

# MINING, SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS AND “RACIALIZED DISPLACEMENT” IN MOZAMBIQUE

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. EUSÉBIO, A. J. As violências das práticas empresariais: mineração, danos socioambientais e conflitos em Moatize, Vale do Zambeze, Moçambique. *In*: Seminário Internacional sobre Direitos Humanos e Empresas, 01, 2021, São Luís: **Anais** [...]. São Luís: EDUFMA, v. 04, 2021, p. 505-516. EUSÉBIO, A. J. As violências das práticas empresariais: mineração, deslocamentos compulsórios e resistências no Vale do Zambeze, Moçambique. **Revista Antropológicas**, Recife, ano 24, v. 31, n. 01, p. 220-248, 2020. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.51359/2525-5223.2020.244418>. Acesso em: 09 Jan 2022.

<sup>2</sup>WANDERLEY, L. J. M. Do Boom ao Pós-Boom das commodities: o comportamento do setor mineral no Brasil. **Versos – Textos para Discussão PoEMAS**, vol. 1, n. 1, 2017, p. 01-07.

intensify production in their original exploration spaces; on the other hand, they search for new exploration spaces.

The first of these large projects were concentrate on mining coal in the Zambezi Valley region, mostly destined for the Asian market. One of the milestones of this phase was the approval in 2004 of the large project operated by the Brazilian multinational Vale for the exploration of the Moatize coal mines, after winning the international tender made by the Mozambican government. Due to its potential in mineral coal, Mozambique has attracted some of the largest mining companies in the world in the field of extractive industry, for example, the Brazilian multinational Vale and the Anglo-Australian Rio Tinto. Vale signed the exploration contract in 2007 and Rio Tinto entered in Mozambique in 2012 by purchasing the total shares of Riversdale Mining, thereby acquiring the Benga coal mines, in an area equivalent to 4,560 hectares with duration of 25 years.

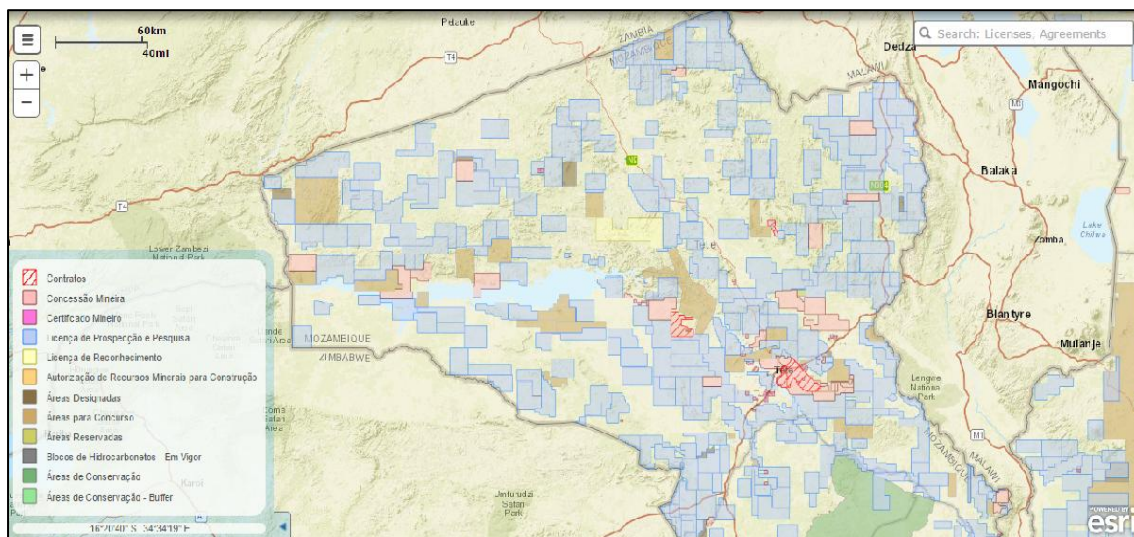
From that period onwards, the Vale, Rio Tinto project and other coal exploration projects in the Zambezi Valley were replaced by companies or joint ventures of Indian capital companies, one of the largest markets for coal extracted in Mozambique. Some of these joint ventures involve a consortium of state-owned companies, such as ICVL (International Coal Ventures Private Limited), the company that currently holds the exploration rights for the Benga mines, acquired from Rio Rinto.

