as both a coping strategy in the face of livelihood deprivation as well as a form of silent political resistance to extractive developmentalism (Eusébio, 2020; Lesutis, 2019b).

Problems surrounding Vale's resettlement policies gained media coverage and academic attention when protests broke out in Moatize in early 2012. A group of resettled people, referred to in the media as *oleiros* (brickmakers), organized themselves to denounce the poor conditions in the resettlement (Campos Mello, 2013). These included the lack of essential infrastructure such as a market, the poor conditions of the homes, which started cracking within a year of families moving in, and the limited number of initiatives to restore people's livelihoods, including road access and transportation to connect communities isolated in Cateme to their places of origin and other roadside markets. Using direct action strategies, the brickmaker movement blocked the Sena railway⁵ and disrupted coal exports for days. As a response, they were violently repressed by state security forces such as the elite army *Forças de Intervenção Rápida* (Rapid Intervention Forces or FIR), with some protestors being beaten and arrested (Barroso, 2012; Macamo & Coutinho, 2020). While people were protesting against violations of human rights during the resettlement process, they also became targets of police brutality, which was widely denounced by civil society in Mozambique and abroad. In the wake of these events, scholars and activists made an effort to draw procedural and political lessons from what was seen as the first large-scale development-induced displacement and resettlement⁶ in Mozambique. These lessons would inform advocacy actions as well as set a legal precedent for further resettlements in the context of forthcoming megaprojects such as the gas city in Palma (Van der Ploeg & Vanclay, 2017; Wiegink, 2020).

In December 2020, Vale announced an ambitious sustainability plan to, among other things, halt coal mining. This came at a time when the company could align its goals with broader claims of restoring the post-pandemic global economy by phasing out “dirty energy” and transitioning towards green energy. The effective result of this decision was turning the page on Mozambique and selling the mines in Moatize. Vale's term as the major shareholder of the Moatize project ended, however, without delivering on its initial promise of utopian

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development. The futuristic argument that sacrificing communities' livelihoods would be justified by local and national gains could not stand up to the reality of the loss of about \$72 billion MZN (approximately €789 million EUR) in tax benefits from 2011 to 2019 during Vale's time in Mozambique (Cascais, 2021; Mapiisse & Mate, 2021). It also became increasingly difficult to sustain the development narrative due to the 55.5% fall in the megaproject's income from 2020 to 2021 announced by the Mozambican Ministry of Finances, a loss of about \$56.6 billion MZN (around €620 million EUR) (Lambo 2022).

Notwithstanding the massive investments in the mining sector, Tete and Moatize's development landscape remains wanting. In January 2022, however, Vale was sentenced to pay \$1 billion MZN (€15.5 million EUR) in compensation to families resettled in Cateme 360 Mozambique 2022) for "unfair and abusive" conduct that exposed families to years of peril. A few months later in May, the company sold its assets to Vulcan, a branch of the Indian mining company Jindal Africa. The handover was tainted by a miners' strike to demand an addendum to their contract as well as wage compensation for contract termination with Vale, all of which were left unpaid (AllAfrica 2022). Overall, Vale's exit after two decades in Mozambique left behind peasant families who were never properly compensated; entire communities promised resettlement, some of whom are still living inside the mining concession to this day; and, equally important, a missed opportunity to improve access to affordable energy, support the industrialization of the region, create jobs and other economic opportunities⁷, and contribute to the wellbeing of the people living there. Such failures gave rise to what Joshua Kirshner and Marcus Power (2015) describe as a landscape of "post-development" in which expectations of an economic boom are challenged by the reality of landscape ruination and increased social inequality.

Cabo Delgado

Figure 2

Map of Cabo Delgado Province and Relevant Areas



Note. Edited from Open Street Maps and Google Maps.

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The discovery of natural gas reserves offshore of Cabo Delgado in 2010 had a profound impact in Mozambique.⁸ The figures were staggering: An estimated over 200 trillion cu ft of natural gas was found distributed throughout the concession areas of Coral Sul, Golfinho/Atum, and Rovuma, amounting to about half of the natural gas reserves on the African continent. This not only enabled a dramatic reconfiguration of Mozambique's industrial landscape, but also affected multiple different economic, juridical, and political sectors, creating a powerful expectation—similar to the early days of the coal mining revival described above—of a long awaited exit from Mozambique's history of underdevelopment.⁹ As news outlets reported back in 2013, Cabo Delgado was, in those days, a region of “new jobs, new services and many expectations” (Sousa, 2013) motivated by the arrival of transnational corporations,¹⁰ state actors, and multiple projects for urban development that were perceived to multiply the possibilities for the livelihoods of people across the region. This was therefore welcomed by the local populations as an opportunity to escape long-term cycles of poverty, either through participation in the emerging economy or through the resettlement compensation processes.

