

**Living with Mount Mabo: *povoados*, land, and nature
conservation in contemporary Mozambique**

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Supervisor: Professor Lesley Green

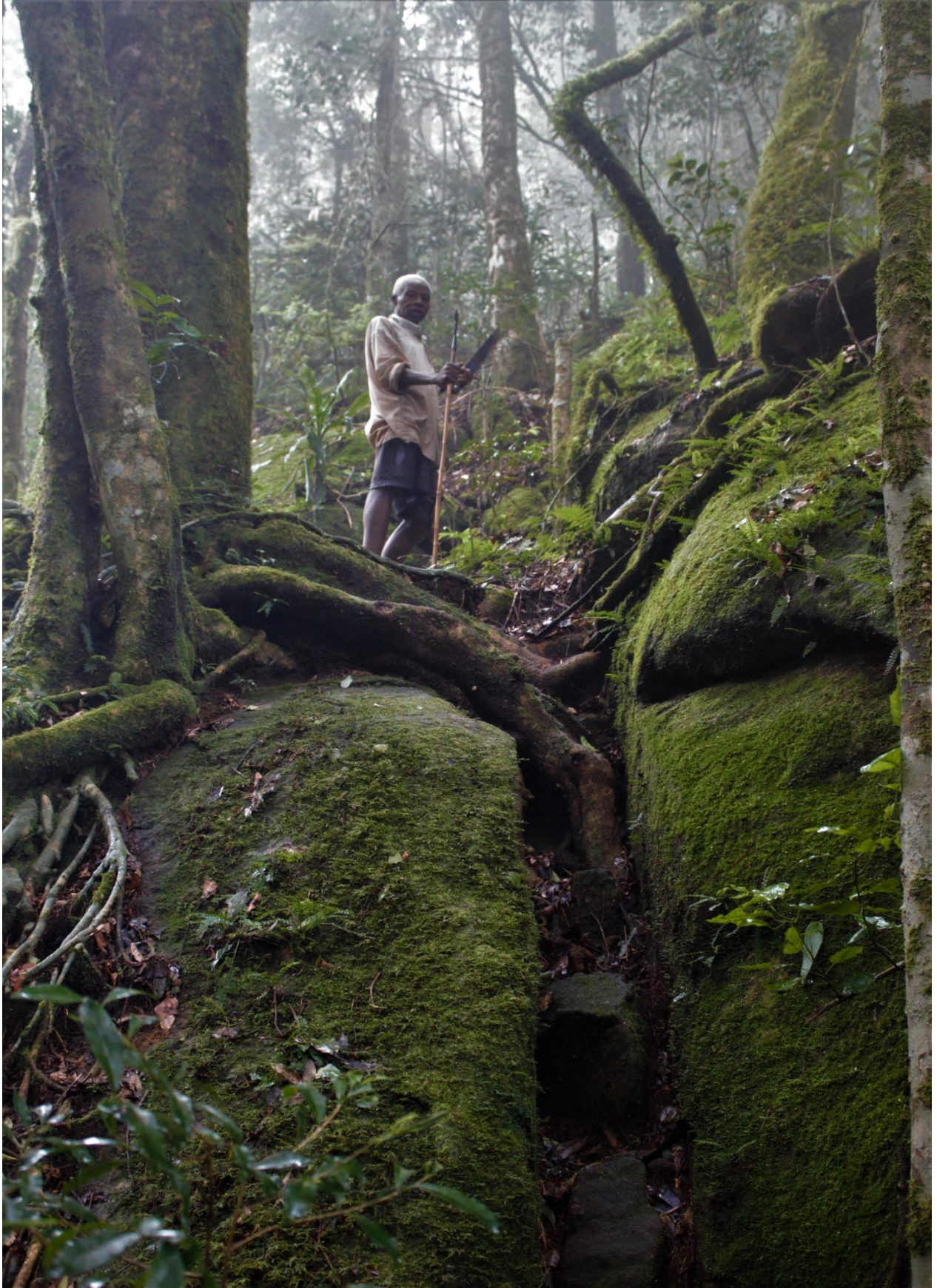
Co-supervisor: Associate Professor Frank Matose

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Ângelo standing on the “neck” of Mount Mabo posing for a photo during a hunting journey

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DECLARATION

I, *Anselmo Marcos Matusse*, hereby declare that the work on which this dissertation/thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

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I strongly believe that academic work is a collaborative endeavour connecting humans and nonhumans. And gift circulation is how I came to see the workings of such a collective. This thesis is, hence, a result of such gift circulation and is deeply indebted to that spirit of the gift.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANAC	(Administração Nacional das Áreas de Conservação)—National Administration of Conservation Areas
JA!	(Justiça Ambiental)—Environmental Justice
DUAT	(Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra)—Land Use Rights Certificate
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
Frelimo	(Frente de Libertação Nacional) —The Mozambique Liberation Front
IIAM	(Instituto de Investigação Agrária de Moçambique)—the Institute of Agricultural Research of Mozambique
iTC- F	(Iniciativa de Terras Comunitária - Fundação)—Initiative for Community Lands - Foundation
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
MMCT	Mount Mulanje Conservation Trust
MITADER	(Ministério da Terra, Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Rural)—Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development
Renamo	(Resistência Nacional de Moçambique)—the Mozambican National Resistance
RADEZA	(Rede de Organizações para o Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Zambézia)—Organizations Network for Environment and Sustainable Development Zambezia
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancing of carbon stocks
RBG Kew	Royal Botanical Gardens Kew
SDAE	(Serviços Distritais de Agricultura e Economia)—District Services of Agriculture and Economy
SDPI	(Serviços Distritais de Planeamento e Infraestruturas) —District Services of Planning and Infrastructure

DPTADR- Z

(Direcção Provincial de Terra, Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Rural-
Zambézia)—Provincial Directorate for the Land, Environment and Rural
Development

GLOSSARY OF MANHAUA

<i>cachaço</i>	noun. sing. From Portuguese <i>cachaça</i> —an alcoholic beverage made of sugar cane extract (uncount.).
<i>cocola</i>	noun. sing. open forest (uncountable)
<i>cumbaissa</i>	noun. sing. a witch doctor who could also deal with spirits (plur. <i>acubmaissa</i>)
<i>manoda</i>	noun. sing. newcomers, not originally from the place (plur. <i>anoda</i>)
<i>mpali</i>	noun. sing. male initiate (plur. <i>apali</i>)
<i>mu'uru</i>	noun. sing. dense forest (plur. <i>ni-uru</i>)
<i>mucuto</i>	noun. sing. traditional ceremony (plur. <i>nicuto</i>)
<i>muda</i>	noun. sing: a small farm (plur. <i>mida</i>)
<i>mukwiri</i>	noun. sing. witch (plur. <i>akwiri</i>)
<i>muthu</i>	noun. sing. person (plur. <i>athu</i>)
<i>mwene</i>	noun. sing. local chief (plur. <i>amwene</i>)
<i>namuali</i>	noun. sing. female initiate (plur. <i>anamuali</i>)
<i>namugo</i>	noun. sing. traditional healer (plur. <i>anamugo</i>)
<i>ncewe</i>	noun. Sing. a snake with dotted skin (plur. <i>macewe</i>)
<i>ndora</i>	noun. sing. a disease in which the sick person develops rashes on his legs (uncountable)
<i>ntoa</i>	noun. sing. spirit of ancestor. Residents differentiate between <i>muzimo</i> (plur. <i>azimo</i>), which is the spirit of the dead in general (like the Christian notion of spirit), and <i>ntoa</i> , which are the ancestors who continue living with the living people (plur. <i>matoa</i>)
<i>oedula</i>	noun. sing. the act of disrespecting someone by calling them by their child's name (uncountable)
<i>okwiri</i>	noun. sing. witchcraft (uncount.)
<i>ori'a</i>	noun. sing. respect (uncount.)
<i>winelwa</i>	noun. sing. initiation rites (uncount.)

GLOSSARY OF PORTUGUESE TERMS

<i>abuso</i>	noun. sing. abuse, or the act of being disrespectful (plur. <i>abusos</i>)
<i>aldeia comunal</i>	noun. sing. communal village (plur. <i>aldeias comunais</i>)
<i>antigo combatente</i>	sing. literally “old combatant”. Initially defined as a veteran of the <i>Luta de Libertação Nacional</i> (national liberation struggle) from 1964 to 1974 which later included all veterans of the liberation and the civil war. (plur. <i>antigos combatentes</i>)
<i>bruto</i>	adj. sing. literally abusive, or a person who is disrespectful (plur. <i>brutos</i>)
<i>caça de ratoeira</i>	noun. sing. literally hunting with mouse trap (plur. <i>caças de ratoeira</i>)
<i>caça de rede</i>	non. sing. literally hunting with a net (plur. <i>caças de rede</i>)
<i>droga</i>	noun. singular. literally drug, or a spell used for protection or to harm someone (plur. <i>drogas</i>)
<i>Homem Novo</i>	noun. sing. “New Man”
<i>jiboia</i>	noun. sing. boa constrictor (plur. <i>jiboias</i>)
<i>lava mão</i>	noun. sing. a bowl made of plastic which is normally used to wash hands but also used to measure grains and other products for sale (plur. <i>lava-mãos</i>)
<i>povoado</i>	noun. sing. the smallest administrative unit in rural areas in Mozambican public administration (plur. <i>povoados</i>)
<i>preparado</i>	literally, to be prepared, connotes to undergo a ritual.
<i>secretário</i>	secretary, a figure created by the socialist state to replace local chiefs portrayed as traitors and colonial agents
<i>tribo</i>	noun. sing. tribe (plur. <i>tribos</i>)
<i>zonas libertadas</i>	noun. plur. literally, liberated zones, or areas which Frelimo conquered from the Portuguese colonial government and used as laboratories to test the communal village experiences (sing. <i>zona libertada</i>)

NOTE ON THE USE OF TERMS

Throughout this thesis I spell Mabo with an “o” rather than “u” as most conservationists and NGOs because this is how the mountain’s name is spelled by the local people and this is also how it is spelled in the official documents of the Lugela, like the Lugela District Profile, which I am aware could also have been impacted by the Portuguese colonial spelling.

When referring to Nvava and Nangaze, I use the concept “*povoados*” (plural) or “*povoado*” (singular) which is a Portuguese colonial and modern administrative concept referring to the smallest unit of the Mozambican public administration, specifically in rural areas, as opposed to “communities” as expressed by the scientists and NGOs. The concept of “community” is theoretically and ideologically inflated, meaning everything and nothing, and it has raised a series of criticism within Anthropological scholarship (*e.g.*, Kuper 2002; Olivier de Sardan 2005). When I use the concept of “community” as used by the scientists, NGOs, and state bureaucrats I do to show their enactments and the kinds of effects they (seek to) produce on the *povoados*. Conservationists conflate “community” (territory) with “community” (people) and suggest a sense of a closed and homogenous group, labelled collectively as “threats” to “wilderness”. For my own analysis, I use the phrase “local people” or “residents” or “Mabo residents” interchangeably to refer to people living close to and with Mount Mabo in Nvava and Nangaze. My so doing is not, as I will detail throughout this thesis, a work of localizing or trapping such people in an “idyllic life” or locale (see Bakhtin 1981) uprooted from the contemporaneity and imprisoned in the past (see Fabian 1983) and homogenous. As a matter of fact, I describe the entanglement of internal and external processes in the making of community life in the area to highlight that Mabo residents are indeed connected to global processes in complex ways.

Following Mamdani (1996, 205) I use the phrase “local agriculturalists”, which I was told sounds too scientific, to refer to “all peasant strata-whether they hire or sell their own labour power, rent land or any implement of labour, lend or borrow money-share on central characteristic that makes of them all peasants: they own some productive property and participate to some degree in the labour process on the land.” I refrained from using the concept of “peasant”, as Mamdani does, due to its colonial negative bias that raised stark criticism among my academic circles and peers at the University of Cape Town.

To refer to nonhumans and human relations some scholars from ontological politics have used concepts such as “earthlings” (Haraway 2015), “earth beings” (de la Cadena 2015a,b), “agents or actants” (Latour 1992; Law 2004). Those concepts carry meanings stemming from the conversations where they originated, hence an ontological bias. Instead, I use interchangeably the words “entities” or “beings” and, through delving into conservationists’ and residents’ ontologies, I show how conservationists and residents respectively construct those “entities” or “beings” as bounded or atomised (as framed by NGOs, scientists, state bureaucrats) or as relational (as framed by residents) and the practices behind those constructions. I also use the words “knowledges” and “ontologies” interchangeably to refer to the intellectual infrastructures that give meaning and reality to being a person, a thing, space and time, a relation, and those infrastructures are plural in Law’s (2011), Viveiros de Castro’s (2004, 2014) and Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser’s (2018) sense, to highlight their heterogeneity. Last, I use the phrase “Mount Mabo” in the titles and the body of the text also to include Mount Muriba and the River Mugue, whose relations I detail in chapters three, four and five where I highlight the landscapes’ relationality and the emergence of what I called in chapter three “sibling landscapes”.

I use the phrase “local chiefs” to refer to the *amwene* (plural of *mwene*, meaning chiefs) not the state’s “community leaders” or the “traditional authority” or “local leaders” for their lack of clarity. The state’s “community leaders” means anybody residents view as legitimate leaders including religious leaders, prominent businesspeople (big men), or others. The phrase “local leader” has a similar connotation as “community leaders.” The phrase “traditional authority” has the limitation of denying coevalness and global connectivities to local chiefs. I also use the phrases “*mwene* of Nangaze”, “*mwene* of Nvava” and “*mwene* of Limbue” to refer to a position of locally legitimized chiefs of respectively Nangaze, Nvava and Limbue. I use specific names of the *mwene* to detail their views as they occupy such positions. Since the *amwene*’s authority derives from their lineages or clans through which the substance of chiefdom is passed, I use the words clans and lineages interchangeably. The reader will notice that residents use the word *tribo* (tribe) to refer to clans. I decided to use the word “clan” due possible confusion the world tribe could create.

Finally, I use the concept of “conservationists” to include RADEZA, JA!, and the scientists, as an analytical construct, and not a reality in itself. I do so not to homogenize them as easily singled out entities. I recognize their differing and contradicting stances.

My move of referring to those entities as “conservationists” is analytical, and it is based on the understanding that, much like Max Gluckman (1940) stated, even from most disparate events, it is possible to devise a connecting thread between those events. The connecting thread among RADEZA, JA! and the scientists is that they all part of the “environmental globalization” (Zimmerer 2006) and defend nature protection and adhere to a modernist ontology that assumes the separation of nature to society, and overlook local relational ontologies, which alongside residents, the scientists and NGOs framed as “threats to biodiversity” or “wilderness” that they needed to contain.

All seek instead to replace local ontologies with what they framed as some formal techno-scientific and economic nature protection designs following the Mozambican 2014 Conservation and 1997 Land Laws, which many studies have extensively described as lacking clarity in integrating residents and their ontologies. In short, these three entities occupy distinct nodal points within a global network that I call modernist ontology, which is inherently exclusionary. I will contend this is one the conservationists’ major failures since they all miss out on the opportunity to engage creatively with local ontologies and criticize the growing capitalist and neo-extractive capture, or as Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre (2011) would call it “capitalist sorcery” or the constant capture of life and nonlife by capitalism. The “conservationists” themselves see nature as a “resource” that they can explore through science and tourism.

In their own modes of existence, NGOs and scientists frame the relation between nature and societies much like that between subject and object, master, and slave (Green 2020), but not as a relation between people through custodianship. I cannot look at such processes as monolithic. Comaroff and Comaroff (1993, xii) state that those processes produce complex continuities and contradictions that don’t quite fit in the aesthetics of nice oppositions. Below, I present a table detailing the fields of action, the differences and the similarities between the entities mentioned resulting from my interview and readings. I am aware that this analytical move has its own contradictions that I embrace as part of an endeavour of making sense of how capitalism impregnates the web of life.

Box 1. Conservationists: fields of actions, similarities, and differences

Conservationists: fields of actions, similarities, and differences

Organization	Activities	Differences
RBG Kew (Dr. Julian Bayliss and Jonathan Timberlake)	Science exploration and help with policymaking for nature protection. The scientists are in favour of REDD+ mechanism on Mount Mabo.	<p>RBG Kew takes a politically neutral-stance or science objectivity stance, framing the problem of nature conservation in rather technical terms that need to be addressed also by implementing technical solutions, including some sort of formal nature protection and economic measures.</p> <p>On Mount Mabo, the organization takes on more of an advisory role, as can be evidenced by the meeting with the Mozambican government officials in 2009 to persuade it to protect Mount Mabo.</p> <p>The organization works under the neoliberal approach and defends the role of the private sector in nature protection, including REDD+ projects.</p>
JA!	<p>Self-proclaimed radical leftist organization working with local communities to help them safeguard their rights to land and other natural resources in the context of growing extractivism in Mozambique. JA! Is part of the global Friends of Earth Movement. JA! Has offices in Maputo but works in the whole country.</p> <p>JA! is also against REDD+ and mega projects encroaching local communities' lands.</p>	<p>Compared to RBG Kew and RADEZA, JA! takes admittedly a more politically oriented approach with a radical leftist viewpoint and criticizes heads on capitalism and extractivism and their negative effects on local communities. This stance has rendered them a reputation of being “enemies” of the state (according to some of JA!’s activists).</p> <p>Compared to RADEZA, JA! shares the view that the area should be protected through a</p>

community conservation area and take on an implementation agent role and has worked closely with RBG Kew scientists.

In JA!'s view, the NGO does not do community development because the NGO believes local communities should develop themselves, an approach that distinguishes it from RADEZA. JA! disagrees with the private investors being the managers of natural resources in Mozambique but also believes that the state is failing in doing so, an attitude that is different from the RBG Kew scientists and RADEZA and is openly against REDD+ projects.

RADEZA

RADEZA defines itself as a network of organizations working in nature protection in Zambézia province. The NGO works with community development, environment, conservation, advocacy and works closely with local communities.

RADEZA has not shown any concerns around RED+.

Compared to JA!, RADEZA takes a more developmentalist approach and works with local communities to promote community development.

Like the RBG Kew scientists, RADEZA's political stance is ambiguous, and as such it has managed to get more connections with actors across sectors including in the private and public spheres. RADEZA is politically more influential in the region than JA! One could frame it as advancing a more neoliberal perspective.

