

The Curse of Mineral Resources: An Analysis from Moatize in Central Mozambique

A maldição dos recursos minerais: uma análise de Moatize no centro de Moçambique

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ABSTRACT

In this article I discuss mining exploration in Mozambique from the Moatize region, which is a place rich in carboniferous mineral resources. I emphasize throughout my approach that, contrary to expectations that the exploration of coal in Moatize would bring social development to the communities around the projects, reality shows that they do not benefit the countries where it is carried out, but it works as a source of large-scale resource removal and as a form of development that ends up benefiting rich countries at the expense of the poor. On the other hand, many of these extractive resources occur on the lands of peasants and indigenous groups, who are also involved in resource extraction such as artisanal miners or workers in large-scale mines and resist these encroachments on their lands (Jacka, 2018 and Gilberthorpe & Rajak, 2017). Coal mining in Moatize, in the manner in which it is carried out, puts the survival of the communities around it into question, as they remain in the cycle of poverty, and a series of human rights violations occur when they are resettled in new regions by the State.

Keywords: Mining, Land, State, Foreign Investment, Involuntary Migration and Resettlement.

RESUMO

Neste artigo discuto a exploração mineral em Moçambique a partir da região de Moatize, que é um local rico em recursos minerais carboníferos. Ressalto ao longo da minha abordagem que, ao contrário das expectativas de que a exploração do carvão em Moatize traria desenvolvimento social para as comunidades do entorno dos empreendimentos, a realidade mostra que eles não beneficiam os países onde é realizado, mas funciona como fonte de remoção de recursos em grande escala e como forma de desenvolvimento que acaba beneficiando os países ricos em detrimento dos pobres. Por outro lado, muitos desses empreendimentos extrativistas ocorrem nas terras de camponeses e grupos indígenas, que também estão envolvidos na extração de recursos, como garimpeiros ou trabalhadores de minas de grande porte que resistem às invasões de suas terras (Jacka, 2018 e Gilberthorpe & Rajak, 2017). A mineração de carvão em Moatize, da forma como é realizada, coloca em questão a sobrevivência das comunidades do seu entorno, que permanecem no ciclo da pobreza, e uma série de violações de direitos humanos ocorre quando são reassentadas em novas regiões pelo Estado.

Palavras-chave: Mineração, terra, Estado, investimento estrangeiro, migração involuntária e reassentamento.

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Introduction

In Mozambique, prior to the discovery of gas in the Rovuma basin in Cabo Delgado, the Tete and Moatize regions were considered the richest mining areas in the country and ranking among the largest unexploited coal reserves in the world at around 23 billions of tons of coal that, among the different multinational mining companies, attracted Vale, a Brazilian multinational (Human Rights Watch 2013). In 2004, Mozambique became, for the first time, the transnational mining companies in Moatize a global place and focus for the transfer of foreign capital and goods.

Because Mozambique is a country rich in mineral resources and as a way of committing to the principles of good governance advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, it adhered to a set of reforms in the mining sector, which implied its liberalization and consequent entry of multinationals companies for the exploration of natural resources, with emphasis on the mining company Vale, a Brazilian multinational that is the main mining company in the exploration of coal in Tete. Contrary to what was expected from the same projects that would accelerate the socio-economic development of the communities around them, they became a burden for the populations, causing discontent in the communities that at some point staged demonstrations against these development projects.

In methodological terms, for the writing of this article, I made a bibliographical review that addresses mining exploration, as well as forced resettlements, with emphasis on the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa where Mozambique is located. I also used the ethnographic method, accompanied by direct observation techniques, semi-structured interviews with common people from peasants, miners, street vendors, etc. In the agency of this group of ordinary citizens I sought to understand their local experiences through their narratives of coal mining activity and moving away from the view of traditional classical ethnography that saw mining projects as monolithic vehicles of capital driven by an unstoppable logic of maximization rather than the focus of ethnographic interest itself (Gilberthorpe & Rajak 2017). Researching ethnographically in a context of transnational mining industries took me to a global space of Moatize where foreign capital flows and which a priori presuppose the tracking of transnational flows and corporate practices of resource extraction in different geographies (Gilberthorpe & Rajak 2017).