Years of intense activity followed the discovery, with cities on the coast of the Cabo Delgado province like Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, and Pemba becoming hubs for national and international agents engaged in the material development of industry and associated services ranging from construction projects to consultations and surveying. At the same time, these cities became magnets for youths in surrounding rural communities who sought labor opportunities in the same industry or in the lateral economy emerging around it, including work as drivers and laborers or through small trade opportunities. In a matter of a few years, Palma and Pemba experienced significant urban growth.

In 2017, this “triumphant logic”¹¹ was challenged by the emergence of an Islamic guerrilla group that targeted rural areas in the region of Palma before eventually hitting the cities of Mocimboa da Praia in 2020 and Palma in 2021. This motivated a massive southward exodus from the cities and a dramatic refugee situation, forcing a full interruption of operations by Total due to force majeure. In April 2019, Cyclone Kenneth also caused significant damage throughout the province, destroying more than 3,000 households and creating a subsequent wave of climate refugees (ONU News, 2019).

Interestingly, these situations did not immediately hinder the powerful wave of optimism coming from state and corporate voices, which downplayed the insurgency. At the same time as these incursions were taking place and waves of climate and war refugees were traveling southward to Pemba, Ancuabe, and Metuge, industrial conferences and summits were still being held in Maputo, where major urban development projects such as the Gas City were presented. The Gas City, or *Cidade do Gás*, is a modern urban development project expected to house 150,000 inhabitants involved in the LNG industry in Palma. The project's concrete timeline remains uncertain, however.

Meanwhile, this onshore uncertainty was counteracted with the promotion of offshore activities. In November 2021, President Filipe Nyusi proudly presented a Korean-built floating platform to operate in the Coral Sul area. In a statement issued in Seoul in response to the undocking of the platform, Nyusi insisted that “peace, security and stability are essential conditions for the development of the economy, including natural gas projects, for which his Government is determined to do everything to remove the last obstacle until restor[ing] security in Cabo Delgado” (Munguambe, 2021). This was to be one of very few occasions in which Nyusi officially addressed the insurgency problem in Cabo Delgado.

This persistent optimism needs to be contextualized within the discourse and narratives of growth, peace, and prosperity that have sustained mobilization toward the development of an industrial infrastructure in Cabo Delgado. Here, both state and corporate actors were key in the production of a working discursive framework which was supported by powerful propaganda (see Figure 3) and anchored in several material dispositions and developments, ranging from the construction of transport and communication infrastructure to the necessary juridical initiatives to enable the industrial development. Below, we take a closer look at different aspects of this framework.

Figure 3

Billboard at Maputo International Airport Arrivals



Note. A billboard at Maputo International Airport arrivals reading “USD 15 billion investment by MLNG Area 1 to drive Mozambique growth.” Photo taken by Ruy Blanes, November 2021.

First, the Mozambican government promoted a set of legislative revisions which amended previous land and environment laws to make them more compatible within extractive activities. This was the case with the regulations and diplomas issued from 2010 to 2014 regarding resettlements due to economic activities and legislation regarding environmental protection. We are referring specifically to the Law of Environmental Audits (Lei de Auditoria Ambiental) of 2011 and the 2015 Regulation for Environmental Impact Assessment, which produced the necessary compliance processes to meet global environmental standards, as well as the 2014 diploma regarding resettlement in the framework of economic activities (Regulamento sobre o Processo de Reassentamento Resultante de Actividades Económicas), which specifically

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framed the LNG project as a priority over other socio-juridical considerations, including environmental protections.

These actions enabled a widespread land concession strategy through the issuing of public licenses known as DUATs (Direito do Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra, Right of Use and Benefit from the Land) that grant recipients the right to use and benefit from originally state-owned land¹². This motivated the development of standards for environmental assessment and resettlement negotiation processes, legitimizing the work of the transnational companies on the ground. Each industrial development has been accompanied by an environmental impact assessment (EIA) including analysis of the social and economic impacts of each project and the respective compliance measures to mitigate these impacts, such as resettlement plans or economic compensations.