Different from JA!, the NGO privileges the implementation of a national reserve to be managed by the state and private forces. Also take on an implementation role.

RADEZA works closely with the private sector and believes that the private sector involvement can help create community development.

Sources: Author's reviews and interviews

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ABSTRACT

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the *povoados* of Nvava and Nangaze, in the district of Lugela, Zambézia Province, central Mozambique, consisted of field visits that started in June 2016 and ended in April 2018, this thesis is an ethnography of the relationships between people, spirits, animals and landscapes. It examines the cultural, scientific, ethical, and economic stakes of local modes of relating to Mount Mabo, the River Múgue and Mount Muriba that both abide by and surpass the exclusionary forms of science, nature conservation and governance that dominate environmentalism in Mozambique. Focusing on narratives and practices, the study explores concepts such as person, nature and time as mobilized by the state, conservationists and residents, and describe the respective emerging worlds and their messy interconnections, namely, the conservationists’ “Google Forest” premised on techno-science and modernist ideals and seeking to enact a divide between nature and society, the “Neo-extractive” version of landscapes promoted by the Frelimo-run state in its attempt to generate wealth and alleviate poverty also premised on techno-science and modernist ideals that construct nature as a natural resource and “public good” to be owned through DUATs (land use rights certificates) that only the state can grant or revoke; and finally, the “Secret Mount Mabo” as experienced and expressed by residents whereby landscapes emerge as relational entities demanding *ori’a* (respect) from the humans with whom they engage in a relation of mutual belonging. In this world, the *amwene* emerge as the ones who control access to the mountain and forest through their ritual and spiritual power. The study finds that reframing of colonial and neoliberal notions of property, nature, labour and citizenry by conservationists and the state, underlies their techno-scientific approaches seeking to protect nature from devastation and impose and their respective versions of nature, human and time—worlds—on residents. That approach renders dialogues across ontologies extremely difficult. Working with residents’ concepts and practices the study proposes that Mount Mabo conservation efforts are at odds with local ontologies. While these are central to residents and their practices of world-making, such ontologies occupy a marginal role in conservation project planning, design, and implementation, amid conservationists’ attempts to mobilize residents’ alliance in nature protection. These observations draw from and reinterpret contemporary scholarship on political ecology, political ontology, Africanist thought, and decolonial theory, in that they account for

different ecological practices and concepts that are linked to practices of wealth redistribution, recognition of other non-modernist ontologies and their colonial legacies. The study proposes that understanding and accounting for these differences and the ways they are made to endure or resisted could help in finding alternatives conducive to ensuring both ecological and residents' wellbeing in ways that advance decoloniality in Mozambique.

Introduction: Putting Mount Mabo on a Conservation Map

Maps are initially designed to fit a story, but later stories must be fit to existing maps. A map, then, can restrict stories as well as generate them (Wolf 2012, 157).

Mount Mabo is in Lugela district, Zambézia province, central Mozambique, which became also known in the media as “Google Forest”. That portrayal of the mountain started in 2005, when Julian Bayliss, who was then working with the Malawi-based Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (MMCT), noticed the existence of the forest of Mount Mabo using Google Earth. The act of locating the forest through Google Earth led Jonah Fisher (2009) to name it “Google Forest” although later Bright’s description of it as the “butterfly forest” was used (Bayliss et al. 2014, 2). In 2008, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (henceforth, RBG Kew) scientists, including Bayliss, but headed by Jonathan Timberlake, carried out their first major expedition to Mount Mabo. A UK Government Darwin Initiative grant funded the expedition from 2006 to 2010, under a collaborative project Monitoring and Managing biodiversity loss of South-East Africa’s ecosystems. According to Timberlake (et al. 2012, 8) the project aimed at

undertaking botanical and vegetation field survey of Mt Mabu [sic], gathering additional zoological information on the mountain, particularly on birds, reptiles and butterflies, training a team of Mozambican and Malawian biologists in botanical and vegetation survey techniques, accessing the extent, status and threats to the moist forest and other biodiversity on the mountain, and based on gathered field data, developing species and habitat recovery plans.

The team made trips under the same project between 2006 to 2010, and they carried out the largest fieldwork exercise in 2008. The team’s work resulted in a major global media coverage that turned Mount Mabo into a global media phenomenon. The team that carried out the 2008 expedition included 28 scientists and support staff from the UK, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Belgium, and Switzerland plus 70 local porters (Grrlscientist 2013, para.7). This expedition was part of the RBG’s vision, as expressed on their website, which is to study, preserve, and disseminate knowledge on fungal and plant diversity and aid policymakers and

conservation managers in their decision-making on biodiversity conservation, in a context where many species remain unknown to science and accelerated mass extinctions.¹

The 2008 expedition, according to Timberlake et al.'s report (2012, 6-7), resulted in discoveries of “249 plant species above 800m altitude, of which two [...] are new to science and an additional 11 are significant range extensions from the Chimanimani Mountains or Tanzania's southern Highlands and/or new records for Mozambique.” The report also stated that the exploration expedition also led to 126 bird species being recorded, including the discovery of significant populations of *Cholo Alethe* and the race *belcheri* of Green Barbet, along with smaller populations of Dapple-throat, Spotted Ground Thrush, *Namuli Apalis* (previously believed to be endemic to Mt Namuli) and Swynnerton's Robin. Additionally, “of the 12 bat species recorded, one is new (*Rhinolophus mabuensis*) and two are new records for the country. A total of 15 reptile and 7 amphibian species were found, including three new species (the Mabu forest viper, *Atheris mabuensis*, a chameleon *Nadzikambia baylissii*² and a pygmy chameleon Rhampholeon). Two other snakes and a frog may also be new to science” (ibid.).

The report also stated that “much effort went into surveying the butterflies, with 203 species on the checklist including 39 new country records. Four of these are new species (*Baliochila*

¹ For more details visit: <https://www.kew.org/science/our-science/publications-and-reports/science-reports/kew-science-strategy>, section strategic priorities, para. 1-5, accessed May 04, 2020

² The newly discovered species was named after Julian Bayliss himself. Even though conservation scientists described here framed their work in rather objective and technical terms, studies have shown that conservation science is itself inherently normative because it involves choosing what life to protect and what life not to protect and, it does so charged with values (cf. Lele 2020). Those aspects make it political and contested (Lackey 2007; Campbell 2012). I can exemplify science neutrality as a falsity by quoting the case of science explorations in Colombia where a scientist from the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew named a new plant species from north-eastern Colombia *Espeletia praesidentis* in honour of efforts made by Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos to build peace in his country after over five decades of conflict that blocked the scientists from doing science explorations in Colombia (RBG Kew 2017 <https://www.kew.org/about-us/press-media/Colombian%20President%20awarded%20Kew%20International%20Medal%20for%20work%20protecting%20biodiversity>). Describing the embeddedness of peace (politics) and science in science expeditions, Carolina Botero (2020, 10) stated that “Colombia Bio, despite being an expedition conducted by biologists with the interest of producing biodiversity inventories, is as much about peace as it is about science”. Instead, in Mozambique, the science organization's scientists, Julian Bayliss, named a new pygmy chameleon species after himself which is also a common practice in conservation science. Christopher Looby (1987) connected taxonomy, the science of naming species, to politics. In Looby's words “in designating a thing, I designate it to others” (Looby 1987, 253). In other words, science, species can be made to tell stories or regimes of truth beyond science facts.

sp. nov., *Cymothoe* sp. nov., *Epamera* sp. nov., *Leptomyrina* sp. nov.) with a further three new subspecies” (Timberlake et al. 2012, 6-7; Branch and Bayliss 2009). The scientists sent the collected species samples to RBG Kew’s collection where they would be studied, archived and be part of RBG Kew’s “unparalleled” collection.

Following Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar’s (1986) work on laboratory life, it is possible to affirm that the above-mentioned practices in the field and the RBG Kew’s laboratory produced science facts (new and known species of flora and fauna) that then enabled the production of the vision of the mountain as “wilderness” and important for science. Both the ideas of “wilderness” and scientific importance were then circulated in the media. This newly constructed fact that Mount Mabo was “untouched” and crucial for science, and the observations around Earth of human-induced decline of “wilderness” areas on Earth (Wilson 2016) and biodiversity (Leakey and Lewin 1995; Rose, Dooren, and Chrulew 2017; Kolbert 2016; IPBES 2019) raised serious concerns among conservationists working on Mount Mabo.

Despite what was for them exciting discoveries, the scientists reported to Antonia Windsor, a journalist working for the Guardian, that “they fear[ed] that with local people returning to the area [after civil war], and Mozambique’s economy booming, pressure to cut the forest for wood or burn it to make space for crops threatened the ecology” (Windsor 2009, para. 7). Logging industries were booming in Mozambique, specifically, in Zambézia province in what Catherine Mackenzie (2006), an IUCN Pakistan affiliate, warned was a “Chinese takeaway”. The mainly Chinese logging companies’ activities and legal but clandestine export of forest products prompted strong concerns over their damaging effects (ibid.). The scientists also observed, and made comparison, between Mount Mabo and the observable rapid deforestation taking place on Mount Namuli, also located in Mozambique’s Zambézia province.

Because of this concern over deforestation and biodiversity loss, in 2009, the scientists organized a meeting in Maputo, where “representatives from the Mozambican department of agricultural research, Birdlife International, WWF [World Wide Fund for Nature], the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the British High Commission joined others to convince the government to commit to protection” (Windsor 2009, para.13). In an extract from the newspaper interview with Jonathan Timberlake on the Guardian he stated that “[t]he three messages we conveyed were that there is rich biodiversity in Mozambique,

that butterflies and botany can be as important as mammals, and that conservation policy should take into consideration areas such as these mountains or the coastal forests, that do not easily fit into the usual category of national park” (Windsor 2009, para.4).

In the same newspaper article, Antonia Windsor reported that “government ministers agreed to put conservation measures in place before any commercial logging might occur there, after meeting representatives from the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (MMCT), and numerous other groups involved in the project” (Windsor 2009, para. 3). The statement above shows the intersection where science met policy. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Deborah Danowski (2018, 176-178) paraphrasing Latour would call this RBK Kew’s framing of science as the “arbiter” or authority to mediate the conflicts over biodiversity loss contentious since the scientists emerged indeed as actors claiming a stake on nature.

Despite the scientists having found no evidence of harmful human activity in the forest, which was consistent with the observation made by IPBES’ scientists (2019, 5) that local communities’ natures were declining less than in other lands, using satellite imagery and field visits, they determined “an area above 900m in the forest” which they called the “Core Zone” that should “be protected at all costs [since] this is where the endemic, rare and restricted range species are to be found” (Timberlake and Bayliss 2016, 26). They also stipulated that in this area there should be “no bushmeat hunting, no planting of crops, no villages or settlements, [there should be] active ecotourism initiatives (e.g., scientific expeditions, birders), employment of local hunters as forest guides, only limited collection of medicinal plants, controlled and limited collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs)” (Timberlake and Bayliss 2016, 24). The scientists assumed that these activities would maintain the current “idyllic nature” or “wilderness” of Mount Mabo or (at least at the 900 metres altitude), and that a financialised ecology, rendered exclusive to paying tourism and scientific research, would be an adequate replacement for the presence of the mountain in the local ecological economy.

After the scientists had provided information about the mountain, its ecosystems, the various species in their 2012 and 2016 reports, the scientifically unknown species, and the lack of study data in an area that did not present according to them major signs of devastation, they advocated strict measures of protection. The scientists’ reports provided minimal information about

residents even though it was they who had shown the scientists the way to the mountain and forest. Where residents appeared in the report's photos the caption labelled them "guides"³, thus substituting their personal names, ontologies and reducing their personhood with a function defined by its relation to a global centre.

The scientists' reports provided no information about how people there lived, how they knew or related to the mountain, nor their concerns about receiving scientists and the growing scientific, media and touristic attention and interests in their area. The scientists entered no such information into their records. A reader who had never been to the mountain and the *povoados*, would, as two young South African tourists said to me in Nangaze, have been "surprised to see people and villages" rather than just "wilderness" in which they could freely roam around and explore. By rendering local peoples' interests and personhood nearly invisible, the scientific texts implied that the mountain and forest comprised *terra nullius*. In Clapperton Mavunga's (2014, 7) words residents were people who could "only hear [and see] but not speak". The place where the scientists' reports referred to all residents' lives was under the heading "conservation threats" where they represented them as menaces and risks regarding "clearance for agriculture", "fire", "logging", "hunting" (Timberlake et al. 2012, 51). As likely threats to the continuity of a constructed untouched "wilderness", residents, it seems, needed to be contained or controlled.

Following the RBG Kew's work, two urban NGOs: Rede de Organizações para o Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Zambézia (Network of Environment and Sustainable Development Organizations of Zambézia, henceforth RADEZA)—an environmental NGO based in Quelimane city—, and Justiça Ambiental (Environmental Justice, henceforth, JA!⁴)—another environmental NGO based in Maputo city—started working with residents to turn the mountain into an official protected area.

JA!, which had worked closely with the RBG Kew scientists in their earlier explorations—one JA! activist, a biologist called Daniel Ribeiro, was part of the science expeditions to Mount Mabo and has published about biodiversity there—started taking steps into effecting the Mount

³ For a visualization of my description look at Julian Bayliss's webpage <http://julianbayliss.co.uk/mt-mabu-2005-2017-selected-photos/>

⁴ JA! uses the acronym which in Portuguese means "now", as a form of command, hence the exclamation mark.

Mabo's conservation. During 2013, JA! created four local associations, one each in Nvava, Namadoe, Nangaze and Limbue, formalised in 2016, namely Associação Wiwanana Wa Nvava (AWIWAN), Associação Ambiental de Namadoe (AANA), Associação Comunitária de Nangaze (ACONAZ), and Associação Nifugule Mento (ANIME). By 2013, RADEZA too had worked with local people and formed eleven natural resources management committees to protect Mount Mabo, one each in Mucuera, Nvava, Limbue, Namadoe, Nangaze, Matequenha, Mpemula, Ndavo, Seane, Ndoda, and Mukuwa. The associations and committees differed in that JA! formalized the former as legal personae, while the latter worked informally as interest groups.

Whilst the two NGOs took diverging moral and practical stances in their environmental work (against corporations and state capture)—see chapter two—both shared the scientists' view that Mount Mabo should be a protected area and that it was necessary to train local people about the importance of protecting it based on the NGOs' notions of ecology and environmental justice. The NGOs' work to turn Mount Mabo into a conservation area surfaced another big factor in Mozambican nature conservation—the dominance of the Frelimo party government-run state which adds complexity to an already complex story.

With land in Mozambique being state property—a colonial legacy itself— and since only the state can determine how it private or public persons or organizations can use or explore it, JA! recognised it needed to apply for a *Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra* (land use rights certificate—hereafter, DUAT). Such DUAT would allow the NGO, in partnership with residents, to protect Mount Mabo and implement the planned ecotourism activities, ostensibly for income generation through a “community conservation project”. Effectively it would also enable JA! to become the gatekeeper and control access to Mount Mabo, through modern bureaucratic practices and scientific expertise in partnership with the associations the NGO had created. JA!'s 2016 application determined the “*Área Pretendida*” (lit.sing. Intended Area) at the above 1000m altitude, a zoning that comprised what the scientists and NGOs considered the area where “wilderness” existed.

Up to the moment of the writing of this thesis (late April 2021), JA!'s DUAT application is still pending state approval. Meanwhile, RADEZA has become lethargic about its programmes on Mount Mabo so much that, according to people I have interacted with, RADEZA has slowly

“disappeared” from the area. The long time it was taking for the DUAT’s approval, in the eyes of the interlocutors of this study, correlated to a feeling of lost opportunities and “development” in the *povoados* because it bureaucratically delayed expected economic gains from conservation. One JA!-created association member told me directly that he was expecting to “become someone in life” with Mount Mabo’s conservation programme. At least he (but also many others) thought of participation in conservation as a way of expanding their “field of opportunities” (de L’Estoile 2014, 64) in the *povoados*. What this means is that although the state has not declared a conservation area on Mount Mabo, conservationists alongside historical legacies have exerted transformations in the area with unforeseeable present and future implications to both nature and residents.

The efforts to conserve Mount Mabo described above made up a coming together of different worlds, the theoretical underpinnings of which I discuss in chapter one. I learned that for the scientists and NGOs, Mount Mabo is

essentially a complex of granitic inselbergs (‘whalebacks’) or ancient igneous intrusions, exposed by millions of years of subsequent erosion. [...] and that [t]he rock forming the Mabu [sic] massif is syenite, similar to granite, an igneous intrusion of the younger Precambrian Namarroi series dating from 850-1100 Mya [...]. This intrusion is surrounded by migmatites, also of the Namarroi series (Timberlake et al. 2012, 10).

The scientists also characterized it both in terms of its size and extent: “the moist forest present in Mt. Mabu [sic] is around 7880 ha in extent, 5250 ha of which is thought to be at medium-altitude (1000-1400). [...] and that Mabu [sic] forests are possibly the largest extent in southern Africa, [...]” (Timberlake et al. 2012, 56). Since the scientists first became acquainted with the forest through Google Maps, and some journalists have suggested the forest be called Google Forest, I call this modernist, techno-scientific and dualized version of the forest and mountain “Google Forest” and I discuss its configurations more in detail in chapter two.

During my fieldwork, I learned that for the *mwene* (lit.sing. local chief) of Nangaze, Mpida Tacalanavo, Mount Mabo was the oldest of three siblings: it is a brother who acts as an agent involved in social relations with his second-born sister, the River Múgue, and their younger brother, Mount Muriba. In addition, residents have long treated Mount Mabo as an agent with whom they engage in reciprocal relations based on an ethic of *ori’a* (lit.uncount. respect). Mabo

and its relations with residents resonate with Narotzky and Besnier (2014)'s findings according to which "indigenous processes that make the environment valuable are often dialectical [following residents' ideas of *passear* (lit. having a walk) and sharing ideas, I prefer dialogical] relationships that produce identity and space simultaneously (see chapter one). Here, the processes of valuation themselves are incommensurable with the categorization system that sustains the current economic models of conservationists" (Narotzky and Besnier 2014, 9). For Nangaze's and Nvava's residents at large, Mount Mabo had emerged as a mysterious mountain that they needed to fear or respect. For them, it was after a ritual with the *mwene* that one would be "*preparado*" (lit.sing. to be prepared) to visit the mountain and the forest, suggesting similar patterns connecting landscapes, animals, people, and ancestral spirits as the ones Clapperton Mavunga (2014) called "guided mobility" in his study of the VaShona people of Zimbabwe. I call this relational and experienced version of the forest and mountain, including Mabo's siblings, "Secret Mount Mabo" and focus on its configurations in chapters three, four and six.