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State, land, forced migrations and resettlements

In Mozambique there was a great enthusiasm for the Mozambican government, private institutions and civil society when natural resources boom was announced in early 2000. But as the time went by and with the implementation of projects for the exploration of same resources the expectation that these would bring an improvement and communities development faded. The most aggravating is that the exploitation of

mineral resources has brought a social problem related to mass population displacement and resettlement that defied the Mozambican State.

What remained uncertain is to what extent the presence of foreign mining companies would benefit local communities. Equally important is the extent to which governments ensure that investments in the mineral sector contribute towards social development and environmental protection (Cowell, Wehrmeyer, Argust, Graham, & Robertson 1999). The International Monetary Fund (2012) refers that the economies in sub-Saharan Africa that substantially export natural resources like Mozambique have experienced fast economic growth, but there have been notable incongruences between growth and social indicators.

Bennett & McDowell (2012) state that the majority of contemporary resettlement in the developing world is conducted by States for economic and development reasons and the decisions taken to acquire land, locate a project, or relocate populations are always highly political. The ethical dimensions of development-created displacement have come to the fore in recent decades with the increase of land acquisition and resettlement undertaken as part of private and for-profit investments.

The states play an important role in negotiating lands for foreign investments and facilitate the implementation of large-scale projects. Contrary to the widespread assumption that foreign actors ‘grab’ land illegally from weak governments, according to Evers *et al* (2013) states often invite outside investments and work in partnership with foreign actors to negotiate the contracts, regulatory of food sovereignty and the reorganization of rural economics, but also spark issues of state sovereignty, the role of domestic investors in driving enclosures, and state-state bilateral relations.

For Andrade & Sousa (2016) the issue of forced resettlement becomes more complicated because the state that causes the displacement is also responsible for protecting the affected population. The displaced of development are obliged by their state to move in the name of the national interest and to pay the price of the common good that will be enjoyed by the others. In the majority of cases those affected are ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples or traditional communities with no ability to influence the governmental agenda.

For Terminski (2013), the involuntary resettlement associated with economic development is a phenomenon seen in all continents. Only in some of them, however, does it take the character of a significant social problem, leading to violations of human rights and significant reduction in the level of individual and community security. Therefore, global variation affects the difference in standards of implementation. The key factor in the strong global differentiation among cases of Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR) is the difference in standards of resettlement, which determine the subsequent economic and social situation of the people.

For Bala (2008:4), involuntary resettlement is a human rights issue. According to this author, resettlement processes involve “accountability, governance, participation, capacity building, relevant legal and policy framework”. In this

perspective, resettled communities have the right to legal representation and institutional support to ensure the protection of their human rights as they are relocated.

There are international and regional guidelines set to support countries in the articulation, enactment and implementation of policy aimed at reducing the risks and negative consequences attached to displacement and involuntary resettlement. For example, the World Bank policy (2001) calls on all relevant stakeholders involved in the resettlement of a population to make room for development projects to help displaced persons improve, or at least restore, their living standards. The policy also specifies that displaced people should be “consulted and provided with technically and economically feasible resettlement alternatives” (2001, Annex A, Art. 6ii). The new location must give the resettled population the same or better opportunities to engage in productive activities to ensure their self-sufficiency and avoid a cycle of dependence on the mining company and the government (2001, 6b, ii). In the case of Mozambique, given that the Moatize community primarily consists of subsistence farmers, their mode of survival should be maintained and they must also have access to markets and proper infrastructure to enhance their living standards, what does not happen.

The Cernea’s model of impoverishment risk and reestablishment (2000) is suited because it captures the dimension of the phenomenon in the context of Moatize. The involuntary resettlement had by the Mozambican State marginalized and impoverished more people than they have enriched. This is because they have been evicted from their homes or habitat, disrupting their lives and livelihood.

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From the land law reform in Mozambique to the local reality of Moatize

Contrary to the first Mining Law of 1986, which defended the interests of the State, and consequently of the citizens, advocating the use of mineral resources for the benefit of the national economy or for the development of the region in which they were located, the reforms introduced in the laws of Mines in 2002 and 2006 authorized the mining concession to foreign entities in Mozambique, which began to benefit more the economies of the countries of multinationals involved in mining (Matos & Medeiros 2017).