In the same way that Rio Tinto left Mozambique in the post-boom period (a period marked by a drop in commodity prices on the international market) in January 2021, Vale announced its divestment in the mineral exploration project in Mozambique and highlights the need to become a carbon neutral company by 2050. In March 2022, the Mozambican government authorized the sale of the coal mines and the total of Vale's operations in Mozambique to the Indian company Vulcan Minerals in a deal

valued at US\$270 million<sup>3</sup>. In other words, Indian companies are currently dominating mineral exploration in the Zambezi Valley.

The figures 01 and 02 allow us to have an idea of the spatial evolution of mining concessions and exploration licenses in Tete province, in the Zambezi Valley region.

Figure 01: Research and mineral exploration areas in Tete Province until 2017.



Source: Mozambique Mining Portal 2017.

Figure 02: Research and mineral exploration areas in Tete Province until 2022.

<sup>3</sup>CARTA DE MOÇAMBIQUE. **Moçambique autoriza venda do negócio de carvão da Vale à Vulcan.** Maputo, 25 de Março de 2022. Disponível em: <https://www.cartamaz.com/index.php/economia-e-negocios/item/10279-mocambique-autoriza-venda-do-negocio-de-carvao-da-vale-a-vulcan>. Acesso no dia 25 de Março de 2022.



reference for thinking about this second question: who are the social groups that are expropriated and suffer environmental damage from large mining projects in Mozambique?

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The displacements of a diversity of social groups are some of the direct impacts of the intensification since the 2000s of the expansion of large mining projects and one of the main sources of socio-environmental conflicts in Mozambique. As an example, data from the Moatize District Government indicate that 1,365 families from the communities of Mithethe, Chipanga, Bagamoyo and Malabue were displaced in the process of installing the coal exploration project operated by the Brazilian multinational Vale in Moatize, Tete province. Of this number, 714 families classified as rural were relocated to the Community of Cateme, approximately 30 km from their former places of residence and work; 289 were classified as urban were relocated to the 25 de Setembro neighborhood, in the Moatize village and the rest were received the compensation.

The narratives of displaced families to Cateme, classified as rural, denounce significant ruptures with their original ways of living, inhabiting and producing, directly affecting the bases of their socioeconomic reproduction. In addition to breaking with spaces of great symbolic significance, these families are now forced to invent new forms of socioeconomic reproduction because of what they call limited alternatives for survival in new places.

The way which the displacement process itself was carried out and the current relationship between the displaced populations and the multinational company reactivates memories of violent colonial-style practices. In other words, if on the one hand, the large mining development projects activate in the national social imagination the hope of a better life and the overcoming of poverty on the other hand, it has been transforming the territories of its implementation into spaces where – following the

conception of Walter Mignolo<sup>4</sup> – projects for the expansion of international capital violently intersect with the stories of the local communities that have inhabited the region since immemorial or dated time.

Decisions for project implementation were taken centrally; there is a subordination of the wills of the affected people denying the possibility of being protagonists of their own destiny, as well as deciding on where and how to live; paternalistic relationship practices prevail, as well as the uses of intimidation and police violence. As an example: in 2012, approximately two years after the displacement undertaken by the Vale project, the community of Cateme, where the populations classified as rural were resettled, demanding the fulfillment of the various promises made for de Brazilian multinational Vale (access to water, fertile land, energy, compensation, collective transport, health, education, etc.), blocked the railway line for the coal transport that passes a few meters from the community of Cateme. At the request of the company, this collective action was violently repressed by an elite unit of the Police which reinforces the prevalence of violent corporation's practices of controlling and managing the resistances by appropriating of state repression apparatuses.

The populations had unsuccessfully attempted a dialogue with the company. The collective action was the alternative found to overcome the company's indifference to their demands. The international repercussion of the violence carried out made the company later accept some demands made by the displaced communities: the electrification of houses, the expansion of water access holes, paving of the access roads to the community, just to cite a few examples. This just goes to show that they weren't unfounded claims. They were not blocking the coal railway of mere opportunism, but because some promises made were not being kept, so the use of police violence is unjustified.

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<sup>4</sup>MIGNOLO, W. **Histórias locais/projetos globais**: colonialidade, saberes subalternos e pensamento liminar. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2003.



It was common during fieldwork to hear words such as: “please do not denounce me...”; “I’ll tell you, but don’t say that I said it...”; “there are people who are taken to the village at night, that’s why please don’t denounce my name...”. That words shows the persistence of typical practices of what sociologist Luc Boltanski calls “domination by terror”<sup>5</sup>. They are practices that remind us of dictatorial regimes and, therefore, are unacceptable in democratic regimes such as our country constitutionally is<sup>6</sup>.