Through this framework, multiple urban development plans were released for major infrastructural interventions in the city and district of Palma and, to a lesser extent, Pemba. In 2014, ENH (Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos, National Hydrocarbon Company) presented a general LNG implementation plan that included a General Urbanization Plan (*Plano Geral de Urbanização* or PGU) for the district of Palma with a total cost of \$116 billion USD that would cover 18,000 ha of land, of which 5,000 ha would be designated for LNG processing purposes (Ribeiro, 2014). As initially announced by ENH, the plan did not involve the resettlement of local communities, which were to be incorporated into ecological buffer or peri-urban areas (Ribeiro, 2014). Soon after, however, a resettlement plan was announced. As the Mozambican NGO *Centro de Integridade Pública* eventually stated, the whole process unfolded in a very obscure fashion due to a lack of information, unfulfilled promises, and unequal compensations (CIP, 2017).

At the same time, on the corporate side, the main player, Anadarko, which was later replaced by French multinational Total Energies under the consortium Mozambique LNG¹³, worked to establish an industrial development plan complemented by social responsibility and environmental sustainability actions. For instance, the inland village of Quitunda to the east of Palma was designed by Total/Mozambique LNG to harbor resettled communities from the Afungi Peninsula, an area where the company had been granted a DUAT. The architects presented Quitunda as a sustainable project designed “after extensive consultations involving stakeholder engagement, consideration of local contextual factors, existing urban development models, principles of urban planning and urbanism, and sustainable development guidelines” (Mozambique LNG, n.d.). In 2019, President Nyusi inaugurated Quitunda, predicting that it would very soon “become a city” (Muchano, 2019). Just days after the inauguration, the NGO *Justiça Ambiental* denounced that the resettled families did not have land to produce food for their long-term subsistence and could expect only three months of food handouts for their new kitchens (Cossa, 2019). Not long afterwards, the war and Cyclone Kenneth disrupted the whole process even further and Quitunda became a refugee center for thousands.

Thus, while these sustainability, accountability, and peacebuilding procedures were presented as successful in terms of producing consensus, the impact was perceived quite differently at the ground level, in particular in terms of land access and maintenance of livelihoods. For instance, in the area of Milamba on the coastline of the Afungi Peninsula's DUAT, the projected site of the main factory infrastructure of Total's LNG project, negotiations with the local community involved their relocation to Quitunda. While this was not the initial resettlement destination for the community, insurgency activity in and around Palma pushed them into this inland area. From the perspective of Total, this facilitated the resettlement process, but it was

denounced by Mozambican environmentalist organizations such as *Sekelekani*, *Justiça Ambiental*, and *Centro Terra Viva (CTV)* for causing further conflicts.

Specifically, *Justiça Ambiental* (*Justiça Ambiental et al.*, 2020) co-authored a report confronting the French consultants and organizations involved in the process of compensation. It also detailed the reactions of the former inhabitants of Milamba, who complained of unfulfilled promises of compensation and being doubly deprived of their livelihoods because they had to abandon their traditional fishing activities and they were not given any access to machambas in Quitunda or elsewhere.¹⁴ They also complained about the design of the houses in Quitunda, which did not reflect their family and kinship structures or livelihood routines. Furthermore, the increased insecurity prevented many locals from circulating in the region in search of other livelihood options. At the same time, as a CTV activist explained to us in Pemba during November 2021, the process of negotiation had been highly conflictual. The circulation of rumors regarding jobs and heavy compensations offered to only some of the communities affected the local people's expectations regarding the process and created intercommunity suspicion. *Sekelekani*, on the other hand, denounced the superficial and unclear information offered to local populations regarding legislation and their rights and described several intimidation tactics that were being used to force the Milamba communities to agree to proposed solutions (Velasco, 2016).¹⁵

Interestingly enough, these consequences had already been predicted in the early EIAs carried out by the *consultor impacto* for Anadarko:

The Project expects that everyone residing within the Afungi Project Site will be permanently displaced resulting in loss of dwellings and infrastructure associated with the household, livelihood activities and community assets within the Afungi Project Site. Access to areas of collective natural resource value (e.g., forests, wooded grassland, flood plains/lowlands, dune shrub vegetation, fruit trees, and coconut plantations) will be permanently lost due to the acquisition of land required for the Project. In addition, fishing and sea-based transportation will be affected by Project activities in Palma Bay during the construction and operational phases of the Project due to increased vessel traffic and safety exclusion zones around Project infrastructure. The impacts associated with physical and economic displacement are expected to be of MAJOR significance both during the construction and operational phases. Following the implementation of the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP), the significance will be reduced to MODERATE. (Impacto, 2014)

On a macro level, the cases of Cateme in Tete and Milamba in Cabo Delgado expose challenges to the straightforward peace-development framework that the Mozambican government has used since the Rome General Peace Accord of 1992 to attract foreign investors and stimulate growth through extractivism. This neoliberal peacebuilding project metamorphosed into megaprojects initially animated Mozambicans' dreams of a better life. The failure to fulfill such dreams epitomized by Cateme and Milamba illustrates the divergence between the corporate and local perceptions of the performance of peacebuilding and consensus initiatives. These can be understood as among the more notorious, visible examples on a temporal and geographical continuum of extractive processes which are granted more or less exposure and monetization. In the next section, we will highlight other forms of violence surrounding extractive endeavors in both Tete and Cabo Delgado.

Silent extractions, invisible conflicts

Tete

In the beginning of 2014, a press release from the Mozambican Peasant Union (*União Nacional dos Camponeses* or UNAC) called attention to the general deterioration of peasants' livelihoods in central Mozambique (UNAC, 2014). The document made public how the resurgent conflict between RENAMO and *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Liberation Front of Mozambique or FRELIMO) and massive development-induced displacements during the previous year had affected peasant livelihoods in Moatize. Curiously, from 2014 to 2017, and again in 2021, despite both parties signing the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (2014) and the Peace and National Reconciliation Agreement (2019), trains transporting Vale's coal became targets of RENAMO's armed groups, leading the company to suspend coal transportation (Sebastião, 2021; Regalia, 2017). At that point, the government discourse focused on the need to build union within the country and to preserve and repair infrastructure. RENAMO expressed discontent with the geography of wealth distribution in the country and with extractivism in the north directing riches to the south. Despite most of the newly discovered natural resources being exploited in central and northern Mozambique, power and wealth remained largely concentrated in the south, and particularly in the city of Maputo, while communities spread across the rest of the country bore the burden of displacement and vulnerability. In light of this disparity, RENAMO wanted to expand its access to the political and administrative spheres of the state, perhaps to avoid political ostracism (Beck, 2016; see also Macuane et al., 2018).

Awareness of the extractive industry's unequal profit distribution galvanized public opposition due to the general perception of disenfranchisement—even the jobs created by megaprojects in central and northern Mozambique, for example, often ended up going to expats or qualified workers from the south (Mosca & Selemene, 2011). In 2015, it was difficult to estimate how many people had already been displaced across central Mozambique by the resurgence of conflict between RENAMO and FRELIMO. While Mozambican authorities claimed just 100 people had fled, Malawian officials reported that 700 refugees had arrived in the south-western district of Mwanza (Economist Intelligence, 2015). Three years later in 2018, 3,000 refugees, some of whom were coming from Moatize, were still in Malawi awaiting repatriation to Mozambique (Sebastião, 2018). In the case of Cateme, protests dwindled after 2014 not because people's living conditions have improved, but due to the erosion of peace and widespread fear on behalf of the protesters of being associated with RENAMO or FRELIMO. Without social mobilization, as of early 2020 even the model farm set up to train peasants to increase agricultural production and tackle food insecurity had been shut down.