The Mozambican state also had to introduce reforms to the Land Law in order to accommodate the start of mining exploration in the territory. The Land Law 19/97 clearly specifies in its introduction that:

Due to the challenges that the country is facing, as well as the experience in applying Law 6/79, of 3 July, the Land Law shows the need for its revision, in order to adapt it to the new political, economic and guarantee access and security of land tenure, both for Mozambican peasants and for national and foreign investors.

Matos & Medeiros (2017) state that the same Land Law, although benefiting the peasants and the local community, it opened many loopholes for the first to lose,

as in cases where land acquisition was through occupation, registration was not essential, except in cases where the land was in the interest of investors. Proceeding in this way opened the space for the investor to negotiate with the occupants of the land and then register and thus acquire the Right to Use and Enjoy the Land (DUAT). The State abstained from any responsibility for the loss of land by the communities.

Many land conflicts that occur in Mozambique are due in part to this gap in legislation, as because land is not registered, peasants are usurped and have no mechanism to prove their ownership. On the other hand, UNAC (2011) reports in its study on land grabbing in Mozambique that many of the investors' investment projects are located on fertile land, mostly previously used by local communities for agricultural purposes and which Upon their entry, the communities were forced to change their lifestyles, as they abandoned their fields and traveled great distances in search of an alternative land for growing food, which contributed to low food production. In the case of the municipality of Moatize, in the land conflicts between the mining company Vale and the peasants, the latter were removed from their fields and were resettled or poorly resettled, thus demanding their land back or compensation.

Mining exploration and production of territorialities in Moatize

Hota & Behera (2016) argue that, although the mega mining projects were approved after the reforms recommended by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for developing countries, due to the potential they would have for development in terms of employment opportunities, the direct and linear relationship between these and development has been challenged and refuted by many researchers who argue that the benefits and costs of mining are unfairly distributed.

The Tete and Moatize regions were described as the richest mining areas in the country, ranking among the largest unexploited coal reserves in the world estimated at more than 23 billion tons of coal that attracted the world's largest miners such as Vale, a Brazilian multinational company and Rio Tinto, an Anglo-Australian multinational company. Indian company Jindal Steel and Power Limited and Beacon Hill Resources, a British company, are operating in smaller scale coal mining in Tete (Human Rights Watch 2013).

The first mining company to be granted a license to explore coal from large reserves in Moatize, after resolution 24/2000 by the Mozambican government, was Vale in 2004 which won the international tender that gave it the right to explore areas located in the Moatize basin, where it is done in the open air. According to the EIA (2006), it was due to the growing demand for coal consumption in Asian countries such as China, Japan and India, allied to the favorable historical, political and economic conditions for mining, and also connected to quantity and quality in Moatize, which led to the development of a new source of coking coal in Mozambique, which was the first to be scaled up beyond the traditional Pacific and Atlantic routes. It should

be noted that Rio Tinto has already withdrawn from mining in the region and at the beginning of the present year of 2021, Vale Mozambique announced the sale of the mining projects in Moatize to Japanese company Mitsui, alleging the issue of the environmental impact they cause on the local.

According to Chizenga (2016), the company Vale has invested in complex areas in Mozambique, such as the coal mining complex in the Moatize basin, the coal transport railway on the Tete-Nacala route, and the Nacala transport port. According to FIAN (2010), CVRD-Companhia Vale do Rio Doce in Brazil had a concession of 24,000 hectares of land for the implementation of its mining projects, and part of the land that was granted served as a place of residence for many families, as well as a source of survival for many peasants who use the land for the production of basic products for their food, basically it is the land for this group of citizens, a source of their social reproduction. A process of displacement and resettlement of populations removed from areas of implementation of Vale projects took place, but it was never consensual, having been characterized by conflicts between the company and the target populations, with the latter opposing the installation process, Vale's presence and expansion.