Moreover, as I interacted with residents and local state officials, a third version of Mount Mabo and other landscapes emerged with its colonial legacies: the neo-extractive version of landscapes promoted by the Mozambican state in its quest for attaining and sustaining economic growth faced with poverty. Since the state is the ultimate owner of landscapes in Mozambique, it decides what explorations or forms of use are to be given to landscapes framed as "natural resources", based on the state's definition of what the Constitution calls "public interest" or Alfred and Corntassel (2005) would call "common good" as defined by the ruling elite. By occupying state positions, the Frelimo elite is ultimately the one who decides what that "public interest" is and how it is to be achieved. Following the narratives in Frelimo's state-run policies, it became evident that they framed extraction and modernization as the way towards progress and poverty alleviation. This neo-extractive version of landscapes raised concerns among the conservationists, not just in Mozambique, but globally over its environmental degradation, human rights abuse, and dispossessions, that characterizes it. I describe this version of landscape's configuration more in detail in the introduction, chapters two, five and six.

The discovery of Mount Mabo led to the current encounters among the three versions of landscapes described above, with the Google Forest and Neo-extractive versions of landscapes defining what it means to be nature and to be person in public fora. Given the many studies on

nature conservation that referred to residents' loss and displacements after implementation of nature conservation or development projects in southern Africa and the difficulty of exerting transformation once protected areas had been proclaimed (see Ramutsindela 2005; Witter 2013; Pritchard 2015; Schuetze 2015; Walker 2015; Massé 2016; Massé, Lunstrum and Holterman 2016; Lunstrum 2016; Matose 2009, 2016; Dlamini 2019; Green 2020), Mabo offered an opportunity to study conservation work as it was materializing and the kinds of transformations that nature protection implementation entails, much like the processual turn scholars argued (*e.g.*, Law 1994; Latour 2004b; Czarniawska 2007). Focusing on such a process of implementing a conservation area could in turn help understand the tensions between conservationists, the state and local knowledges in determining the relations that a conservation area would establish. Additionally, once mapped and proclaimed, the reserve would restrict stories and generate others, as Wolf (2012) noted in the sentence that forms this introduction's epigraph. Then, what stories would have been lost or unheard? Could a deep, detailed, and rich study bring such stories back into dialogue with the conservationists and the state?

The core of this study is a response to those questions and an attempt to highlight the residents and their knowledge missing from the conservationists' stories and maps, as are their complex relations to "Google Forest" and the "Neo-extractive" versions of Mount Mabo. The (dis)connections of the three worlds previously mentioned and their effects also served as an opening to attend to discussions about Mozambique's old and unresolved "land question" and the interrelated issues of the subaltern black African subject, colonial legacies, hierarchization of knowledge systems (or ontologies), disciplinary boundaries and the cumbersome relations between the state and local people in Mozambique. These (dis)connections were at the centre of anthropological literature that discussed how modernist and universalist science ideas about technology (including modern administrative technological principles that some call bureaucracy) dominate the world (almost) hegemonically (Ferguson 1990; Latour 1988, 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Scott 1998; Povinelli 1995, 2016, 2017; Haraway 2008). This literature has pointed also to how that kind of domination led to an approach to so-called developing nations that long regarded extant local practices as, at best, out of date and, at worst, dangerously deleterious to the world—much as was the approach of early colonists (Fanon 1963 [2004]; Spivak 1988; Said 1994; Bhabha 1994; Mbembe 2001; Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2011).

The literature was initiated among others by historical analyses of colonial intrusions (Stone 1987; Grove 1995; Sahlins 1995; Mamdani 1996; Chakrabarty 1992; 2000; 2009; Ayittey 1998; Spivak 1999; Asad 2003; Hunwick 2005), by those offering critiques of the “development industry” (Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1992; 1995; Hanlon 1991; Scott 1998), and by anti-colonial thinkers and Africanists (Nkrumah 1962; wa Thiong’o 1993; Mondlane 1995; Wiredu 2004; Hountounji 2009). The ideas that those approaches generated and include much post- and de-colonial analysis and argument, and critiques of the failure of science and of modern forms of governmentality to adequately take local epistemologies and others’ ontologies seriously (Viveiros de Castro 1986; 2004a,b; 2014; Blaser 2005; Green and Green 2013; de la Cadena 2010; 2015a; de la Cadena and Blaser 2018; Green 2020).

The Mabo-focused scientists’ and NGO’s abstractions or alienations of local people’s experiences and lives and their labelling them as a “threat” or as deleterious to the natural order, and their suggestion that there is a need to “control” and “manage” them while “separating” them from the “wilderness” constructed through techno-scientific procedures, shies away from the historical, political, material conditions mentioned above. The scientists’ and NGOs’ attitude also shies away from their own colonial history (contra, Turrill 1959; Wilson et al. 1960; Brockway 1979; Antonelli 2020).

What this shows is that there is an urgent need for a radical shift in how to frame and materialize nature-human relations. Previous experiences around conservation areas in Mozambique, and in southern Africa in general, suggest that an introverted “techno-scientific” and “apolitical” approach to nature conservation, based as it is on technological optimism and modernist ideals, may be one of the reasons that nature conservation has gained minimal popularity among local poor black people in Mozambique and in southern Africa—people who find themselves framed as poachers or illegal loggers (see Ramutsindela 2005; Witter 2013; 2019; Pritchard 2015; Schuetze 2015; Walker 2015; Massé 2016; Lunstrum 2016; Matose 2009; 2016; Hübschle and Jooste 2017; Dlamini 2019; Green 2020). The result of this apolitical and techno-scientific framing of conservation is that local people have become conservationists’ enemies, and refugees following their displacement to accommodate conservation projects (see Dowie 2009; Terminski 2013; Matose 2016; Abrams 2018). The mounting evidence of conflicts around conservation areas, and the relatively failed attempts of protecting nature (specifically, in the African continent), has given rise to a global conversation among conservationists and scholars

who now propose novel modes of nature conservation, for example through “convivial conservation” (Büscher and Fletcher 2019) or “green governance” (Weston and Bollier 2013). Those proposals challenge still predominant market- and state-centred nature conservation approaches.

In this thesis, I draw from the concerns raised by the various scholars mentioned above critical of the prevailing approach to nature conservation. I look critically at nature conservation, and I highlight how it conceives of and enacts human and nonhuman relations (or lack thereof) in ways that legislate humans out of nature much like Cronon (1995) described. Rather than asking how to best protect Mount Mabo, I ask: is the form of nature conservation, as framed by the NGOs and scientists, necessary in a context where they found no harm to nature in actuality, at least not from the residents, and where poverty, harsh living conditions and lack of social infrastructures and employment opportunities are actual and pressing concerns? What are the ethical, moral, and epistemological grounds through which the scientists’ and NGOs’ actions are thought of? What potential effects might the work of scientists, state officials, NGOs have on local people and nature? More broadly, what can an insistence on protecting Mount Mabo in the moulds the conservationists are proposing tell us about nature conservation in Mozambique? I do not give an exhaustive answer to these questions; rather, I offer hints that can inform further research aiming at “reconceptualising and achieving justice in African environmentalism and climate intervention,” much like the Environmental Humanities South collective at the University of Cape Town has been doing.

My goal is to decentre or “provincialize”, to use wa Thiong’o’s (1993) words, the techno-scientific and modernist narrative forwarded by the conservation scientists, NGOs, and state bureaucrats and reclaim through ethnography the complex relations that such narratives gloss over⁵. I do so by first resorting to scholars who have situated nature conservation within a specific cosmology—Judeo-Christian and Euro-American ontologies (commonly referred to as modernist ontology, as does Bruno Latour)—seeking to create Eden on earth (see Gorge 1995) or what the scientists and NGOs have called “wilderness” (see de Quesada 2008; Lowenthal 2013; Lovejoy 2019). Both the literature provincializing techno-scientific and

⁵ See chapter two and five for the techno-scientific version of landscapes, chapters three, four and six for local ontologies and their articulations to techno-scientific modes of governance.

modernist designs and my fieldwork material then enabled me to argue for more collaborative and symmetrical work between the encountering words described above.

The IPBES (2019, 5) in their policy report argued that “goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories, and goals for 2030 and beyond may be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors.” It is by embracing this need for transformational change that I seek to make an argument against a nature conservation that has emerged as a matter of concern stemming from a perceived troubled relation between a generalized and universalized “Man” who conservationists contrast to an equally generalized and universalized “Nature” in a generalized and universalized linear time and its devastating effects.

“Will to control” and “will to develop”: coloniality, “Plantationocene”, and extractive landscapes

The kinds of external designs seeking to transform the livelihoods of residents, to use James Ferguson’s (1994) and Tina Li’s (2007; 2017) ideas, in Lugela district in specific and Mozambique are not new nor are their contradicting effects including acceptance and resistance. Choosing a historical starting point to analyse and contextualize contemporary predicaments is no straightforward task and is often a contentious endeavour. Zambézia province is rich in historical evidence, and such richness would be a thesis on its own. In that history, pertinent to my analysis in this thesis is the process of superimposition of different normative systems as regards land tenure systems, new geographies and novel forms of subjectivities, and temporalities in area.

This section will assist me in depicting and situating the history of the “neo-extractive version of landscapes” in a broad way; showing that the Kew Gardens while playing the role of saviours through supposedly neutral and objective techno-science measures are deeply implicated in the history of colonialism, landscape devastation and local struggles in both Malawi and Mozambique, which I explore more in chapter five; showing that colonial legacies shape current practices around Mount Mabo albeit in complex ways; and showing that residents in the area are not new to foreign contacts nor to the transformations caused by such contacts.

While acknowledging the effects of early traders' and kingdoms' excursions into northern Mozambique on residents and their ontologies, I start my historical analysis from Vasco da Gama, because the Mozambican administrative system as of today is a Portuguese colonial imprint. The externally imposed modern citizenry, property rights, and public administration with which I grapple in this thesis started in Mozambique centuries after Vasco da Gama first disembarked in Quelimane from what residents then called the Qua Qua River in 1498, and that he named Rio dos Bons Sinais (lit. River of Good Signs; currently Zambezi River). This was after he had left the Cape of Good Hope; and had passed Southern Mozambique on his way to India. He became the first European to set foot in the region, setting in motion forces that would shift the history of the region and the continent (Newitt 1995, 13), a journey that led to Mozambique becoming a Portuguese colony.

The northern Mozambique region was then a booming international trade centre in which commodities like ivory and gold were traded between African people, Afro-Arabs and Arabs, and Asians (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1982; 1995). By then Vasco da Gama's trip was more focused on the spice trade in India, and his voyage created the first European direct trade route in the Indian Ocean which was before then dominated by regions such as India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia. Firstly, carried out on land, the trade then started being carried out through the red sea, which introduced the spice trading into the western markets. That trade then became monopolized first by the Byzantium empire and later by the Ottoman Turks who conquered Constantinople in the mid-15th century. That monopoly of trade routes and competition, specifically between Portugal's and Spain's monarchies led those countries to seek new spice trade routes and trading directly with Indian businesspeople (Lane 1940; McAlister 1984; Turner 2005). Vasco da Gama's landing in South Africa, Mozambique and then India was caused by those historical developments in the spice trade. As Gary Paul Nabhan (2014, 1) stated "imperialism, cultural competition and collaboration, religious belief, and social status are embedded in every milligram of cardamom, cinnamon, or cumin" and so are with the history of Mozambique and Africa, and America.

In the 15th century, the Makua and Lolo group had arrived in the region and had occupied territories that long-before the San people dwelled on (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995). The Lolo and Makua rapidly extended the areas under their control at the beginning of the 16th Century. They did this by expanding north-westwards from the country between the Zambezi and Lúrio

rivers (Phiri 1979). The Makua and Lolo in the coastal areas based their economy on ivory and gold trade firstly with the Arabs and later the Portuguese, whereas the Makua from the hinterland were still mostly agriculturalists and hunters (Newitt 1995), much like the contemporary Nangaze's and Nvava's residents. At the beginning of the 16th century, the Lolo had occupied the south-eastern part of northern Mozambique, while the Makua and other Lomwe-speaking groups inhabited the coast opposite Mozambique Island and its hinterland as far as the highlands in the central of northern Mozambique (Phiri 1979, 7).

The Makua kingdom's capital was at the Namuli mountain in Zambézia (Newitt 1995, 63). At the beginning of the 16th century, the Makua and Lolo's political system was characterized by the two-tier hierarchy of localized chieftaincy. This political system revolved around a local chief who was the uppermost authority to whom several lineage heads made appeal. The chief in this position ruled over a group of closely related lineage-based villages of which his own was the most senior genealogically. The uppermost chief "rendered religious, judicial, and military services, and was in turn entitled to the allegiance of all his followers (Phiri 1979, 7).

In the 16th century, the region then fell under domination of the Maravi kingdom, specifically Lundu, that conquered the existing matrilineal Makua and Lolo, and other Lomwue speaking groups and transformed their two-tier political system by superimposing the dominant chief as the uppermost leader and the existing local chiefs were turned into the Maravi's vassals, in what became a three-tier system (West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999). The exact date of the arrival of the Maravi in Zambézia is contested (see Alpers 1975; Newitt 1982; Morris 2006). There seems to be consensus that the Maravi's Kalonga and Lundu had become dominant forces that the Portuguese had to reckon with by the 1640s (Alpers 1975; Newitt 1982; Morris 2006, 7).

One of the results of Vasco da Gama's journey was the growing attempts of Portugal's Crown to control and monopolize maritime-route trade of the Indian spices which also enabled the emergence of other sets of relations throughout coastal areas in the Indian Ocean. Sailors and businesspeople and army officials constructed fortresses in coastal areas of Mozambique, which would help Portuguese sailors and traders in getting provisions on their way to India's spices market. The Portuguese army officials and businesspeople who had stayed in the fortress with time ventured into the hinterland and engaged in trade relations with existing Maravi kingdoms, and invaded those chiefs that opposed them, most often with the help of other

competing local chiefs, a process that became known as divide and conquer (see Alpers 1975; Phiri 1979; Morris 2006). The Portuguese traders became prominent and acquired influence in the region, either by marriage or as traders or mercenaries (Newitt 1995, 217). Local chiefs made concessions or gifted tracts of land to those Portuguese individuals. The Portuguese traders had their private armies locally called *achicunda* to protect their territories and trade centres or *feiras* (lit. plur. fairs). Those individuals were autonomous.

Portuguese Crown intending to retain control over lands in central Africa made it so that when concessions of gold mines from Mwenemupata were made in 1607, those concessions were made to the Crown and not to any individual *conquistador*, who while controlling those mines and land, they did so in the name of the Crown (Newitt 1995, 219). In practice, private individuals made decisions on how to use and explore the land and concessions at will. That Portugal's lack of control led it to decree more contractual forms of relations with the *prazos* owners. Such contracts among other things stated that the *prazos* owners were given a tenure of three-life and the tenant was obliged to pay a rent and perform service (id. 224). The *prazos* owners also had to "keep order within the *prazo*, administer it and keep roads clear: they had to provide soldiers [*achicunda*], boatmen or carriers for the government and bear their part of expenses of maintaining the forts and government buildings." (ibid.). The *prazos* owners had also to support the church, permit mining activity or rent land to small farmers. From these roles it became clear that the *prazos* were an accessory of the Portuguese colonialist Crown to control the African territory and people. That control was never really attained.

In the 17th and 18th century gold and ivory were the main economic activities in the region. The *prazos* owners relied on local agriculturalists' production whose surpluses they taxed in kind (Newitt 1995, 237). Faced with harsh climatic conditions and the fact that local agriculturalists abandoned the *prazo* owners who they thought to be unfair or harsh, and the growth of the slave trade, the *prazo* owners could not depend solely on agriculture. Their economic activities included trade, mining, and service economies (Newitt 1995, 241). *Prazo* owners, rather than exerting transformation of landscapes, relations, and subjectivities in Zambézia province, appropriated existing forms of territorial dominance and power structures, so much that they became "Africanized" (see Isaacman and Isaacman 1975). Malyn Newitt (1995) called them Afro-Portuguese. Speaking of those Afro-Portuguese's nature, Newitt (1995, 217) stated that they were like "holograms": "to the Portuguese they were land grants

held under Roman Law contracts of emphyteusis, but from the African point of view they were essentially chieftaincies and as such part of a complex system of social and economic relations bounding together all the people of the region.”

The *prazos* system too would face a decline caused among other factors by severe droughts, the rise of the slave trade and the Ngoni invasions (Newitt 1995). Most slaves who were traded had originated from the Makua wars who in exchange for slaves had received firearms from French traders (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1982; 1995). The severe drought and famine of the 1820s undermined agricultural production of the *prazos* and created instability in the increasingly militarized and armed region, that made many *prazo* owners abandon Zambézia, leaving the areas depopulated. When the droughts ceased, and *prazo* grant-holders returned, rather than resuming agricultural production they increasingly resorted to slave trade (Newitt 1995). Many African kingdoms had previously started taking part of the slave trade in exchange for firearms with the French traders. The result of that was a militarized region increasingly beyond Portuguese control.

The *prazos* as a Portuguese form of colonial control had “failed” but their enactment created pathways to the emergence of more sophisticated and modern forms of extraction of the region which the Portuguese Crown viewed as being “fertile” and “under-explored” by the former land-grant holders (de Castilho 1891). The Crown’s stance suggested that land itself had become a prized commodity to grow raw materials to export to the rapidly industrializing Europe, not much so the mineral resources—or what Glenn Ames had called the African Eldorado—that had proven to be a bust in Mozambique (see Ames 1998, 91). Apart from the land, African labour power itself became a commodity. The Portuguese Crown tried regaining control of the region through enactment of decrees that ended with the abolition of *prazos* in 1854, even though *prazos* continued well into the 1930s (Newitt 1995), and their structure and functioning would influence subsequent Portuguese Crown’s measures to control the territory and African people.

With the Berlin conference in 1884-1885 and the resulting decision for all colonizers to carry out a *de facto* occupation of their colonies and implementation of free trade in the African continent and its coastline. Portugal, as one of the economically weak colonizers, resorted to the old system of renting out two-thirds of the country to foreign investors, mainly from France,

Britain, Germany, and Switzerland to control and explore its territories and people (Adalima 2016, 34; Newitt 1995).