In other words, authoritarianism, guardianship and the “neglect” of the life projects of the various affected families have marked the process of displacement imposed by the current large mining projects. There has been no concern with the destiny of the displaced populations and the integral continuity of their logics of social and economic production, organization and reproduction - as Mozambican law requires - but with their departure at all costs from the place to boost corporation resource exploitation. It is the prevalence of this logic that makes the development of these large projects to be followed by a continuous and perverse process of violation of human rights.

The reality of the daily life of displaced populations in Moatize denounces the violence of corporation practices and the unequal cost of large-scale mining, but it is not the only relevant impact. The other is related to extraction technology, which is characterized by an open-air blasting system, considered by experts to be highly polluting. These impacts directly affect the populations of the surrounding areas and are experienced by them through noise pollution and dust rains. It is through these experiences that they activate mechanisms of resistance and it is through the narratives of what has been lived and what has been experienced that this impact is made visible in the public arena.

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<sup>5</sup>BOLTANSKI, L. Sociologia da crítica, instituições e o novo modo de dominação gestonária. **Sociologia & Antropologia**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 03, n. 06, p. 441–463, 2013. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1590/2238-38752013v364>. Acesso em: 10 Abr 2022.

<sup>6</sup>MOÇAMBIQUE. **Constituição da República de Moçambique**. Maputo: Boletim da República de Moçambique, 2004.

For example, one of the field narratives in Moatize tells us:

“When they detonate explosives there, everything goes dark, the water is like coffee. Dust soils the houses and no one can spread flour outside the house anymore. That's why we now have major problems with access to drinking water. Their dust comes out of the mine straight into the houses, into the flour and into the river water. We've already made several cards. One we deliver to Vale. Another one we handed over to the [Moatize] government. But we got no response so far. They just don't answer us. The government doesn't even bother to come here to see our reality of life. We are Mozambicans because we have a Mozambican ID, that's all, but we don't have any rights”<sup>7</sup>.

The pollution caused by open-air blasting technology causes, for example, what in the specialized literature is called “deslocamento in situ”<sup>8</sup>: people remained in the places, but the places are completely unstructured, which forces them to change their strategies for everyday life. They are not expropriated from their territory, but they are expropriated, for example, from a healthy environment. This is, for example, the reality of the daily life of the remaining populations of the Bagamoyo neighborhood and the populations of the Catete community, in the surroundings of Vale's coal exploration project in Moatize, who experience pollution by dust rains caused by the dynamiting of the mine area.

Ethnographic evidence shows that most populations compulsorily displaced from their territories have peasant characteristics of social and economic production, organization and reproduction. A peasantry characterized by what we can call the “pluriactivities”, because they do not depend exclusively on agricultural production, they combine with other forms of

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<sup>7</sup> SR. I.H. **Entrevista realizada na Comunidade de Catete**. Moatize, 2017.

<sup>8</sup>TEIXEIRA, R. O. S.; ZHOURI, A.; MOTTA, L. D. Os estudos de impacto ambiental e a economia de visibilidades do desenvolvimento. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais**, v. 36, n. 105, p. 01-18, 2021. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1590/3610501/2020>. Acesso em: 10 Abr 2022.



income. Families that live in the surroundings of the exploration areas that are currently forced to live in a degraded environment and in daily contact with the pollution caused by the technology of blasting the mine present the same characteristics.

These data reaffirm what has already been denounced in several studies carried out in Brazil, for example,<sup>9</sup> by showing that mining company's aggressive and harmful socio-environmental practices affect highly the low-income populations, peasants, indigenous peoples, and racially discriminated groups, among other "subalternized" social groups. Some of these damages are known to companies that do little to prevent them. They do little precisely because these social groups are seen as disposable subjects that can be sacrificed in the name of "progress, modernization and improvement of living conditions for all". In this context, the way is paved for the rights violation of the affected populations and is imposed a dangerous reality where only the will and power of large corporations prevails.

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. ACSELRAD, H. Mariana, novembro de 2015: a genealogia política de um desastre. *In*: ZHOURI, A. (Org.). **Mineração, violências e resistências: um campo aberto à produção de conhecimento no Brasil**. Marabá: Editorial iGuana/ABA, 2018, p. 155-174. ZHOURI, A. et al. O desastre de Mariana: colonialidade e sofrimento social. *In*: ZHOURI, A.; BOLADOS, P.; CASTRO, E. (Org). **Mineração na América do Sul: neoextrativismo e lutas territoriais**. São Paulo: Annablume, 2016, p. 45-66. CASTRO, E. M.; DO CARMO, E. **Dossiê Desastres e Crimes da Mineração em Barcarena, Mariana e Brumadinho**. Belém: Editora NAEA, 2019.