Chizenga (2016:66-69) states that the company's installation process covered populations located in the concession area and within the enterprise risk range and priority groups subject to compulsory displacement, it was the entire population of the Chipanga district, the village of Mithete, Malabwe, Nhacolo, as well as a part of the population of Bagamoio. In the operational phase, the company had to close off its concession area, which culminated in restrictions by the local population, along the neighborhood of Bagamoio, Primeiro de Maio, Catete, Tchenga, thus affecting access to the territory and other resources of common use to local populations. In the expansion phase in 2015, due to the intentions of increasing production capacity and opening new mines along the concession area, there was a registration of families and properties that should be affected by the mine expansion, along the Liberdade neighborhood and of units three, four and five in the 25 de Setembro neighborhood, on the outskirts of the village of Moatize.

A paradoxical fact is the issue of Vale having announced that it intends to withdraw from coal mining in Moatize in the present year of 2021, but then also having announced that it intends to open Cava 2, as Cava 1, for which it obtained the environmental license in 2007 and which is currently in operation, will be terminated. Through an environmental consultancy company, in June 2021, Vale held a series of public meetings in Moatize that made it known that it intends to open Cave 2, and that the potential environmental impacts identified are minimal, not making it unfeasible or placing this stage of the opening of phase 2 of mining exploration in Moatize is an issue. One of the aspects referred to in the plans for the implementation of this new phase is that in the same area contemplated for the expansion of this project there will not be a process of displacements, or physical resettlement, as there are no houses

there, but *machambas* and their cultures, which must be made compensations for the latter.

The fact is that, based on past experiences, according to conversations held with civil society organizations located in Moatize and who advocate for the rights of local citizens, the process of displacement and resettlement in Moatize brought many problems to local citizens, which will hardly bring about back or improve the situation they were in before. In the new places where peasants were given land to carry out their agricultural activities, for those who did not receive cash compensation, they were also expelled from the same land by local populations who claimed ownership of it. In the cases of those who received cash compensation, only later did they see that their land had more value than the money given, because later on, it ended and they were left without the means of land, which guaranteed their survival. On the other hand, when they complained about what they considered a “swindle”, it was already too late, because they signed documents confirming that they received compensation for having withdrawn from their land.

Matos & Medeiros (2017) draw attention in their study on Land Law 19/97, as it opened many loopholes for peasants to lose, as when their possession was by occupation, as is the case of peasants in many areas of In Mozambique, registration was not essential, except in cases where land was in the interest of investors. It was in this way that space was opened up for investors to negotiate with land occupants and then register, thus acquiring the Right to Use and Enjoy the Land (DUAT). The state abstained from any responsibility for the loss of land by the communities.

Matos and Medeiros (2012) say that the introduction of new territorialities that exclude the previous ones are not always presented as negative, and may be an opportunity to improve the quality of life for these communities. But also, these new territorialities can present quite different results, distancing themselves from the expected positive results. The unfolding of the entire process, from the negotiation on the introduction of the new use to resettlement, is defined by the Law, as a process that must be participatory, making it crucial to guarantee a smooth and approved action by the communities and guaranteeing the improvement of your quality of life.

According to Mosca and Selemene (2011), the process of resettlement of populations targeted by Vale's mining projects was led by local government agencies, which choose the most appropriate, among several alternative locations identified by the company responsible for mining coal. The same authors state that the resettlement process is presented as an inevitable path, demonstrating that communities have little or no participation in choosing the new residence space. For the operationalization of the mining activities, the communities had to be compulsively resettled in other places, apparently far from the areas granted for the exploration of mineral coal, being able to avoid direct environmental impacts of its exploration.

The compulsory resettlement process for communities covered by the Vale de Moçambique mining project began in 2009 and identified two population groups, one with rural characteristics and the other with urban characteristics. Communities

identified as belonging to urban spaces in the town of Moatize were resettled in the 25 de Setembro neighborhood. The majority of the population, who lived in communities considered rural, were resettled in an area 45 km from the city of Tete (provincial capital city) and about 30 km from the village of Moatize (in Cateme), in an area where the project was responsible for providing the basic conditions for the survival of these communities, with the construction of new houses, provision of 2 ha of land per family for agricultural cultivation, construction of classrooms and a health unit, and other infrastructure. (Mosca & Selemene, 2011; FIAN, 2010).