Portuguese colonial administrators established the colonial administration apparatus between 1885-1930 (Hedges et al. 1993). The Maravi kingdom had then declined due to internal wars, rebellion from conquered chiefs and the slave trade and Portuguese conquest (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995). Other small, militarized kingdoms had emerged that reincorporated Zambebian fragmented polities (de Castilho 1891; Isaacman and Isaacman 1976, 23-24) making Portuguese colonial control and exploitation of the area difficult. Portugal seeking to seize control over African lands and subjects, introduced modern citizenry that stipulated the rights (or lack thereof) and duties of the people in relation to the Crown, and a series of legislation that made the land essential for the residents a state property. Only the colonial state could grant or not access to it and determine its use and exploration. The colonial land laws also determined that all inhabitants should pay a tax called *imposto de palhota* (lit. hut tax) (Enes 1893)—those who failed to pay the tax could pay it with labour— this stance some scholars considered a tool to force residents who colonialists perceived as “lazy” black people and available labour power into labour (*xibalo*—lit. forced labour) in large-scale plantations in central and northern Mozambique (Isaacman and Isaacman 1975; 1976; First 1977; Newitt 1995).

As already indicated earlier, the Portuguese Crown did not have conditions enough to effectively occupy and explore the colonial territory in Mozambique and other colonies. Earlier attempts to occupy the region’s territories militarily had failed or proved very costly to the Portuguese Crown (de Castilho 1891, 7). As the Captain Augusto de Castilho (1891, 7) stated “the state of war in Zambézia has been nearly chronic, it has been the main reason behind the backwardness that characterizes the region, and of the difficulties the metropolis and local governments had had in ensuring progress in that vast territory.” The high costs related to conquering and controlling the region and intense military states made Portugal rent out land to private foreign investors. A result of that was the creation of two chartered companies, namely, Mozambique Company in 1888, occupying Manica and Sofala, and Niassa Company in 1891 occupying Niassa and Cabo Delgado. Those companies acted as states within the state in that they could

organise a police force to ensure the pacification of the territories under their jurisdiction; facilitate colonisation through the construction of infrastructure (especially roads); create and develop small industries, *e.g.*, cotton and sugar; engage in trading agricultural surpluses and rural business; and ensure the transit of goods to neighbouring countries (mainly South Africa and Rhodesia). In exchange, the companies earned the right to collect taxes (*musso* and hut tax); negotiate through sub-concessions the exploitation of land for agriculture and mining; exploit marine wealth; exercise exclusivity in the recruitment of labour (including forced labour); and issue currency and postage stamps in the territories under their administration (Adalima 2016, 35; see also Hedges et al. 1993; Newitt 1995; 1997).

In Zambézia province, Portugal granted leasing rights to the Zambézia Company founded in 1892 owned mostly by South African, English, German, French and Monocan investors, which did not have the same state-like ethos that chartered companies had.

The large-scale plantations in Zambézia province produced copra, sisal and cotton, sugar cane and tea (Newitt 1995; Bertelsen 2015; Adalima 2016). In these companies, labour power itself was a commodity that company owners traded from Zambézia to plantation owners, for example, in “São Tomé and Príncipe, which had become the world’s third-largest cocoa producer after Ecuador and Brazil” (Adalima 2016, 40). While having been implemented in substitution of *prazos*, the companies had the similar role of aiding Portuguese extractive colonial presence in Mozambique, albeit in different degrees and intensities. The companies maintained some of the former *prazos*’ functioning like collection of taxes which had worked well in turning residents who had failed to pay their taxes into cheap labour and using local authorities to find labour power and law-breaking individuals. The companies’ authority in the region was stronger than the actual state and this too created a sense of unease among Portuguese colonial officials who felt that they had no power or say over what happened in territories that they oversaw (de Castilho 1891). Different from the *prazos*, the private companies could not be seen as holograms. For the Africans, it was clear that they were external actors who “owned” and explored the lands in which they had long lived.

One of the major crops resulting from imposing these novel forms of geographies, subjectivities and sets of extractive relations in my fieldwork site was tea. Tea plantations had begun in South

Africa, south of Mozambique, around the city of Durban. But in 1878, after coffee plantations had failed in Mulanje, a Malawian district neighbouring Zambézia Province's Milange district, private investors started tea plantations in Malawi (Wilson et al. 1960). According to Wilson et al. (1960, 6), "in 1878 Jonathan Duncan planted tea near Blantyre on a Mission Farm with successful results. Two consignments of tea seed were sent out from Kew and Edinburgh Botanical Gardens in 1886 and 1888. The African Lakes Corporation successfully planted this seed on a small acreage at Lauderdale below Milange Mountain." This success story of plantations led to a spread of the plantations to different countries in Africa, including Zimbabwe (1900), Uganda (1900), Kenya (1904), Tanzania (1920), Mozambique (1920), and Cameroon (1954).

In Mozambique, as stated earlier, tea plantations started in 1920, first in the Milange district, bordering Malawi's Mulanje area. Private investors then expanded tea plantations to the Gurue district, until it reached Tacuane, an administrative post in Lugela district, in the 1930's (Wilson et al. 1960, 7). In Lugela, where Mount Mabo is located, the companies producing tea included Societé du Madal (henceforth, Madal), Chá Tacuane, Chá Palma mira, Boror Company, Agricultural Company of Lugela that rented the Lomue, Lugela and Milange *prazos* (land leases and SONIL (Mozambique's Government Portal <https://www.portaldogoverno.gov.mz/index.php/por/Moçambique/Historia-de-Moçambique/Penetracao-Colonial>). These companies emerged after the Portuguese government had decided to sublease the Zambézia Company (Adalima 2016, 37), in Portugal's interest of extending control and generating income in Mozambique.

According to Wilson et al. (1960), Madal was the largest of Lugela's tea estates in terms of production and area. Madal was also involved in coconut production in Zambézia, introduced prior to colonialism by Indonesians (Adalima 2016). Madal was a private company created by the Prince of Monaco 1903, who then invited the Norwegian Christian Thams to manage the company, in 1910 (see Reiersen 2014, 272; Bonnet 1914). As Bertelsen writes of Madal it:

first, may be seen as an instance of a *total institution*, [...] in the sense that it controlled and structured nearly all aspects of the African subjects under its command. Second, the plantation may not be analysed in isolation, but must be approached as a node - a singular point in a network—in the vaster economic and political colonial system. Last,

[...] Zambézia's plantation regime—of which Madal comprised a part—was an integral part of Portuguese colonial rule and strategy in Mozambique (Bertelsen 2015, 292).

What this means is that Madal, like the other colonial plantations and companies, was part and parcel of Portuguese colonialism and helped in controlling land and people, setting modern citizenry through introduction of forced paid labour and collection of taxes. Madal and RBG Kew could be framed as being part and parcel of what Donna Haraway (2015) called “Plantationocene”. Anna Tsing (2012) previously described the “Plantationocene” as the messy entanglement of social hierarchies, state capitalism, plants, and soils (I discuss this proposition more in chapter five).

Madal was also influential in the symbolic, cultural, and material life of the inhabitants see box 3—Calisto's timeline biography in the appendices). While at first its implementation in the 1910s was violent (Bertelsen 2014), with international pressure against Portugal's forced labour policies, and increased competition from other companies, and mine work in South Africa, Madal later sought to ingrain itself into the local modes of living and allowed flexibility of its workers to work on their own lands and integrate their economies to the company's (see Adalima 2016). The company sought to create conditions to persuade workers to stay. Madal's created flexibility, relative freedom and attractiveness made some of the interlocutors of this study invoke Madal's colonial time and operations as better than the present-day Mozambique Holdings Limited's, where an abundant free labour power, lack of opportunities and inexistence of labour unions and weak state control makes it so that the corporation dictates the workers' lives and hour-labour rates at will. Although the state transferred the rights to use the land to Mozambique Holdings Limited in 2011, residents still called the company Madal.

What the short history above highlights is the similar process described by James Ferguson (1994) in Lesotho and Tina Li (2007; 2017) in Indonesia where those scholars described how allegedly “failed” projects in the past, in fact have created transformations that served as pathways to contemporary projects being implemented. It also shows how the states' will to power and control local people and the states' will to improve through extractive development also in the name of control. It also highlighted what Igor Kopytoff (1989) called the African frontier and showed that African identities are made up of complex processes and (amicable or

violent) contacts between local, regional, and global actors. Wars and trade connected local inhabitants to global capitalist markets in messy ways.

“New Man”, modern citizenry, land, and disillusionment: competing claims to land in postcolonial Mozambique

Mozambique attained its independence through an armed struggle in 1975. The country carried out a bold nationalization of private properties and land, after Frelimo’s struggle to free people and the land in 1977. The newly established Frelimo government gave the white people who belonged or identified themselves with the colonial administration 24 hours to pack up to 20 kilogrammes of their belongings and leave the country. However, the socialist state continued the colonial-style modern citizenry⁶ public administration which privileged scientific knowledge and state-centred modes of determining land use rights. This continuation of colonial modern administrative and citizenry tools was as much at odds with local ontologies and structures as had been the colonial system in that the former privileged belonging rather than ownership, small scale farming rather than the large collective monoculture production that the socialist government sought to implement through *aldeias comunais* (lit. plur. communal villages). The then Frelimo government framed local chiefs as colonial agents inimical to its nation-building plans towards a “New Man” free from superstition and tribalism, an educated and civilized man—that “Man” was a product of centrally planned techno-scientific designs.

From 1975 to 1992 Mozambicans experienced three major political transformations: implementation of a socialist regime in 1977, headed by a one-party government—Frelimo, which privileged the improvement of human condition through imposing techno-scientific and collectivized modes of production and using land. In this period, the socialist state mobilized the use of the natural resources as an ideological struggle between capitalism and socialism. In the late 1980s Mozambique switched to neoliberalism after the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union that had supported Mozambique and another change after a peace agreement in 1992, which ushered the country into a more neoliberal extractive political-economic

⁶ For example, it was only in 2014 that the Mozambican state approved a new penal code to substitute the 1886 penal code introduced by the Portuguese colonialists (<https://www.dw.com/pt-002/novo-c%C3%B3digo-penal-de-mo%C3%A7ambique-traz-muitas-novidades/a-17790640>).

approach. During the second period, Mozambique experienced a horrific war between Renamo (The Mozambican National Resistance) and the Frelimo government. It devastated the social, economic material fabric of the society. Severe droughts coupled with the war and sent many Mozambicans into extreme precarity (Geffray 1990; Alexander 1997; West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999; Dinnerman 1994; 2006; 2009; Robinson 2006; Bozzoli and Brück 2009; Chichava and Legg 2013). This was a period when Mozambicans were struggling with rebuilding the country, ostensibly with the aid of the “iron” hand of the Bretton Woods institutions imposing structural adjustments programs (henceforth, SAPs) in terms of the post-war global monetary order. In terms of these SAPs, the World Bank and IMF forced Mozambique to implement economic reforms such as implementing free trade between Mozambique and the global market, allowing the implementation and operation of non-governmental organizations (henceforth, NGOs), and permitting foreign investment (WTO 2001; Govereh and Jayne 2002). This was a move to bury any remains of the socialist and Cold War eras.

The 1992 signing of peace agreement brought a sense of hope that a new dawn had come to the devastated country. But, after the first elections which saw the victory of Frelimo candidate Joaquim Chissano in 1994, Mozambicans were still experiencing high rates of unemployment, homelessness, starvation, lack of basic infrastructures like hospitals, schools, safe water supplies among others—a situation compounded by a multi-year drought. In this period, the global media and donors represented Mozambique, to use a metaphor, as the proverbial skinny-flies-infested little boy or girl on the cover of a Western country magazine or newspaper begging for aid⁷ from Western countries and organisations faced with a growing economic and political elite in the country and a widening gap between the new rich and the poor (Hanlon 1991, 2004a,b; Sumich 2005; 2010a, 2010b; Cunguara and Hanlon 2012). These conditions led to the rise of the “development machine” (*cf.* Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; 2017) in Mozambique, aiming at improving the living conditions of poor people and alleviating poverty.

⁷ My childhood memory is filled with such images, which as a child I remember I looked at them as if they were talking about some foreign country which was not my own. I lived in Maputo, and I had visited my grandmother in Gaza province, and played with my cousins from my mother’s side and I never really registered those images that populated the media in the 1990s.



Figure 1. I took this photograph in 2017 on my way to Limbue from Nangaze through the former colonial tea estate Madal property. This photograph shows old Madal’s infrastructure that was destroyed during the civil war and is currently abandoned and taken over by the colonial tea plantations as well as other plants, showcasing what Tsing et al. (2017) calls “ghosts” that haunt current landscapes. It is a reminder that rather than looking at Madal as a “failure” it is more insightful to look at it as a pathway that enables or blocks possibilities in the present and future.

Since 1994, Mozambique has had five democratic elections, each seeing the re-election of a Frelimo government. Afonso Dhlakama, the leader of Renamo which had now formed as a political party, unsuccessfully contested the validity of each one of those re-elections (see Valot 1998; de Brito 2008; Vines 2013; Reid and Wimpy 2013; Machado 2018). Many scholars echoed in their studies Dhlakama’s criticism of Frelimo—as the new base for the elite capture of the public political life, public administration, private businesses, and media (*e.g.*, Sumich 2005; 2010a; Israel 2014; Vhumbunu 2017). And while the problematic political situation leading to corruption was well-known by foreign donors, researcher Joseph Hanlon (2004a) has argued that those donors promoted corruption through ignoring the corrupt activities of Frelimo party members. Such observations led the international community, including the IMF

and the World Bank, to enforce novel forms of governance, including accountability, transparency seeking not just to exert development but steer the political life of the country towards what they called “good governance”. Such impositions of development and political designs also produced contradicting results on the ground.

Many Mozambicans with whom I have interacted during my life are aware of these dynamics and in *bater papo* with them, I have often heard, the terms “*Frelimização*” (lit. “Frelimization” or the process of Frelimo party cadres occupying public administration places) being used for the people who act for the interests of the party. Similarly, the interlocutors of this study have referred to Frelimo supporters as “*Frelimistas*” (Sumich 2010) and I never heard a similar denomination with Renamo supporters. Additionally, and particularly pertinent to this study is Frelimo’s increasing focus on extractive industries also affected by Frelimo elite capture (Macuane, Buur and Monjane 2017; Wiegink 2018). From a macroeconomics perspective, an outcome is that the GDP numbers showed a growing economy.⁸ As development, conservation and development-aid funds poured into the country from various Western institutions and countries (see Financial Tracking System 2019).

The prospects of the extractive industries, and the foreign (including South African) direct investment it attracted, generated a sense of excitement during the 2000s and early 2010s (Besharati 2012; World Bank 2014; Macuane, Buur and Monjane 2017; Wiegink 2018). It created hopes that finally the country would experience structural transformation and climb the ladders of prosperity with job creation, improved infrastructures, and services provision. For Mozambicans, this was what Ferguson (1999) called an expectation of modernity (see also Narotzky and Besnier 2014; de L’Estoile 2014), with visions of the future perceived to be prosperous due to extractive development.

The Mozambican state’s approach was part and parcel of what Hans-Jürgen Burchardt and Kristina Dietz (2014) called neo-extractivism in Latin America, meaning that the state was central in creating laws and policies to enable resource extraction and generate income, because “progressive governments regulate the appropriation of resources and their export by nationalizing companies and raw materials, revising lease contracts and increasing export

⁸ For more details visit <https://countryeconomy.com/gdp/mozambique?year=2016>

duties and taxes. In addition, they use the surplus revenue to increase social structures that favoured development” (Burchardt and Dietz 2014, 270).

In 2021 as I write this thesis, many negative events are obfuscating the initial excitement that the Mozambicans had around extraction, namely: the political violence claiming human lives in central and northern Mozambique (Crisis Group 2020; dos Santos 2020; BBC 2020; World Bank 2020a; Morier-Genoud 2020), population displacements (IOM DTM 2020; iDMC 2020; Real World Radio 2020), plundering of forests through illegal logging in central Mozambique (World Bank 2018a; DW Africa 2017a; 2019); rapidly growing social inequalities (World Bank 2020b) that reflect high unemployment alongside a small prosperous economic and political elite (Cuangara and Hanlon 2012; Williams and Isaksen 2016; Macuene, Buur and Monjane 2017; Hanlon 2017; Navarra and Rodrigues 2018; Buur and Monjane 2017; Wiegink 2018; Nhamire and Hill 2019); and Mozambicans in central Mozambique were still recovering from severe blows of cyclones IDAI and Kenneth. Many young Mozambicans lived in radical uncertainties and survived through the informal sector (Honwana 2013). These predicaments led Salim Valá, a former Mozambican state leader and academic, to state, in a public debate on TV, that “given the structural and complex problems that Mozambique is facing, we are really lucky things are not worse.”⁹

The interlocutors of this study also expressed the same predicaments and the concerns. They used the events narrated earlier to arrange their narratives about and acted upon their past, present, and future. When Calisto and I would *passear*, drinking and chatting with other local men, these were among the topics that emerged. Residents mentioned greedy and corrupt Frelimo elite; lack of employment opportunities in the district; lack of hospitals nearby; worsening of the present living conditions; increased criminality rates; that people exhumed human remains or killed others for their organs; and that then ongoing Renamo versus Frelimo’s government political tension resulted in killings in central Mozambique; and the colonization of Mozambique by western countries through imposition of policies or development and governance designs. Residents also talked about the lack of roads from within their *povoados* to major district and urban centres, and access to clean water—resulting in their

⁹ STV 2020. O País Económico. Accessed July 21, 2020, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAltfkJDTL0&feature=share>

resorting to taking water from rivers, lakes, and open boreholes (80 percent, according to the 2011 statistics from the National Institute of Statistics).

The existing schools in the *povoados* were distant and in such precarious conditions that sometimes the teachers were absent from school for an extended period which caused uproar, specifically in Nangaze. Men with whom I would *passerar* complained about local state bureaucrats who charged money to provide services that they claimed they should receive for free, since the government and donors' programmes had funded them. They complained about the lack of electricity, forcing them to use wood as their source of energy. What men said during our *passerar* sessions showed their recognition that they lived at the margins of the state and of (their desired) modernity. They contrasted their harsh living conditions to those in other countries, specifically Malawi. They praised the Malawian government for aiding its local agriculturalists through distributing improved seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides to boost agricultural production, as opposed to Mozambique.