Cabo Delgado

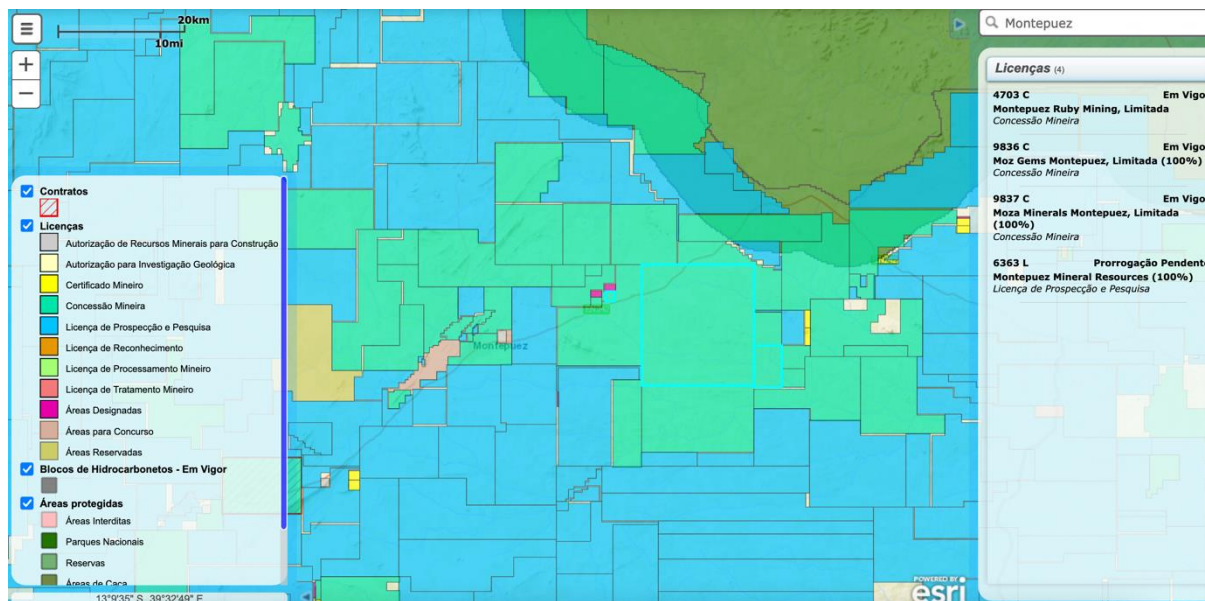
The province of Cabo Delgado is home to multiple other extractive processes in addition to LNG. One such case is that of the gemstone industry, most notably in the eastern district of Montepuez, where a significant amount of land was subject to concession to multinational companies such as Syrah and Gemfields, which established the subsidiary Montepuez Ruby Mining (MRM) to oversee operations there (see Figure 4).¹⁶ This led to two concomitant processes: The reduction of available land for small-scale domestic farming on *machambas* and the criminalization of traditional artisanal mining (*garimpo*), which was the main source of livelihood for many local communities. As noted in several news reports (e.g., Anacleto, 2020; Való, 2016), this produced a situation of recurrent confrontations between artisanal miners and corporate security which escalated to the violation of human rights. This includes the deaths of several local artisanal miners who were allegedly buried alive. The first instance of this occurred in August 2015, when an artisanal miner was allegedly buried alive by a MRM

bulldozer (Valói, 2016), followed by another case in early 2021, in which two “illegal miners” were buried alive in the MRM concession zone. While the company attributed the cause of these deaths to illegal mining activity in unsafe conditions, which caused 25 deaths in 2020 alone (Diário Económico 2021), several other reports mentioned violence by state forces, including the local Protection Police, FIR, and the Natural Resources and Environment Protection Force, and private security forces against local *garimpeiros*, while other sectors of the Mozambican state remained silent (CCIE, 2019).¹⁷

In this respect, there is a longer history of violence in Montepuez which precedes the insurgence movement itself. This stems from the process of resource encroachment and the criminalization of communities' resource-based livelihoods, oftentimes through state-backed securitization using what Chris Alden and Sérgio Chichava described as “legal and quasi-legal tools such as detentions and disappearances” to forcibly remove local farmers and artisanal miners (2020, p. 8). A later report by the same authors reinforces the link between resource securitization and political violence, particularly during the electoral period of 2019 when several people were prevented from exercising the right to vote in what would, notably, later become insurgency hotspots in Cabo Delgado, such as Macomia and Mocímboa da Praia (Alden & Chichava, 2020, p. 4).

Figure 4

Active and prospective mining concessions covering the Montepuez area



Note. From the Mozambican Mining Registration Portal, August 2022.

(<https://portals.landfolio.com/mozambique/en/>) CC Trimble Inc.