Mining and under/development: The case of Moatize

The municipality of Moatize along with the city of Tete are the place that most impacts had in the country due to the implementation of coal mining projects. It should be noted that the changes occurred did not positively impact the local population which in principle should be the main target of the projects, as there is a worrying occurrence in the regions where mining of coal occurs, noise and air pollution, as well as local consumed water, where scientific studies demonstrate the fact (DPS of Tete 2015).

According to DPS de Tete (2015) Mining activity in Moatize directly benefits mine-related workers and families by providing entry points for health and nutrition promotion, healthy living conditions and health inspections. Moatize is a region where its populations live on the basis of agriculture but with the implementation of open coal exploitation there is a need for many tracts of land that are being expropriated in the peasant and rural populations putting their survival at risk. Often when populations are removed from their land, they are resettled on small land that is not arable for farming.

Although there is a diversity of food products in the localities due to the progress brought by mining there is a lack for local peasant populations of farming products considered fresh but which can no longer be cultivated as they have no land to do it. One of the sources for livelihood in Tete and Moatize lies in the practice of informal commerce where people of all ages are involved but with more emphasis on young people.

Products are at high prices and ordinary people like peasants are unable to afford them because they are not involved in remuneration activities that can guarantee them any salary for their purchase (Kirshner & Power 2015). Mosca & Selemene (2011) describe a dual economy in which non-mining households struggle to afford the steep prices for food, renting a house, or buying a plot of land.

Kirshner & Power (2015) also refers to the change in health status locally that is linked to the mass migrations of many people seeking opportunities in Tete and Moatize due to the progress brought about by coal mining. In addition to the social segregation caused by the construction of enclaves for mine workers and common residences for local residents, the urban expansion of the cities of Tete and Moatize

consists of slum-growing dwellings and workplaces that lack basic electricity, sanitation and water waste services.

The growth of the urban area puts the municipality of Moatize in a great challenge to answer the many problems that arise considering that its power is often overlapped by the central power that decides issues facing the municipality regarding concerns the concession of land for mining enterprises, as well as issues related to the start-up agreements between mining companies and the State (Kirshner & Power 2015).

The co-location of informal food markets, open wastewater, sewage flow and garbage dumps increase the risk of cholera and typhoid, thereby aggravating public health problems. (DPS de Tete 2015: 42). In addition to the growth of informal trade along the roads or small stalls that are built in markets as well as in residences the municipality of Moatize also records the growth of places of leisure as nightclubs which are most frequented by young people at night climbing and especially on weekends. These are places where both sexes are present and it is not ruled out that sex workers will flock to them. Sexual intercourse is common and some reports even indicate that there are situations in which one abstains from condom use because according to the belief of some local people its use would be the same as eating banana with its peel². Kirshner & Power (2015) points to the city of Tete as the conduit for HIV to enter the country and it has high rate of HIV/AIDS and an influx of miners, truck drivers and sex workers.

The growth of new urban areas due to the mining sector in Tete and Moatize is not followed by the fulfillment of basic public health requirements. With the dispossession of land that the peasants suffer, resettlement follows in unsuitable areas lacking basic sanitation conditions, while Moatize is currently facing land scarcity due to mining activities as well as internal migration arising from the progress of mining activities. Due to the emergence of pollution from land clearing for the construction of infrastructure for mining, agriculture, transport and energy projects, there is a loss of biodiversity, aggravated also by the loss of forests due to forest fires and possible increase in temperatures due to coal mining emissions (DPS de Tete 2015).

Final Remarks

In this article, I highlight the fact that mining in Moatize district, Tete province, central Mozambique is more of a curse than a gain for the communities that live around them. Contrary to the enthusiasm in the country since the beginning of the year 2000, that foreign direct investment in Mozambique through mining companies would boost the country's socio-economic development, reality has shown opposite results.

In the district of Moatize, through interviews and observations made and the narratives of ordinary citizens from peasants, miners, informal vendors, they complain

² Data obtained through an interview with a young person in the 25 de Setembro neighborhood, Moatize in March 2019.

about the loss of their land where they practiced agriculture, pollution, as well as forced resettlements without follow the basic rules enshrined in human rights.

The case of Moatize also demonstrates the lack of empowerment and participation of citizens in issues that affect their well-being. Chambers (1983) refers in this regard that they are involved in the “deprivation trap”.

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