Calisto and *mwene* of Nvava, Costa Moreno, had worked in Malawi and shared fond memories about their youth years there. Most men from these two *povoados* had taken refuge in Malawi when the civil war broke out. Many young men with whom I interacted were, like people studied by Ferguson (1999), de L'Estoile (2014), and Wiegink (2018) "thirsty" for opportunities and development. Their visions of prosperous futures, which the men framed in Portuguese as *esperar* (meaning to expect, to wait or to hope) (*cf.* Capranzano 1985; Dhillon, Dyer and Yousef 2009; Honwana 2013; Kovacheva, Kabaivanov and Roberts 2017), resulted from the "failures of existing institutions to mediate the transitions of young people into adulthood" (Dhillon, Dyer and Yousef 2009, 13). But while they *esperar*, they also devised strategies to deal with their predicaments or "field of opportunities" (de L'Estoile 2014, 64). I felt no sensation of resignation among *povoados*' residents but a hustle and hope amid those radical uncertainties.

The scientists' and NGOs' work seeking to protect Mount Mabo provided a catalyst for generating such expectations. I situate that work within the above-described historical external successive techno-scientific designs framed as to improve living conditions of residents. Conservationists enacted an environmentalism through techno-scientific designs to protect nature which is, to paraphrase Zimmerers' (2006) idea of "environmental globalization", a

rhizome connecting Mabo residents, flora and fauna to global environmental designs and centres in the current climate crisis, or as the scientists themselves stated it putting Mount Mabo on the “conservation map.”

Study Area Location: Why Nvava and Nangaze?

Lugela district covers an area of 6,132.5 square kilometres and contains four *postos administrativos* (lit.plur. administrative posts), namely, Lugela, Muabanama, Munhamade and Tacuane comprising 16 *localidades* (lit.plur. localities) which in turn comprise various *povoados* (smaller population territorial units in rural areas). Mount Mabo is within the Muabanama and Tacuane administrative area. The population of Lugela district in 2018 was 18,811 persons. Most employed people work in the public administration (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2018) while the most spoken language in the district is Manhaua (89,6%), one of the Makua language-group languages. The extent of distinct dialects within the Makua language group suggests that a thousand years may have passed since the break-up of the original Makua-speaking group that was the Makua nation, based in the Namuli mountains (Newitt 1995, 62-63).

I focused my fieldwork in the Nvava and Nangaze *povoados* because they were among the four *povoados* identified by JA!, and the eleven identified by RADEZA as targets for community related conservation efforts. When I started my fieldwork in June 2016, I was unaware of either of these two NGOs and the existence of the associations and committees that the two NGOs had respectively created. I learned about them, on my arrival, from the newly appointed Chief of locality of Limbue, Manuel Pacá. I then followed the associations and committees’ activities based in Limbue, Namadoe, Nangaze and Nvava.

I first interacted with the associations and only later with the NGOs’ activists who explained that the NGOs had selected the targeted *povoados* because of their perceived spatial proximity to Mount Mabo. My interactions with residents in the *povoados* further highlighted that it was both relational and spatial proximity that bound certain *povoados* to Mount Mabo; and that Namadoe, which is part of Limbue, was relationally and spatially closer to Mount Namadoe. When I talked to the Limbue’s *mwene*, he confirmed his *povoado*’s and Namadoe’s attachment to Mount Namadoe and stated that Nangaze and Nvava *povoados* are attached to Mount Mabo.

There was a dispute between the *mwene* of Nangaze, Mpida Tacalanavo who belonged to the Munema clan, and *mwene* of Nvava, Costa Moreno who belonged to Madimba clan, about which lineage or clan legitimately belonged to Mount Mabo. Such ‘legitimate belonging’, as I later show, was beyond NGOs’ emphasis on spatial proximity, but on clan groups highlighting the importance of kinship, spirituality, and ancestry. Complaining about the NGOs’ presence, *mwene* Mpida added that much of the confusion had started when the NGOs created associations and committees and used spatial proximity as a parameter to determine “ownership”.

In this thesis, I follow the logic espoused by both the Nvava’s Madimba and Nangaze’s Munema lineages that claim that they mutually belong to Mount Mabo. During my fieldwork in Nangaze and Nvava, people hardly ever spoke about Mount Mabo, River Múgue, and Mount Muriba or the forest. They also hardly ever spoke directly about the NGOs and scientists working in the forest. Mention of the mountain and forest emerged indirectly and in conversations about NGOs, scientists, tourists, colonialism, the civil war, the *mwene*, and their complex present entanglements. Whilst many residents had visited Mount Mabo as porters and guides for tourists, activists and scientists visiting the mountain, it was common for most to go about their daily lives without mentioning Mabo, Muriba or Múgue. One would be wrong in thinking that this meant residents knew nothing about their significant nonhuman Other, much like a JA!-activist had told me. Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and River Múgue are part and parcel of residents’ lives even when they did not explicitly articulate this. Their relations to these aspects of landscapes emerged mostly when discussing hunting, farming, ruling, bewitching, and protecting in relation to those nonhuman entities.

Following life in the two *povoados*, I have organized the thesis into chapters based on themes relevant to any of the *povoados*’ members. Those themes are protecting, ruling, hunting, cultivating and bewitching, each of which is the concern of a primarily descriptive chapter where I share residents’ narratives and stories about the area. In doing so, I invite readers to glimpse the residents’ world—a world that far exceeds the stories that an 80 000-word thesis can contain. That world is not exclusive: the global climate crisis, global inequalities, neoliberalism and neo-extractivism affect and are affected by it in complex ways and the local and international struggles to halt such destructive processes.

In chapter one, I position the thesis theoretically and analytically. I survey the scholarship that focuses on the existence of multiple worlds, specifically those related to ontological, temporal and spatial multiplicities amidst the continuity of coloniality. This scholarship has helped me identify, describe, and analyse such multiplicities and to build my argument for more fair and just coexistence than at present. As an ethical, analytical and epistemological stance following the decolonial and Africanist scholarship, I operationalize the concept of *okwiri* (lit.sing. witchcraft) since it is one that invites us to look at implications of a subjects' actions in enabling or obstructing production of a harmonious community of life (and death) and which helps me to account for the complexities and contradictions behind the state, NGOs, scientists, the *mwene* and local people; and hence to destabilize colonial and dualistic approaches to understanding social relations between such entities in contemporary Mozambique.

In chapter two, I focus on the emergence and configurations of the “Google Forest”. I show how global concerns over biodiversity loss and the work of conservationists in Mount Mabo informed by a modernist ontology intersect in messy ways with the complex and yet unsolved Mozambican “land question”, its competing valuing systems and coloniality. Following Ferguson (1994), I argue that the NGOs' work to implement a conservation area through the acquisition of a DUAT has tightened the neoliberal, neo-extractive and donor-dependent Frelimo's state grip over remote areas and people. I show that the narratives and practices of conservationists and the state bureaucracy through its Land and Conservation Laws, Mount Mabo and the forest emerge as a “scene” of political, economic and social struggles, and only the state-approved artefact of DUAT works as the proof of attachment to landscapes. This narrative, while useful, to borrow Marisol de la Cadena's (2015b) expression, in “commoning” global struggles—to halt the accelerated mass extinctions and predatory capital accumulation—with local struggles, leaves one losing sight of the modes of attachment between the *mwene* and the mountain, and of local ontologies. It thus cannot acknowledge effectively and salvage such relations from neoliberal and extractivist capture.

In chapter three, I depart from the “Google Forest” and its techno-scientific register to focus instead on what I have called the “Secret Mount Mabo” by looking at the neglected and contentious figures of the *amwene* (lit.plur. local chiefs) who one can consider them one of the “veterans” of the “land question” disputes in contemporary Mozambique. I describe how, despite intense external and internal shocks including conservationism, the *amwene* have

sustained their disputed legitimacy and the substance of power through their mutual belonging to Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue. Both the *mwene* of Nvava and that of Nangaze in their disputes over who rightfully belongs to Mount Mabo resort to lineage and the death of the first *mwene*'s lineage ruling each *povoado* as the link between the *mwene*, those landscapes and the various *povoados* making it so that the *mwene*'s lineage belongs to the landscapes and the landscapes belong to the *mwene*'s lineage. In this dispute, I also show how the *mwene* of Nangaze—and his Munema lineage—mobilizes the knowledge of Mount Mabo's, Mount Muriba's and the River Múgue's secret names as an archive to bestow him and his lineage the legitimate authority. In this ecopolitics, I argue, the landscapes are not passive “natural entities” in which political and social struggles unfold and to be “owned through land use rights titling” as framed by the modern forms of governance. Instead, it is the landscapes' ability to bestow power to *mwene*'s lineages that makes political and social life in the *povoados* possible. This ecopolitical register escapes techno-scientific and economic nature versions advanced by conservationists.

In chapter four, I remain my focus on the “Secret Mount Mabo” to focus on the transforming hunters' relations with the “Secret Mount Mabo”, animals and forest. By following Angelo's stories, his mobility, tracking skills—or what Tsing (2015) called arts of noticing—in Mabo forest, I highlight how such stories and modes of engagement enact the personhood and agency of landscapes and animals and the centrality of the *matoa* (lit.plur. ancestors' spirits) with whom hunters must engage in relations based on *ori'a* if they wish to succeed in their hunting journeys and return home safely, suggesting what Mavunga (2014) called “guided mobility”—giving rise to a relational ecology. I argue that conservationists by framing hunters' incursions into the forest as dangerous to biodiversity with little evidence, they continue a colonial gaze on hunters' practices, who they seek to transform through techno-scientific interventions and economic incentives into guides or porters. By recognising the hunters' relations with the landscapes, animals and ancestral spirits, I seek to unsettle the technically designed lines dividing the “community” lands from the forest and Mount Mabo as traced by GIS. Those lines code landscapes as “community” lands separated from the bounded “*Área Pretendida*” or the “Core Area”, and code local people as a potential “threat” to the biodiversity of the area in ways that lead to an assumed need to control their access to the forest through what conservationists have framed as a “formal conservation”.

In chapter five, I focus on the emergence of yet another version of nature: Neo-extractivism in the form of rubber plantations, which resuscitate colonial designs to improve the human conditions in the area (see Li 2007; 2017). First, I focus on residents' ways of doing agriculture with special focus on seeds, soils, and pests as empirical and analytical lenses through which to understand the solidarity networks and the relational ecologies with which residents inhabit. I highlight how such relational ecologies and solidarity networks are increasingly being encroached by neo-extractive development designs seeking to boost rural development through private investments steered by the state, with special focus on Mozambique Holdings' Limited rubber plantation and its colonial legacies. I argue that while having damaging effects on nature, residents and their relations—including dispossessions, commoditization, marketization, financialization, hierarchization and exploitation of life and nonlife and growing conflicts in the area—neo-extractivism around Mount Mabo has not deserved similar conservationists' attention as residents' agricultural practices that, much like hunting, conservationists have framed as threats to Mount Mabo “wilderness”.

In chapter six, I delve into *okwiri* as both a practice and analytical lenses to analyse how residents handle conflicts and social hierarchies resulting from both internal and external actors. I discuss how in Nangaze, in the context of growing exclusionary transformations, the *mwene*'s family are attempting to hold and control all positions of power and in the process control opportunities and distributions of resources brought into the *povoado* by external actors. By so doing, they emerge in the eyes of excluded *povoados*' members as *akwiri* that endanger community-building and solidarity networks, which they must protect as local chiefs. By shifting focus to Balami both as a person and a concept, I show how *okwiri* accusations emerge as social control of erratic behaviour for community-building purposes, and how Balami uses his erratic behaviour, and *okwiri* as tools to claim a stake in the *povoado* and counter the feared and respected figure of *mwene* and his lineage. I also discuss how residents have mobilized the figure of *akwiri* to make sense of the otherwise exclusionary and obscure work of conservationists, including mine. My doing that allows me to make a case how *okwiri* accusations emerge as “weapons of the weak” to use James Scott's (1987) words, questioning the *mwene*, conservationists and state bureaucrats perceived by the accusers as agents that are endangering solidarity networks within the *povoados* and in the process creating and favouring an elite.

Taking the opening of witchcraft as a call for more transparent and solidarity-building actions within the *povoados*, I end the thesis with a general conclusion where I highlight the disconnections between “Google Forest”, “Secret Mount Mabo”, and “Neo-extractive” versions of landscapes. By resorting to the notions of “contaminations” (Anna Tsing 2012), “impurities” (Shotwell 2018), and that “we are both colonized and colonizers” (Viveiros de Castro and Danowski), I proposed the conservationists need to look at themselves not as “arbiters” or “mediators” as they have thus far but stakeholders in which their version of nature is but one version, among others. Only after they have made that move could they start building liberating alliances with residents already facing pressures and shrinking “affordances” (Gibson 1979) or “fields of opportunities” (de L’Estoile 2014).

Chapter one: Theoretical and methodological frameworks

The New, the Geological and the “Man”—On Multiple notions and ontologies of “Man”, “Time”, “Space”, and “Nature”: Theoretical framework

Worlds extend beyond the stories that occur in them, inviting speculation and exploration through imaginative means. They are realms of possibility, a mix of familiar and unfamiliar, permutations of wish, dread, and dream, and other kinds of existence that can make us more aware of the circumstances and conditions of the [...] world we inhabit (Wolf 2012, 17).

To account for the (dis)connections between the three worlds mentioned earlier, there is a need to open the very understanding of “Nature”, “Man”, “Space” and “Time”. “What’s a Man?” asks Edward Wilson (2016), in the prologue to his book *Half-Earth: our planet’s fight for life* where he defends the urgent need to protect 50% of Earth’s surface. Wilson answers by stating that Man is “a storyteller, mythmaker, and destroyer of the living world. Thinking with a gabble reason, emotion, and religion. Lucky accident of primate evolution during the late Pleistocene. Mind of the biosphere. Magnificent in imaginative power and exploratory drive yet yearning to be more master than steward of a declining planet.” Wilson’s definition of man resonates with the 1992 Rio Earth Summit’s concerns over biological diversity loss due to *human* activities. That is like the “Man” of the enlightenment and modernity, and to the “Man” in Christianity. The term “Man” refers to a particular Eurocentric and modern vision of the human that emerged out of the enlightenment, around which the story of the entire planet is too often told (see Morrison 2015).

This generalized though un-situated (almost ghost-like) “Man” has been at the centre of environmental conservation debate as the *Anthropos* in the Anthropocene, a concept which according to Stephen, Crutzen and Mcneil (2007, 614 my italics), means that “*human* activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*.” Lesley Green (2020, 134), in her book *Rock/water/life* describes how *Homo-sapiens* has in the era of neoliberalism come to be understood as *Homo oeconomicus* all in the service of economic growth. Another aspect that

this “Man” embodies because of Judaeo-Christian religion is the blinding notion of human exceptionalism, says Anna Tsing (2012, 144), such notions of the Human and human exceptionalism “fuel assumptions about human autonomy, and they direct to questions of the human control of nature, on the one hand, or human impact on nature, on the other, rather than species [or other entities] interdependence.” But this notion of “Man”, as Anna Tsing (2012; 2013) Marisol de la Cadena (2010; 2015a) Green (2013, 2020) and others pointed out, is but one form of conceptualization being human. The “*anthropos*” (“Man”) that emerges in the narrative above are ontologically bound and already separated from nature and in a relationship that Lesley (2020, 77), inspired by Aimé Césaire, described as that between Master and Slave, Subject and Object.

Following the vast legacy of decolonial, political ecology, Africanist and political ontology scholarship and my ethnographic material, I argue that that understanding of “Man” is but a historical and contingent construction within the Enlightenment rationale of divisional categorizations, and also within a modern and Christian cultural matrix separating spirit from body, and nature from society, subject from object (Wagner 1981; Povinelli 1995; Fowler 2004; Lima 2005; Blaser 2005; Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2011; Viveiros de Castro 1986; 1998; 2004a,b; 2014; de la Cadena 2015; Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 2018; Green 2020). This “Man”, argues Green, “excludes the experiences and struggles of those who do not define their worth or well-being as humans in ‘econo-sphere’ that defines the worth of all the other earth systems” (2020, 134). Those excluded experiences and struggles will be at the centre of this thesis.

Such studies have pointed out the existence of other ontologies in which being human takes different configurations and meanings. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Déborah Danowski (2018, 173-181) called these different modes of being “Man” Terrans living in Gaia as opposed to the above “Humans” living on an (ahistorical) Earth described above. An example is the *ubuntu* philosophy—in Manhaua the word for a person is *muthu*)—which normatively defines a person in relation to other people and to the environment (Murove 2009; Chuwa 2014; Molefe 2016). People who adhere to *ubuntu* do not judge others’ actions on others’ ability to achieve their individual goals but the degree to which they meet the precepts of intersubjectivity and to which persons contribute to harmony with others and the environment. That relation attests the normativity of *ubuntu* (Nyamnjoh 2005; Chuwa 2014). Studies have also shown that the

existence of local institutions, local courts, gossip, and accusations of witchcraft (in my case study *okwiri*) equally attest to personhood as relational (see Garrett 1977; Ehrenreich 1990; Auslander 1993; Ashforth 2005; Geschiere 2013). In short, and much like Strathern (2004) described, the human-environment/person-others relation is the unit of being a person. This human being is not the individual “Man” who is divided in body and mind and from which relations with others unfold after a self-interested calculus. It is that bounded vision of the human that populates the nature conservation imaginary, as showed by Wilson (2016) and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), and Stephen, Crutzen and Mcneil (2007), all of which scholars have challenged their coloniality that silences other forms of personhood in relational philosophies and relational enactments of personhood (Chakrabarty 2000; Davis 2017; Morrison 2015; Szerszynski 2017; Green 2020).

One fieldwork example of these other forms of personhood comes from one occasion when I was enquiring about the origin and mobility of *mwene* Mpida and his lineage and asked him if he knew whence, he had come and he answered “*Mio di Nangaze*” (lit. I am Nangaze [translated from Manhaua]). In his view, his identity was not a sum of his moving within a space called Nangaze. His whole being as a person he defined as “being Nangaze”. What this means is that the relation between him and the land and people gave him a particular personhood—he is a Nangaze. The land, the mountains and River were in him, and he was in them. Yet, as my next example (explored further in chapters two and six) shows, such a relation some residents contested.