Another example is that of graphite, an increasingly popular resource in the global market. In the regions of Balama and Ancuabe, for instance, the “rediscovery”¹⁸ of graphite reserves quickly enabled a process of industrial and infrastructural development operated by the Australian corporation Syrah on what is now the largest graphite reserve in the world (Alberdi & Barroso, 2021; Khassab, 2021). As described by Berj Khassab (2021, p. 33–36), while Syrah publicly boasts a developed sustainability program, the actual process leading to the development of the mine favored resettlement and economic compensation over maintaining the livelihoods of affected communities. Likewise, expectations related to community

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involvement in the extractive process, announced by the company upon arrival, were never met (Khassab, 2021, p. 40). Furthermore, as recent reports show, these areas have also been subject to attacks by the insurgency. In June 2022, the Grafex graphite mining project in Ancuabe shut down operations after two security guards were killed (Zitamar 2022).

The examples of Tete and Cabo Delgado illustrate how conflictual processes occur beyond the boundaries of the extraction/insurgency debate. For many local communities, conflicts in central and northern Mozambique exist on a continuum of multiple overlapping displacements and grievances related to the extractive process itself, promoted by both state and corporate actors.

Conclusion: Pluralizing the Nexus of Extractivism and Conflict

When discussing the LNG situation in Maputo with local civic society actors and organizations, one thing that stood out was a collective mistrust and pessimism regarding the extractivist project which contrasted with societal and governmental optimism about the anticipated widespread benefits of this project for the Mozambican people. While the war has hindered some of this optimism, the general outlook was one of confidence. Furthermore, as per recent rumors, the conflict in Ukraine appears to be an opportunity to strengthen Mozambique's position in the global LNG market. Civic society NGOs, on the other hand, have been highly critical of the situation.

This critical stance stems from the perception of two concomitant processes: A temporal continuum and a geographical distribution of the processes of extraction and dispossession. While it would be too simplistic to claim that there is a direct correlation between the emergence of an insurgency around extractivist megaprojects in Tete and Cabo Delgado, both cases have generated highly operative spaces of developmentalist expectation. This has also mobilized local responses due to these projects' problematic material implementation, which have been either welcomed or, more often, contested. Central to this contestation has been the issue of traditional livelihoods that have no material or symbolic place in the new spatial configurations of society brought about by the megaprojects. This represents a form of displacement that goes beyond physical eviction by cutting people off from local economic life. In this respect, the cases of Tete and Cabo Delgado expose fault lines between the promises of development and the realities of dispossession that pave the way for accumulated and overlapped grievances.

This highlights the contradiction between the developmentalist narrative of extractivism and local experiences composed of grievances and discontent. It also exposes the complexity at the intersection of extraction and conflict, which are motivated not only by the logics of insurgency but by the accumulation of extractive violence (Shapiro & McNeish, 2021). This violence is silently spreading both within and beyond the LNG/insurgency nexus throughout the daily lives of Mozambicans in places like Tete and Cabo Delgado, affecting both their livelihoods and expectations for the future.

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Endnotes

¹ This article is the outcome of a research project funded by the Swedish *Vetenskapsrådet* and hosted by the University of Gothenburg's School of Global Studies. It is based on ethnographic research trips held between 2020 and 2022 to Cabo Delgado, Pemba, Montepuez, and Beira, as well as research with institutions and organizations in Maputo. More broadly, it incorporates long-term research experience in the provinces of Tete and Sofala. We would like to thank Selina Gallo-Cruz for her feedback and patience and the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback.

² Our bracketing of the "state" is motivated by the idea that there are often local identifications of statehood or estatal agency in actors and processes that are not necessarily part of the government. These can be FRELIMO oligarchs, corporate agents, NGO activists, or simply anyone arriving from the capital of Maputo to do business.

³ After the liberation war that led to Mozambique's independence in 1975, the country experienced a civil war between the two main supporters of independence, FRELIMO and RENAMO, as well as other smaller groups. This situation lasted until 1992, when a cease-fire was agreed to in the wake of the Rome General Peace Accords. Since the 2010s, however, some insurgency movements have taken place in the central and northern regions of the country, including Tete, on behalf of RENAMO groups and factions. Under the aegis of current President Filipe Nyusi (FRELIMO), peace talks have resumed, and two new peace accords were signed in 2014 and 2019, both ratifying nonviolent confrontation as well as a commitment to state decentralization.