Another fieldwork example that attests to the existence of relational personhood highlights the mechanisms used to stabilize such a notion of personhood when some violate the notion’s precepts. Balami, a Nangaze resident, who other residents accused of being a witch because his life did not conform to the ideal of being a person in Nangaze. In his neighbours’ eyes he was an interloper, a drunkard who caused many fights including with the *mwene*. These attributes made him the object of many interventions by *amwene* including various expulsions from places where he had lived. What Balami’s predicaments suggest is that while personhood and identity emerge with and as part of place, as *mwene* Mpida had articulated, maintaining one’s personhood is neither bound nor given and other people can threaten it. This occurs when practices that challenge the normative stability of Nangaze ontology occur—and residents respond to them decisively, often through accusations of *okwiri*. Accusations of *okwiri* may

then emerge as mechanisms through which to maintain ontological order, and therefore normative personhood and conviviality.

Personhood is not only a human quality (in the Western sense of the word), since the environment—which the classical Judaeo-Christian or Enlightenment, Western and modernist thought reduced to a stage for human action—is here (and in many other societies) an agent endowed with person-like qualities (see Viveiros de Castro 1986; Povinelli 1995; Howell 1996; Kohn 2006; Willerslev 2007; Descola 2013).

Another example of local framings of personhood lies in a story, told by Philippe Descola about his hosts' wife who had been bitten by a snake and how his host, Chumpi, interpreted such an event. That is because it highlights nature as a person. According to the story, after a snake had bitten Chumpi's wife, Chumpi felt it was revenge from *Jurijuri* (one of wildlife's mother) because he had used a shotgun and killed and harmed many monkeys that he really did not need. Explaining to Descola about his breaking of the rules, Chumpi told him that “woolly monkeys, toucans, howler monkeys (...) are persons, just as we are” (Descola 2013, 1).

As I expound on later, I found a similar extension of personhood towards the nonhuman world with Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Mugué. For now, the point of these examples is to show that taken-for-granted understandings of being human, and person are slippery concepts, and that ontological reality is not the universal that Enlightenment thought proposes. To accept this kind of multiplicity requires one not to take a singular reality for granted. Viveiros de Castro's (2004b, 465) explanation of Amerindian perspectivism, illustrates when he states that “while our folk anthropology holds that humans have an original animal nature that must be coped with by culture—having been wholly animals, we remain animals ‘at bottom’—Amerindian thought holds that, having been human, animals must still be human, albeit in an unapparent way.” What this means is that the “humanness” of beings manifests in different forms or species, as people, and who, like people, engage in social relations. As Viveiros de Castro explains, other species or a mix of them with human species “usually are visible to the eyes of only the particular species and of ‘transspecific’ beings such as shamans” (ibid.).

In the *mwene*'s worldview, itself a reality rather than a belief as the paired Enlightenment dichotomy of knowledge-belief would have it, Mount Mabo, the River Múgue and Mount

Muriba are siblings who engage in social relations that create the area's ecology. These are entities with a secret name that only the *mwene* can summon in his role as the Nangaze's residents' leader. The *mwene* and his lineage are not the "masters" of those nonhuman beings, but recipients of those nonhumans' power through their use of the secret knowledge that only the current *mwene* holds. This expertise gave him authority and made him a gatekeeper, the one who controls access to those nonhumans that conservationists are seeking to control and protect. It is he who holds the technology, Viveiros de Castro (2014) calls it "know how", to mobilize these entities. It thus makes him the strongest *mukwiri* in the area. For the "common" local person, Mount Mabo is an entity that is a source of both wonder and bewilderment: it can generate awe, respect, terror, and fear.

One tendency among modernist approaches is to look at this understanding of personhood as resulting from failure of logic or, at best, as animism that is proof of the "backwardness" of the "Man" that once was "primitive" and is now maladjusted into modernity. Both arguments highlight the disjunctions in ontology (Viveiros de Castro 2014; de la Cadena 2015) and time-space (Fabian 1983; Wirtz 2016). Following the scholarship outlined above, I look at these modernist framings of difference as evidence of the existence of multiple conceptualisations and materialization of personhood, ontologies, and time-space. What this suggests is that the concepts of Nature, "Man" and the resulting notion of "Nature Conservation" are contingent referents constructed in a specific cosmology—Western and Modern—which Latour (1988) has shown has never itself been Modern.

Considering the situatedness mentioned above, it is necessary "to first interrogate some of our common-sense understandings of what it means to be a person, [to] loosen their grip on our imaginations, and then [to] illuminate some other conceptions of personhood" (Fowler 2004, 1) and, I would add, of "naturehood". I can extend the same interrogation to notions of temporality and spatiality. Doing this enables a decentralized and symmetrical understanding of current global and local challenges around nature devastation and local people's disenfranchisement.

(Un)levelling the Terrain: on spatio-temporalities

Earlier, I introduced the configurations of what I called the "Google Forest", the "Secret Mount Mabo" and the "Neo-extractive version of landscapes", and suggested that, following Mikhail

Bakhtin (1981), to use them as composed of different “chronotopes” that can enable the understanding of “(dis)connections” between them. In this section, I discuss the theoretical underpinnings that informed such identification of time-spaces. To do so, we need to decentralize the analyses of time and space to allow me to analyse other (dis)connections among different encountering worlds.

Multiple meanings and contestations of the concept of space are pervasive in anthropology, political ecology, ontological politics, environmental humanities, and feminist scholarship (*e.g.*, Lefebvre 1974[1991]; Kuper 1972; Bourdieu 1973; de Certeau 1984; Foucault 1984; Appadurai 1991; Ingold 1993; Augé 1995; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; du Plessis 2018). This is much less the case with scholarship of time, although, as stated in the following paragraphs, such scholarship is quite extensive.

To avoid reproducing yet another divide, that between space and time and essentializing the worlds described above, I resort to Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981, 84) concept of chronotope, literally meaning space-time. Bakhtin uses the concept of chronotope to highlight “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships (...).” He asserts (1981, 84) that

in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsible to the movements of time, plot, and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.

Bakhtin developed the concept for literary analysis borrowing the concept from Einstein’s physics. Other scholars have expanded it to analyse cultural and social processes (*e.g.*, Gell 1992; Witz 2016) and for attending to how specific time-space arrangements have the potential for social, cultural, and material *poiesis*, and how they can enable us to understand the building process of narratives, ideologies or discourses.

Gell (1992) identifies three forms for understanding time: as a non-human timespace phenomenon traced in Einsteinian physics; as a social framing of time; and as a personal experience of time. In this section, I am interested in the social and personal understanding of space-time. These last two forms of spatio-temporalities are social constructs (Munn 1992;

Ardener 1993; Adams, Murphy and Clarke 2009; Birth 2012; Green and Green 2013; Narotzky and Besnier 2014; de L'Estoile 2014; Davidov and Nelson 2016; D'Angelo and Pijpers 2018).

Whilst doing fieldwork, I learned local people had rhythms and cycles that I had to follow to get my work done. This required me to be flexible. This need for flexibility is not new to anthropologists. Yet development or conservation agents expected such temporal flexibility amongst residents, but they rarely reciprocated it, as I show in later chapters. I also show that my empirical data, which corroborates other critical scholarship, demonstrate something different from the Judaeo-Christian and commonly held notion that time as linear and universal (see Fabian 1983; Griffiths 2005; Hutton and Jones 2005; Aldrich and Kaiser 2005; Bear 2014) and that has sent into "darkness" other modes of temporality and of being.

Jay Griffiths (2005) who has contrasted Euro-American cultural notion of time with that of other cultures, states that the former treats, "time [a]s a dead thing, a disembodied ghost no longer embodied in nature; the moment struck dumb by the striking clock, the deadening character of routines, schedules and endlessly counted and accounted time... [whilst] in most cultures ... time is alive. And is lived." (2005, 54). Recognising that a downside of such framing is the widespread idea that some cultures lack a proper sense of time, Griffiths (2005, 54) states that "it is not a lack. Rather, they have cultivated a far more subtle and sensitive relationship to time and timing." Griffiths shows (2005, 54-55) that Bolivia's Leco people have three calendars, Colombia's U'wa have insect clocks 'which whistle on the U'wa hour' and Papua New Guinea's Kaluli people have a clock of birds. She also points out that "the San Bushmen of the Kalahari would never schedule when to hunt but would read and assess animal behaviour and choose a 'right' time spontaneously, 'waiting for the right moment to be lucky'" (Idem). In short, these examples all show how time emerges as multiple and connected to space.

Another aspect that the literature on time has shown is its messy connection to capitalism. Bear (2014, 9) states that "most dominant in modern time is the abstract time reckoning of capitalism, which acts as the basis for the universal measure of value in labour, debt, and exchange relationships. This always comes into conflict with concrete experiences and social rhythms of time." Tracing this form of understanding of time to the industrial revolution, Hutton and Jones (2005) show that, as time became a unit of measuring labour in the factory, it put factory owners and workers' unions on opposing sides. The latter complained about long

working hours and low wages while the former, seeking to increase profits, tried to enforce on their employees long working hours and low salaries. The commonly used expressions “time is money” might now epitomize these historical connections between capitalism and the organization of time (Griffiths 2005; Hutton and Jones 2005) or “spending time”. This has been thus far the most widespread mode of imposing time organization in Mozambique, treating time as a unit of measure of labour and income. During my fieldwork I observed the contestation of this approach, specifically around the corporation called Mozambique Holdings Limited and its relation to agricultural practices in the area.

Attending the multiple temporalities exemplified above has helped me to represent conceptually time as arranged around the gravitational force of agriculture in Nangaze and Nava. Agriculture is the main economic activity in Nangaze and Nvava. Adopting such a perspective enabled me to be unsurprised to see how residents planned life around their relationships with agriculture that was itself closely tied to natural tempos and rhythms (or nonhuman time—see chapter five) that were cyclical rather than linear. In contrast, the scientists and NGOs had no choice but to use the funding period and its system of accountability (usually five year-funding programmes) and availability of funds and their “routines, schedules and counted and accounted time” (Griffiths 2005, 54), while the state bureaucrats adhered to the state’s bureaucratic time and by association to Frelimo government’s interests (see Gonçalves 2013).

The scientists, NGOs and bureaucrats’ timescales were therefore demonstrably (dis)connected with local people’s time, and in the process produced tensions. The idea of “wilderness” or “unexplored land” sometimes also suggests the idea of available cheap labour power, which means that residents’ space and time are compacted and emptied, while being turned into resources. This is important since giving attention to multiple spatio-temporalities and ontologies can help to think holistically on topics such as “participation, exclusion, authority, expertise, (mis)communications and (mis)understandings” (Davidov and Nelson 2016, 4).

Provincializing modernist dualisms: state, civil society, scientists, povoados, landforms and *okwiri* in Mozambique

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the coloniality inherent in the insistence on Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment framings of “Man”, “Time” and “Space” as the sole legitimate ontological mode, one that marginalizes other ontologies and implicates the work of scientists and NGOs around Mount Mabo in the continuation of coloniality with their conservation work. This “modernizing stream”, that nature conservationists perform in a “world of many worlds” to use de la Cadena’s and Blaser’s (2018) phrase, faces turbulence or, as Anna Tsing (2005) would call it “frictions”. That is because its condition of conservationists reproducing it (however unintentionally), meets challenges with unexpected and complex results on the ground. To highlight these frictions or turbulences, I need to shake the lines dividing the good and the bad, villains and heroes and I do so by operationalizing the concept of *okwiri*, as framed by Nvava and Nangaze residents, as a form of what Schulz (2017) calls “critical enchantment”. My doing that also follows Szerszynski’s (2017, 269) suggestion that there is a need for “decolonizing and desecularizing the Anthropocene”—by which he means making alliances with other non-Western modes of knowledge, and with agents like gods and spirits, in order to curb the ongoing global climate crisis.

As already shown, Nangaze and Nvava are small *povoados* comprising households that rely on agriculture for their living. They are what Anzaldúa (1999) would call “border people” since they live at the border of Malawi and Mozambique and since they live at the borders between dualistic conservationism and relationality, modernity and tradition, locality and globality—all of which highlight the existence of multiple worlds with their proverbial and literal borders that locals must navigate in their daily lives. One would be wrong to think that such borders bounded them. Instead, as I detail later, residents’ daily lives navigate, reproduce and destabilize such borders.

Nobody in either of these *povoados* is born a *mukwiri*; it is a gained attribute. Nor is being *mukwiri* a pre-set category: it is relational (or the lack thereof). This is at odds with major scholarship on witchcraft according to which people transmit witchcraft via birth or that its power stands in situated around prefixed groups based on age, gender, or social and economic status (*e.g.*, Pritchard 1937; Harwood 1970; Garrett 1977; Auslander 1993; Geschiere 1997;

Israel 2014; Kleibl and Munck 2017). According to this scholarship, the geography of power around witchcraft is already distributed across pre-existing categories.

Using witchcraft as an analytical concept in social science and humanities is not new. Some scholars have used witchcraft or sorcery in their social theorizing. But they do that as a metaphor to grasp western problems. For example, Pignarre and Stengers (2011, 40) call “capitalism a system of sorcery”, but one which operates without “sorcerers”. Other scholars have resisted the use of the concept of witchcraft and its logic altogether (*e.g.*, Macamo 2010; Pignarre and Stengers 2011). Yet others have used it as a proof of the mental ineptitude of its believers to grasp the facts generated by (modern) reason and calculus (*e.g.*, Igwe 2004; der Kraaij 2018). Some serious scholarly accounts of witchcraft studied it as social control (*e.g.*, Kluckhohn 1944; Rosenthal and Siegel 1959; Harwood 1970; Sebald 1986; Ehrenreich 1990; Hari 2009). Others focused on witchcraft to understand its complex relations with western modernity in contemporary Africa (*e.g.*, Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Niehaus 1995; 2005; Serra 1996; Geschiere 1997; 2013; Nyamnjoh 2005; Chichava 2009; Israel 2009; 2014; Moro 2018).

While acknowledging the valuable analytical insights that such scholarship has generated, I dedicate the same serious attention to witchcraft as applied by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1986; 1998; 2004), in his work on shamanism among the Araweté. According to Viveiros de Castro (2004a,b), for Amerindians, nature has a consciousness or a soul that emanates through specific bodies’ senses. A jaguar shares the same soul as a person, but the only way for a “lay” person to know this is through shamans. Marilyn Strathern (2016, 131-132), commenting on Viveiros de Castro’s Amerindian perspectivism, states that it approximates the Native’s point of view and reveals how, when anthropologists talk about the world, they use concepts that seek to produce an understanding of the Other. Viveiros de Castro’s (2014) perspective is that such concepts ultimately mirror the anthropologists’ culture, hence narcissistic and colonize the realities they study.

Efforts to understand the world and others through concepts is not limited to anthropologists. Anthropological study subjects also engage in meaning-making through concepts and categories. They also grasp the world through their own concepts. Such categories and concepts have the potential to offer glimpses at the worlds that constructed them and of the relations

between people and their worlds: their perspectives. What this entails, states Strathern (2016, 131-132), is that

if western anthropologists perceive that relation itself perspectivally, they lay bare the motor force of Western anthropology in its openness to styles of indigenous knowledge practices. Yet to recognize these knowledge practices as anthropologists—to decolonize thought itself—requires more than to show the borrowings of terms and images from here and there.

Or, as Mary Pratt (2017, 170) puts it: “witchcraft can enable the decentring of western matrices, shedding light into the problems that made such concepts exist.”

In Nangaze and Nvava *povoados*, the residents understand that with *okwiri* anyone has the *potential to become* a witch and to engage in the vast web of power relations that links living and nonliving, human and nonhuman entities. It is power stemming from the intimate and micro relations to the major district, regional, and national levels, power that ultimately leads to extracting life from family networks within and of the *povoados* at large. As the reader will have noticed, I bypass any discussion of whether *okwiri* is true or false. I do that because that is an analytical and ontological *cul-de-sac*. I am interested instead in what people do in the name of *okwiri*; what kinds of social arrangements such an institution make possible (or not) and how it can inform scholarly work about the functioning of systems of oppression across scales and locales.

According to local people’s cosmology, *okwiri* can be both a tool (or technology) and a product of the use of such tools. Nangaze’s and Nvava’s residents use *okwiri* for protection and for wealth accumulation within their limited fields of opportunities or affordances. As I was told, a person can use *drogas* (lit.plur. drugs—spells) to protect themselves or their property from harm by *akwiri* (lit.plur. witches), for example in their *mida*. Here, they do so by using a boa constrictor’s skin to protect their produce from theft or damage by *akwiri* who themselves use other animals for such purposes (local forms of protecting private property). People also reportedly resorted to *okwiri* to accumulate wealth through rather “cannibalistic” extractive strategies where a person who was killed through *okwiri* is stripped of their personhood and transformed into meat (a thing) that is then shared among *akwiri* who continue extracting human lives from amongst the *povoados*’ residents (thingification of life and extractivism).

These extractions and appropriations can take the shape of theft or and damage to people's crops; exhumation of bodily remains or sucking of people's blood (see chapter six). However, the type of *mukwiri* that a person is, derives from their effects on others in the *povoados* (a person as a relation). In a *passear*, Calisto told me that when someone feels that their life is facing turbulences that are constant, like diseases or deaths in the family, that person then visits a *cumbaissa* (lit.sing. witch doctor) who uses his power to identify the *mukwiri*. What this allows is the espousing of a register that can help account for how different beings are implicated (or not) in actions that might threaten or reinforce wellbeing that has been achieved through a persons' hard work where conviviality with neighbours and family members is key for community making and maintenance of a moral economy.

The understanding of *okwiri* in Nangaze and Nvava brings forth how difference emerges or how people produce difference, and how they deal with such differences. Such differences are amplified or re-signified by global processes like accumulation, dispossessions, extractivism, conservationism and neo-extractivism and their global contestations. According to the website "Etymonline", implication is "action of entangling," from Latin *implicationem* (nominative *implicatio*) "an interweaving, an entanglement," noun of state from past participle stem of *implicare* meaning "involve, entangle; embrace; connect closely, associate."

One of the current struggles local agriculturalists are dealing with, which I will discuss in chapter five, is the inhuman treatment by the managers of a rubber tree plantation corporation, Mozambique Holdings Limited, against local agriculturalists. This is the area in which the notion of implication helps in moving beyond the dualized notion of good or bad, villain or hero and instead show how people and organizations, specifically the RBK Kew, are implicated in the current devastation of the planet and the continued racialized spaces of monocultures best captured by the concept of "Plantationocene". Donna Haraway et al (2016, 555-557) proposed the use of the concept of "the Plantationocene", out of the realization that Anthropocene scholars tend to look at the mid-18th century forward, and to focus on the fossil fuels as the key moment to determine the Anthropocene and overlooked capitalism, which was much older, and most importantly, large plantations using slave labour. The concept of "Plantationocene" helps to link different geographies, temporalities, subjectivities past and present to the ongoing climate crisis, and I discuss it more in chapter five.

The RBG Kew, as an institution whose scientists are currently working to protect biodiversity Mount Mabo, is itself implicated in the existence of the rubber plantations (*Hevea brasiliensis*) in Africa and around the world, and before the rubber plantations, the tea plantations that shifted significantly the material and social landscapes of the area and worked as the arms of Portuguese colonial administration.

RBG Kew has long been behind the scientific development of tea (Wilson et al. 1962) and later rubber seeds (Woodruff 1958). Such tea seeds were circulated across the globe. Tea planting was first successfully implemented on the foothills of Malawi's Mount Mulanje, in 1878. In 1886 and 1888 respectively, RBG Kew and RBG Edinburgh sent shipments of tea seeds (Wilson et al. 1960, 6) to Africa. Tea seeds' availability and colonialism made possible the 1930s establishment of the Madal tea estate on Mount Mabo's foothills. With the Madal tea estate having been bankrupted during Mozambique's civil war, a new corporation, Mozambique Holdings underwritten by Indian capital, took over the area explored by Madal to establish a rubber plantation. Although RBG Kew's historical colonial implications have long been clear—in texts such as Woodruff (1958), Turill (1959), Wilson et al. (1960), and Brockway (1979, 2002)—they have never been considered as significant by the organisation's scientists. Indeed, it was in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM), and the global attention it has attracted global attention, the head of science at RBG Kew scientists, Alexandre Antonelli (2020) in a media article in *The Conversation* denounced the colonial attachments of the organization and declared that “the time has come to decolonize botanical gardens like Kew”. Antonelli (2020, para. 6) acknowledged the fact that

[f]or hundreds of years, rich countries in the north have exploited natural resources and human knowledge in the south. Colonial botanists would embark on dangerous expeditions in the name of science but were ultimately tasked with finding economically profitable plants. Much of Kew's work in the 19th century focused on the movement of such plants around the British Empire, which means we too have a legacy that is deeply rooted in colonialism.

What Mignolo's (2011) denouncing of the work of “colonial matrix of power” that I will argue conservationists are reproducing on Mount Mabo. In the logic of *okwiri*, the constant disenfranchisement of residents counts as valid ecological and enriching western scientific

organization defining such knowledge and its validation, makes the RBG Kew *akwiri* in that they reproduce the marginality of residents are implicated in neocoloniality and extractivism.

Anthropology too has deep colonial roots, as seen in the works of authors such as Durkheim (1912,) Malinowski (2005 [1922]), Boas (1938), Radcliffe-Brown (1952) that popularized colonial and racist categories through its determination of its objects of study as “simple societies”, “primitives”, “savages”, “animists”. Much of the scholarship on witchcraft that I cite and use in this thesis also uses such colonial and racist categories—a point made clearly by Dlamini (2019) in an essay entitled “to know the African wild was to know the African subject”. For that reason, I must register my serious concern that, in using first the word witchcraft and second employing it as an analytical category, I am rehearsing a legacy of colonial interpretation of witchcraft as ‘historic’ or ‘traditional’ or ‘animistic’ and thus may be accused of conceptually trapping locals into the natural world and denying their coevalness (see Asad 1975; Fabian 1983). As Povinelli (1995) shows, such a colonial view of “otherness” continues to persist in social theorizing and that social scientists need to acknowledge it to get rid of it.

For that reason, I critically engage with these colonial legacies in each chapter of this thesis. In doing that I acknowledge the implications anthropological theorizing and practice had and continues to have on the people anthropologists study. Much like Viveiros de Castro (2014, 40) I also feel that “the time has come to radicalize the reconstitution of the discipline,” through decolonization of thought and of practice. As Donna Haraway (2016, 35) puts it: “it matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories.” In my understanding, *okwiri* offers a critical reflection that is a process (rather than a state) which helps me to unsettle continuously Western anthropological concepts that, as Viveiros de Castro (2014, 40) writes, are a product of a “narcissistic endeavour”.

In the same light, I also acknowledge that I am a black, adult, and able-bodied anthropologist and patriarchalism and ableism might bewitch my writing and thinking. Most of the interlocutors of this study were young or old men and missing from my narrative are the many women and children in the *povoados*; and all the other nonhumans who must navigate the existing structuring power structures. This was in part a design of local logic in which my

interaction as an outside man with local women was something that they warned me could be dangerous to both me and the women involved. I was told men are jealous and violence using *machetes* was not uncommon among men. Spaces of *passsear* were rarely gender inclusive. Men controlled the public and political life of the *povoados*.

Okwiri offers a tool to talk about continuous critical reflection and the ethics of being together. Much like Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Deborah Danowski (2018, 194) showed, *okwiri* forces us to a “perfect intensive doubling (plus intra!), the end of extensive partitions: the invaders are the invaded, the colonized are the colonizers. We have woken up to an incomprehensible nightmare.” It invites a deep introspection since it challenges any moral righteousness or a “zero position” whence one could think and engage with other positions. *Okwiri* helps focus on how power operates in power structures and structuring power. In Nangaze and Nvava, people can choose to be part of *okwiri* or not. But once someone embarks on that path, they become engaged in a contractual relation with other *akwiri* in which they must kill a relative and share their “meat”—meaning desubjectification—with the others.

For example, in a meeting after a resident couple’s sudden death, participants raised suspicions of *okwiri* and *mwene* Mpida urged participants to stop “borrowing meat from witches”. He also urged *povoado* residents to withdraw themselves from night-time *akwiri* gatherings that drained life, blood, and energy from people, and that destabilized the *povoado*. In doing so he tried to make people understand that it would continue if people took part in it. To the Nangaze’s *mwene* and residents, a *mukwiri* can be questioned, healed, and brought to relations of care and solidarity. Accusations of *okwiri* can thus be seen as a far cry from such healing and from redistribution of the few existing “affordances” (Gibson 1979) and “fields of opportunity” (de L’Estoile 2014) controlled by few people. To put it succinctly, *okwiri* accusations point out to a denial or violation of conviviality. *Okwiri* emerges in and shapes social relations, and to gain access to such relations and the worlds they enable to emerge, I needed to immerse myself in the daily lives of residents through ethnography.

Research design: On co-labouring

I borrow the concept of co-labouring from Marisol de la Cadena (2015a). Marisol de la Cadena used that concept to describe the relations and the resulting knowledge between her and Mariano and Nazario Turpo and nonhumans. I also resorted to ethnography as a method of data

gathering and knowledge production. Lynn Hume (2004, xi) stated that ethnography “involves the use of a variety of techniques for collecting data on human beliefs, values and practices.” She also points out that ethnographers do this by resorting to participant observation, which “requires that the researchers simultaneously observe and take part (as much as possible) in the social action they are attempting to document.” The end goal of such a participative and embodied form of knowledge creation is to achieve an “insider” perspective on issues the ethnographer is interested in studying while keeping an intellectual distance. Since early anthropologists, whose primary goal was being “there” in a bounded locale to study a locale, to current ethnographic studies of global connections, much has changed in terms of what the method entails and how anthropologists used it. But the primary goal of collecting data on “human beliefs, values and practices” as humans interact with their environments, other people, technologies, and other species, remains. During my fieldwork, I also used semi-structured interviews around topics I had previously planned. With residents, I used mostly informal interviews, undertook what Geertz (1998) described as “deep hanging out” and that the interlocutors of this study framed as *passear*. I also used photography as a mode of both collecting and communicating data. I undertook document analysis, including the digital media in cyberspace and a literature review.

Encountering Mount Mabo, residents, and the *povoados*

Box 2. Monetization of relations and the dynamics of fieldwork

I missed the group meeting with the Namadoe Association yesterday. My field assistant and I had planned to go to Nangaze, then Mabo. We later cancelled this plan because I needed to know how much camping on Mount Mabo could cost me before we left. People and costs keep adding up and visiting Mount Mabo at this moment is out of curiosity to see what is this mountain that people talk about and made me come here. It had become a personal quest. Does this justify all the costs? I am not so sure. Every time my field assistant and I talk about going to Mabo there is always someone else who must come with us, one more 200mtn per day plus the payment for the guiding service. Amadeus wants 200mtn a day and a bicycle which costs somewhere around 3000mtn. He keeps telling me that the tourists paid him 2500mtn and he had stayed two weeks with them in the forest.

Source: fieldnotes transcripts, June 11, 2016

Between June 2016 and April 2018, my fieldwork site was in the *povoados* of Nvava and Nangaze, in Lugela district, around 62km from Mount Mabo. Before I left Maputo for my fieldwork, I contacted a former of mine student at the Institute of Land Use and Planning (IMPFA), in the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development (MITADER), between June 2016 and April 2018, my fieldwork site was in the *povoados* of Nvava and Nangaze, in Lugela district, around 62km from Mount Mabo. Having completed her studies, MITADER had allocated her to Lugela district as a land-use planner. I asked her for help in finding accommodation and my way into district life, which she aptly provided. On my arrival in Lugela, she advised and informed me about life with people in the *povoados*. “Be respectful if you are going to live there. Make sure you buy all the food you need because there are no markets, and nobody sells cooked food there,” she advised. Her counsel suggested both an ethics of being together and the living conditions in an area that, in her view, lack defined the ethos of rural residents—in this case, a lack of markets and other services. Knowing that I was from Maputo and used to a different time organization in which Saturdays were the best days to meet people and “hang out”, she warned me that in the *povoados*, “Saturdays are usually calm days. This was so because most people are members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and the few shops did not open; there were no public events because residents went to church on that day.”

Her comments affirmed the observations in historical literature that suggested that (protestant) Christianity was the dominant religion in Lugela district as opposed to most coastal districts in Zambézia province that were mostly Muslim as result of the early Arab trade (*cf.* Phiri 1979; Isaacman and Isaacman 1975; Newitt 1995). She also warned me that people in Nangaze do not speak Portuguese, but the Manhaua Lolo language, which is part of the Macua-Lomwe language group, and that their currency was mostly the Malawian Kwacha (rather than the New Mozambican metical—mtn)¹⁰. Their use of the Malawian Kwacha and speaking only Manhaua Lolo highlighted her view about their “remoteness” and isolation from the Mozambican state’s reach and economy, that used instead metical as a currency and Portuguese language as the official language of the country. Her view about the surrounding Mount Mabo *povoados*,

¹⁰ One metical as of December 2020 is 0.28ZAR, and 0.013USD.

residents' isolation from the Mozambican public administration and economy was partly true but more complex than that.

In trying to understand the accuracy of her information, I asked her if she herself had visited Mount Mabo. She had not; she said she heard about it. Most local state bureaucrats with whom I engaged at the District Services of Planning and Infrastructure (SDPI), including the permanent secretary and the administrator of Lugela, had never been to Nangaze or visited the mountain but held a similar view to hers. This “hearsay” mode of knowing Mount Mabo was common among most people with whom I interacted in Lugela district: people who lived near to small shops, a central market, electricity, water in taps, a secondary school, a hospital, mobile communication cover and hostels. Most interlocutors of this thesis claimed that the mountain was mysterious, and that people got lost there if they did not go *preparado* (lit. prepared) and the only person who could *preparar* (lit. to prepare) a visitor was the *mwene* (lit.sing. the chief or head of an area) through a *mucuto* (lit.sing. ceremony)—so, before one visits the mountain, one must meet the *mwene*.

Other narratives of the mountain, in Lugela district at large, was that it was rich in minerals and that they had seen white people going there and coming back, but they did not know what those white people did there. One mentioned that workers of Madal (a former colonial tea estate) had brought machines into that area, but that the district people never knew what the Indian expatriate workers were doing with them. One SDPI bureaucrat told me to be cautious in the manner I approached the subject of Mount Mabo since some local state bureaucrats had some obscure personal interests on “natural resources” extraction in the area. Mystery, suspicion, and speculation surrounded Mount Mabo and the surrounding areas. That was the sentiment I sensed during my fieldwork.

During my initial visits in the *povoados* of Limbue, Namadoe, Nangaze and Nvava in June 2016, I learned that the residents spoke Manhua, some of them spoke Portuguese and nearly all of them used New Mozambican Metical (mtn) as a currency but that their lives connected on many levels with Malawi, as the reader will notice throughout the thesis and as my former student had hinted. I also learned that the corporation that they called Madal was in fact an Indian investment called Mozambique Holdings Limited that specialized in planting rubber plants (*Hevea brasiliensis*) for rubber export and that had gained the former abandoned Madal

tea estate's land use rights and had become another global actor that residents had to reckon on.

I felt that time and the pace of life seemed to have slowed down while in Nangaze and Nvava compared to Mocuba Municipality, and Quelimane city, the capital city of Zambézia province. At first and as an outsider, and after I had introduced myself and told the interlocutors of this study, I was interested in learning about their life in the *povoados* and their relationship with Mount Mabo, I asked them to take me with them in their daily activities like hunting and agriculture, and foraging for mushrooms, picking medicinal plants, or social gatherings. My interest intrigued them. To them, I looked incapable of keeping up with their pace as they went to their *muda* (lit.sing. small farm) or hunting.

I remember when I went to Murhoa, a small *povoado* that is part of Nangaze, to talk with a group of *namugo* (lit.sing. traditional doctor) about their relations with the forest, I asked to join them in their activities as they went to pick up medicinal plants, to their *muda* or to hunt. They laughed. For them I was an urban boy who depended on transport for moving around and did not know how hard it was to farm and go hunting. They asked if I thought I had enough endurance and strength to follow them and hunt. They suggested instead that they could show how they farmed in their *muda*, in a small plot of land that they could open in their homesteads: a kind of experimentation lab for the inept anthropologist. I pleaded my case and told them they should not worry about that. I had walked all the way from Mpemula, a locality nearly 20km away from Nangaze, with a nearly thirty-kilogram backpack on my back. This did not convince all the participants in the gatherings, mostly after I had told them that there would be no payments to them involved.

I based most of my time in Nangaze and Nvava trying to resist being a guest without being what residents called a *bruto* (lit.sing. brutal—rude or lacking respect). Mount Mabo's popularity caused by the media sensation had brought visitors to the area and with them opportunities for generating income through residents being porters or guides (see box 2 above). Few people accepted me following them, and the expectation was that I would have to pay them as had other visitors. I told them I could not pay them since I was a student and the code of ethics of my university did not allow such practice. Since there were no expected monetary gains for them, few people accepted my invitation to work with me. Those few people

included Ângelo Agostinho (henceforth, Ângelo) who was a former Renamo soldier, a local agriculturalist, and a hunter whose knowledge helped me write the chapter on hunting. There was also Eduardo André and his family, who hosted me at his house in the *muda* in Nvava. He allowed me to follow him in his hunting and farming journeys. There was also Ernesto André and his wife, who allowed me to be with him in his *muda*. These encounters enabled me to glimpse at the local agriculturalists' everyday life in Nangaze and in Nvava.

There was also Balami, the outcast of Nangaze (considered locally a *mukwiri*—lit. sing. witch), who taught me Manhaua, but also taught me about the boundaries of the *povoados* and how residents policed and constrained social relations to reproduce such boundaries. And there was the *mwene* who generously shared his time and knowledge on different occasions of “deep hanging out” a concept that Clifford Geertz popularized in an essay where he contrasted the exoticist work of Pierre Clastres and the experimental and uncertain work of James Clifford. According to Geertz (1998), the former was more interested in anthropological sites that were closed and remote and the latter privileged more “contact zones” where distinct cultures and processes grappled with each other both through a process of deep hanging out. The interlocutors of this study would use the concept of “*passear*” (lit. to have a walk—to talk) to refer to moments of interaction where different people interacted with the aim of *partilhar ideias* (lit. exchanging ideas).

I used most of my time in Nangaze and Limbue at my host, Calisto André (henceforth, Calisto)'s homestead. He was a local point man for JA! also spent time with residents in the local markets drinking warm beer made of cassava or maize, which were leisure moments that locals called *passear*.

The idea of *passear* occurred to me one day in an exchange with a local young man. This was after Calisto had left Nangaze for Maputo in December 2017 to attend a JA! organized workshop. Calisto had asked the young man to keep me company as he was away. That same day, the young man walked by Calisto's house and told me he would come later for a *passear*. So, when he came, I was ready to go for a walk: I had my hiking clothes, my shoes on and my camera. Without leaving the homestead, we then spent some hours talking: he told me about his *muda*, his work at Madal, and his experiences in the *povoado*, and I shared my experiences as a person from Maputo and told him stories about South Africa, and the other places that I

had been. He then said to me it was time for him to go and thanked me for the *passerar*. It baffled me since I had assumed that we would go somewhere and not just sit and talk, as the word *passerar* entails in Portuguese. It became clear that there was a clear miscommunication between the two of us, a misunderstanding that linguistics scholars, following Koessler (1928), describe as blind reliance on “false friends”, a term referring to instances “referring to pairs of words in two languages that are perceived as similar but have different meanings” (Vrbinc and Vrbinc 2014, 71). In my case, that difference was not in the language (the word was Portuguese in both contexts), but in the ontology from within which residents articulated the word *passerar*. Discovering this alerted me to be attentive to this and other “false friends” and the dangers of colonizing one ontology with another through explanation. I complemented my involvement in often time-consuming *passerar* with direct observations of and in the *povoado* as I walked around and through it.

I later learned that “*passerar*”, and *partilhar ideias* (lit. exchange ideas), is a mode of mobility, of sociality, of coming together or of falling apart in these *povoados*. It is like what the anthropologist Julie Archambault in her study among young people in Inhambane in the south of Mozambique found as regards the concept of “*bater papo*” (lit. hit the pouch—make small talk), in which “young men in Inhambane regularly meet with the explicit intention to *bate papo* and commonly engage in meta-conversations in which they assess the quality of the *papos* (lit.plur. small talks) in which they participate, as well as the conversation skills of particular individual” (2012, 398). In Nangaze, and Nvava, people highly value skills like *saber falar* (lit. to know how to speak) and *ser forte* (lit. be strong). Mastering the skill of the spoken work is highly valued by residents. During *passerar*, the interlocutors of this study and I exchanged ideas and worldviews, discussed, appreciated, and critiqued my world as well as theirs. It was during these moments that what residents cared about was also highlighted, along with their frustrations, hopes, dreams, joys, and sorrows.