⁴ At this point it is important to note that, as land in Mozambique is state-owned, the right to use and exploit each machamba needs to be approved by the state. Several communities, however, fail to seek approval due to lack of money, misunderstandings of the law, difficulty accessing the registry, and, sometimes, because farmers make their machambas in a different area each year. A nationwide assessment done by Justiça Ambiental and União Nacional dos Camponeses in 2011 revealed that "only 28%, 11% and 10% of the respondents of the Southern, Central, and Northern zones respectively possess registration of land tenure, of which in the Southern zone 7% are in the name of men, 63% in the names of associations, and 30% in the name of both men and women. There is no registration held in the names of women" (2011, p. 21).

⁵ The Sena Railway was created in 1904 to serve industrial, commercial, and agricultural purposes. It connects ports located in the province of Beira and the city of Chipata in Zimbabwe, crossing the provinces of Sofala and Tete over the course of 1,000 km.

⁶ It is important to note that Vale's resettlement was not the first large-scale resettlement in Mozambique. In fact, this process could be better placed in a long-tailed history of displacements caused by the political projects of both colonial and postcolonial regimes (the chibalo debt bondage system and villagization campaigns, respectively) as well as in response to wars and environmental disasters (Arnall et al., 2013; Arnall, 2014), and for conservation purposes (Milgroom & Spierenburg, 2008; Witter & Satterfield, 2014; Shankland & Gonçalves, 2016).

⁷ It is perhaps interesting to highlight how common it was during Ana Carolina Rodrigues' ethnographic work in early 2013 to pass by coal mines in Moatize and see groups of young men in their 20s waiting in front of the gates of the companies. Most came from nearby rural areas and were used to the routine of day labouring. These men would wait there in case an opportunity to pick up a job should arise. Given the current technological and logistical dynamics of the mining industry, it was unclear whether any of these men would ever be able to get day labour this way.

⁸ Prior to Cabo Delgado, Mozambique already had an LNG extraction project in the Pande/Temane region of the Mozambique Basin, albeit at a very inferior scale of production.

⁹ As is well known, Mozambique has historically remained at the top of the global poverty indexes.

¹⁰ Within a complex architecture of corporate interests and articulations, the main players in the LNG development project have been the US-based company Anadarko and, after 2019, the French multinational Total alongside other players such as Eni. The main governmental counterpart has been the National Hydrocarbons Company (*Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos* or ENH).

¹¹ With this concept we refer to the hegemony of a growth and development narrative—what we called, in the framework of the research project that funded this research, the “gas gospel”—regarding the benefits of LNG for Mozambique. This discourse was staged across different scales, ranging from official statements to specific expectations related to local infrastructural and trade development and job opportunities.

¹² These are regulated by Law No. 19/97 of 1 October (Land Law) and Decree No. 66/98 of 8 December (Land Law Regulation). This applies to both national and foreign citizens, corporations, and foreign investors.

¹³ In 2019, Anadarko was sold to Occidental Petroleum and the Mozambique LNG project was handed over to Total.

¹⁴ See also Agência Lusa (2018). In the meantime, as we conducted fieldwork in Cabo Delgado, other “creative” solutions were being offered to the community, such as a daily bus commute from Quitunda to the coast for fishing or the offer of refrigerators to keep fish in Quitunda.

¹⁵ Other issues were raised, such as the lack of consideration for religious and ethnic differences between resettled and host communities and the alleged seizure of land on behalf of Total (Justiça Ambiental et al., 2020).

¹⁶ As noted by Jokin Alberdi and Manuel Barroso (2021), the formation of MRM was enabled through a partnership with a local mining company, *Mwiriti*, founded by a retired FRELIMO general, which obtained the necessary licenses and DUAT for securing an area of 81,000 ha for 25 years in Montepuez for mineral exploitation (2021, p. 237).

¹⁷ This was also portrayed in the 2019 documentary *La Fiebre del Oro* directed by Raúl de la Fuente.

¹⁸ The presence of graphite in the region is documented since the 19th century and small-scale extractive projects took place throughout the 1990s (Alberdi & Barroso, 2021, p. 237).

However, the growing demand for this mineral suggests the potential for a significant expansion of the industry, notably in Balama, which constitutes the world's largest reserve. Graphite is also found in the neighboring province of Niassa, where an industrial complex and related infrastructure is being constructed in the region of Nipepe (Firmino, 2021).

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