When residents were not at their *mida* (lit.plur. fields), it was common for them to spend hours and hours sitting at the market to *passerar*. Doing so helped time to pass quicker and reduce people’s sense of social distance from one another. In these conversations, we discussed vividly aspects like marriage, life, *mwene*, social life, witchcraft, colonialism, Frelimo, Renamo, God, Malawi, South Africa, Donald Trump, war, etc. *passerar* thus exercises bridging worlds through moving without having to move physically, and to inhabit different places and times, and

ontologies through the powerful tool of conversing and storying. I wrote this thesis with the intention of continuing that *passear*.

Since everyone was agriculturalist in the *povoados*, they would often be busy with their *mida* when it was the season to open new fields, plant, or harvest. During that time there were few *passear* and public events in the area, which made me wonder what I was doing with my time in the field. This feeling might have stemmed from a misconception that, once in the field, social processes would keep happening right in front of the anthropologist's well-trained gaze and the anthropologist must have their notebooks, pen, voice recorder or camera ready to capture all these fast and ever-going events. I spent more time sitting under a mango tree and thinking about what I might have missed and the hardships of doing fieldwork—which I grew to accept as constitutive of the experience of doing both fieldwork and living with the others. What this means as Strathern (1999, 1) articulated is that the ethnographic moment is “a moment of immersion that is simultaneously total and partial, a totalising activity which is not the only activity in which a person is engaged.” In other words, I hated, I loved, I cried, and I laughed. I was serious, I was playful, I was offended, and I offended some residents during my fieldwork, and in most of these moments, there was Calisto who was my host and fieldwork assistant. He helped me navigate social life in the field. His personal life history told the story of Mount Mabo nature conservation and its legacies.

Calisto, co-labouring and *passear*: on bridging worlds

When I first arrived in Lugela district for two weeks in June 2016, and went to Limbue, I met with Amadeus, a former Renamo soldier, working for the agricultural and economic services of Lugela district (SDAE). He was monitoring people who sold bushmeat and agricultural products and registered their transactions and charged them a fee which he then channelled to District Services of Economic Activities (SDAE). Amadeus' position at SDAE was not formal, so he received a commission from the money he could collect from the fees. When I arrived in Limbue, the secretary of Limbue locality introduced Amadeus and suggested that Amadeus should be my guide. It was Amadeus who took me to Nangaze where I met Calisto.

While walking with Amadeus to different sites and gathering, he told me stories about the *turistas* (lit.plur. tourists)—the word residents used to refer to any visitor including scientists to the area—and how they walked: how some were lazy, and others seemed more capable, how

they used their testing tubes and collected soil samples and placed them into transparent tubes filled with a liquid that changed colour after the scientists had dropped a sample in, about how the *turistas* trapped butterflies; and about Julian Bayliss, and others. His comments raised some interesting insights about how residents viewed scientists visiting the area. After a while I learned that JA! had created four associations to protect Mount Mabo and guide scientists and tourists, and Amadeus did not work with JA! nor with JA!'s-created associations. This exacerbated existing tensions between the JA! associations and the locality secretary. Association members complained that, with the locality secretary's complicity, Amadeus was taking a role that was rightfully theirs and for the association members the local state bureaucrat and Amadeus did that to get the *turistas*' money. When I returned to the field in April 2017, I therefore started working directly with Calisto, whom residents and the associations arguably regarded as a legitimate representative.

Calisto could articulate residents' views, his own views, the views of the scientists, tourists, NGO activists, and my own too. He could use local knowledge to understand other people and reflect on his own knowledge. He was the link between the conservationists, anthropologist, and local cosmologies, and hence an invaluable interlocutor. He could speak Manhaua, Cewa, and Portuguese. He asked me to teach him English, which I accepted in exchange for him teaching me Manhaua, his mother tongue. According to some interlocutors of this study and my observations, Calisto was *forte* (lit. strong) and *sabe falar* (lit. knew how to speak), attributes that made him some sort of a notable person in the *povoados*. Calisto hosted me at his homestead, where he lived with his two sons, three daughters and his wife, Marta. I learned a lot of Manhaua with his two young sons, Gonçalves and Pires, who made it their game to teach me Manhaua and make fun of my Swedish wife, Julia's accent. As the reader will notice, for the reasons mentioned above, my working relationship with Calisto anchored the fieldwork for this thesis on several levels. Calisto lived in Nangaze, and I also spent most of my time during the fieldwork in Nangaze. This limited my study, mostly as pertaining to the Nvava's residents' modes of relations with Mount Mabo.

There was much laughter from us and from them. But there was also a lot of frustration. I had asked Calisto to take me with him to take part in different activities in the *povoados* since I felt that not much happened in Nangaze. However, Calisto would often leave and assume I wouldn't be interested in events he took part in, such as going to the Catholic Church, to

funerals, family gatherings, and other events. I understood that these were personal events that maybe he would not want to have an outsider attending. As a result, I spent most of my time in Nangaze with me frustrated because I felt marginal in the *povoados*, and most local people were busy with their *mida* (lit.plur. small farms). My total availability in terms of time as an anthropologist in the field on the one hand did not match with that of residents on most occasions since they were busy with daily chores. On the other hand, my availability also created possibilities. Since the *mwene* never left the *povoado* for his *muda* and was most of the time sitting in his homestead, he often came to visit me and *passerar* whenever Calisto was absent. I would also visit him in the mornings. I could not speak much Manhaua, but I could understand some words; so, we would try to communicate in Portuguese and Manhaua, while doing bricolage with gestures. These moments with time enabled me to realize that the *mwene* was more than an anthropological study subject, and to him perhaps I became more than a graduate student seeking to get a degree. These moments of *passerar* between the *mwene* and me brought to the fore debates about the time of the chiefdoms, colonial time, independence and the present; issues I delve into later in this introduction.

These encounters allowed me to build rapport with the *mwene*, which I believed made the *mwene* comfortable enough to share more about his ontology when I was with Calisto or his brother Ernesto, who then helped with translation. These moments of *passerar* also helped me better to look at life in Nangaze beyond the apparent (slow and “wilderness”) world: they enabled me to gain access to a literally secret world—one that shaped the visible and sensible world and was not available for anyone living in or visiting Nangaze. It was something accessible through *passerar* or through being the next line of succession to the *mwene* through matrilineality and uxorilocality. It was a world that the colonial government had marginalized or instrumentalized. The same troubled relationship between the state and the *amwene* continued in the socialist period and in nature protection efforts, in postcolonial Mozambique as the *mwene* articulated it himself. It was thus a world intruded by capitalism, socialism, development, neo-extractivism and nature protection projects, and yet resisting and existing that soon became the primary focus of this study.

Provided the encountering of various actors with Mount Mabo, Mount Mabo emerged as what Marry Pratt (1991, 34) calls a “contact zone”, which are spaces where “cultures, meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such

as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.” While Pratt’s “contact zone” is good to think colonial and postcolonial encounters with, I will show throughout the thesis, following residents’ ontologies, first that Mount Mabo is more than a scene of political and ecological struggles, and second that the whole region of Zambézia was a “contact zone” even prior to colonial encounters and slavery.

Participant observation



Figure 2. From left to right, Ernesto, Calisto and me talking about how to reach the summit of Mount Mabo while standing at Ernesto’s homestead in Muhroa, a small area part of Nangaze povoado

During my ethnographic work, I performed participant observation which DeWalt and DeWalt (2011, 1) define as a “method in which the researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their routines and their culture”. Participant observation “is accepted almost universally as the central and defining method of research in cultural anthropology” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 2). During my fieldwork, through openness and my sense of shared

incompleteness or “partial connections” to use Strathern’s (2004) words, I came to understand that my work depended on the interlocutors and that I had always to seek to be allowed to engage with them in ways that enriched both their lives and my work.

I based my engagement with them on my becoming with (rather than one of) them, and it entailed much hard work and a bumptious journey. I experienced joyous, sad, tense, and heart-warming moments. I remember during one of the last days of my fieldwork I was sitting with *mwene* Mpida and engaging in *passsear* at Calisto’s homestead. As the *passsear* ended, the *mwene* stood up from his chair, one which Julian Bayliss had given him, folded it and, after taking some steps, stopped, looked at me and said that he felt I was part of Nangaze, since he had grown used to my presence in the *povoado*. He then continued walking and laughing while I realised that my time and effort had not been a waste. Relationships take hard work to create and maintain. Mine with the *mwene* and residents was no exception. In my participant observation, I also followed hunters, local agriculturalists, *namugo* and the *mwene* in their daily lives.

I seldom privileged structured interviews. Instead, I used open-ended interviews which I followed up with some questions after initial conversations with residents with whom I had previously interacted. This was to get a sense of the circulation and currency of topics. I did this with my initial contacts I had with the four associations created by JA! in the area and with which I carried out group interviews in June 2016. I based most of my interactions with the interlocutors on informal conversations while drinking, during *passsear*, while farming with them in their *mida*, while hunting, cooking, and travelling. Apart from the conversation with the Mozambique Holdings Limited manager, which was in English, I carried out all other interviews in Portuguese or translated from Manhaua by Calisto, Amadeus, and Ernesto on different occasions. I then translated those interviews into English.

Tracking and following agents across scales, locales, and media

When I started my research, I had wanted to focus on local people rather than on conservationists and state bureaucrats. My experience of life in Nangaze and Nvava, however, made me aware that excluding them was inappropriate since they entangled deeply with the residents’ lives. People repeatedly told me stories about the work of NGOs, scientists, and state bureaucrats, and residents who confronted or worked with them. The stories reflected how

locals lived in the intersections of the battle between NGOs ostensibly trying to protect Mount Mabo. The processes shaping life in Nangaze and Nvava were far from being bound to a specific site. Instead, as residents' stories showed, they interacted in complex ways with world processes. The stories thus reflected George Marcus's (1995, 97) observation that "cultural logics so much sought after in anthropology are always multiply produced, and any ethnographic account of these logics finds that they are at least partly constituted within sites of the so-called systems". This is a stance also expressed by Marilyn Strathern (1991) who wrote about "partial connections".

A consequence was that I soon realised I had to follow NGOs in Lugela, Quelimane, and Maputo. I had two meetings with members of RADEZA—one with Daniel Maula, the general director, on November 18, 2017, and another with Marcos Morais, a RADEZA technician responsible for the project on Mount Mabo, on November 27, 2017. These interviews made clear to me the NGO's intentions around Mount Mabo and its conflicts with JA!.

I had three meetings with JA! activists, one on June 27, 2016, another on May 9, 2018, and the third on July 2, 2018. All three involved Vanessa Cabanelas, JA!'s activist, and René Machoco, JA!'s activist and programme manager on Mount Mabo. Since RADEZA was not present in the *povoados*. I had more exchange of information and suggestions with JA! as the results of my study show. My relationship with RADEZA involved no such opportunity for me to give suggestions, although RADEZA's director, David Maula, invited me to attend a conference in which I took part in Quelimane, on environmentalism in the central and northern region of Mozambique. It was organized by iTC-F (*Iniciativa de Terras Comunitárias*, Community Lands Initiative), also an NGO based in Gaza, Manica and Cabo Delgado that was created and funded by European donors.

Since my conversations with JA! had hinted that they had submitted a proposal to turn Mabo into a community conservation area, I tried to follow their DUAT application in the Mozambican public administration. I did so to understand the workings of a modern bureaucracy which, as Scott (1998) suggests, ideally digests complex realities, and turns them into administratively knowable and manageable entities—this process Scott called simplification. This proved hard since gaining access to these kinds of documents and bureaucratic processes was difficult. I tried to meet with Lugela District officials who work at

SDAE (District Services of Economic Activities), but the director was absent most of the days I visited the SDAE. I never met him. I tried twice to meet with the person responsible for conservation areas in the Land, Environment and Rural Development Provincial Directorate in Zambézia (DPTADR-Z) but both times was told that the person was on vacation. Despite leaving my contact details and signed and stamped credentials with DPTADR-Z, I never heard from them. I then went to the central government in Maputo to see whether they had received an application from JA! to protect Mount Mabo and to understand the steps that such a process takes.

In terms of the 2014 Conservation Areas Law, the state body responsible for conservation areas is the National Administration of Conservation Areas (ANAC) which has headquarters in Maputo city. I could interview Julieta Lichuge, working for the Department of Conservation Areas and Community Development, twice, one at the ANAC's office on March 8, 2018, and another interview was by telephone while I was in Mocuba on December 15, 2017. Through these interviews I learned about the organization of conservation areas in Mozambique, the challenges faced by the state and its agents' work of trying to ensure that they did not displace local people around and inside existing conservation areas from their lands. I also learned about the frustrations of some state bureaucrats in doing their jobs amidst resource and personnel shortages and in a context of state dependence on donors. We also talked about the ineffectiveness of the extant state policies for ensuring distribution of profits, generated by conservation areas, to people living near or inside such areas. Our conversations also opened a Pandora's box of problems regarding the state's struggle to secure control over land and resources and to ensure its citizens' wellbeing. My primary reason for interviewing Julieta Lichuge—to follow JA!'s application (to ANAC) for a community conservation area in Mount Mabo—was because I was told that ANAC had no record of such an application. I then decided that following the application was taking my time and focus away from the local people and their ontologies and so abandoned that line of enquiry.

Having recognised the entanglements of local people with outside agencies, I sought ways to learn about the values, beliefs, and practices of the scientists around Mount Mabo. Since their expeditions were infrequent, I could not follow them in their work. I therefore worked with the scientists', NGOs' and state bureaucrats' texts, photos, and documents, which are what Bruno Latour (1986, 7) calls "immutable mobiles" or artefacts that can be translated without

corruption which became even more widely circulated after the rise of the print industry. The current rise of cyberspace has put such circulation of “immutable mobiles” at what Rosa (2013) would call a nauseating pace. It was in that cyberspace that I found news articles, photos, and texts about the scientists’ work on Mount Mabo. Such circulated immutable mobiles enabled me to grasp the narratives and views they convey about the mountain and local people, and about their own work. They include materials available on social media, news outlets, the internet, and academic works. The RBG Kew scientists compiled a booklet, titled *Mount Mabu Media Coverage Report* (Kew s/d, unpublished), composed of news articles written about RBG Kew scientists’ “discovery” of Mount Mabo. It enabled me to envision the scientists’ broader vistas and to understand the context in which Mount Mabo has become a media sensation after their expedition. The booklet clearly shows that the story of the “discovery” of “Google Forest” has circulated widely. I also analysed documents from NGOs, state bureaucrats including those from the Instituto de Investigação Agrária de Moçambique (Institute of Agricultural Research of Mozambique, hereafter IIAM) which were shared during personal meetings since NGOs’ and mostly IAAM’s presence in cyberspace was not as strong as the scientists’. I added to my analysis of various documents interviews with a few IIAM scientists. This provided insight into their role in the conservation work being performed around Mount Mabo and into how their partnerships with RBG Kew had started and operated. I learned about the human, financial and material constraints on their work and how, like the ANAC bureaucrats, their work depended on external (donor) funding including that provided to research projects initiated abroad in which they collaborated. IIAM scientists complained about not receiving much financial support from the Mozambican state and a debilitating shortage of technicians.

Techniques of evocation: stories as connecting entities between the reader and other worlds

Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser (2018) have shown us that we live in a world of many worlds whilst Wolf (2012) shows that each world is itself made up by many other worlds that hold together the world in which they occur, and “it matters what stories tell stories” (Haraway 2016, 35). Building on this, I maintain that the local people’s world is composed of many worlds, including the modern world; and that the reader can read the stories I share throughout this thesis as windows or doors into that world or, if the reader prefers, vehicles into that world. After my fieldwork, much of my concern has been around how to best communicate the wealth

of experiences in Nangaze and Nvava in a way that avoids betraying the study's interlocutors' visions of themselves whilst also allowing space for broader discussions on decoloniality, climate crisis and nature conservation. I could better deal with my concern after I discovered Marilyn Strathern's (2004) idea of evocation. Strathern (2004, 7) following Tyler states that "ethnography works by evoking in the reader responses that cannot be commensurate with the writer's – there is no 'object' that they both grasp, for the writer cannot represent another society or culture; rather s/he provides the reader with a connection to it"—a connection that Wolf (2012) would treat as a binding element to a story.

I do not seek to represent the *povoados* or their residents' modes of living. Instead, I bring to readers my experiences with them, and the kinds of questions those experiences helped me raise. My goal is to provide a connection with the reader through my stories about those experiences. This, I hope, is a major contribution I make with this thesis—a connection. I consequently resort to narrative as a mode of creating an approximation between the reader and the study' interlocutors' modes of living. As Hinchman and Hinchman (1997, xvi) state, "narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experience of it." Throughout the thesis, I consider the three aspects suggested in this statement as analytical constructs: chronology, meaning, and social bridging of experiences and worlds. I do so even though the stories and events that I narrate did not occur in the same sequential manner. Although I organized my fieldwork data using the qualitative research software QSR NVivo, the reader will notice that it was specific encounters, and their relevance to my argument, that I have used to structure the narrative. The data managed through QSR NVivo was thus used to make sense of these specific encounters and thereby to help me build my arguments.

On the plans that did not work out, limitations, future research projects

A "man's world", a song by an experimental musical band called The Residents, comes to my mind after I have finished writing this thesis. To be more specific, this is an old Man's World. What this means is that missing from my thesis are the equally silenced voices of women, children from various ages and young men. I know I reproduce that very old Man's World (patriarchy) in my plight to question the intrusions or attempts at domination of residents'

ontologies by the Modernist ontology. Future intersectional work (see Crenshaw 2017) that attempts to understand how, for example, the “woman’s world” navigates such oppressive systems and the kinds of politics and *poiesis* that that navigation entails is necessary.

I also had an interest in making comparative analysis between Nvava and Nangaze’s ontologies with those of other *povoados* in southern Africa. I ended up limiting to a more intensive study of Nvava’ and Nangaze’ residents’ ontologies, with the similar academic attitude of Clapperton Mavunga, who did an intensive study of VaShona and Matshangana people’s philosophies on their own terms. Such comparative analysis firstly across central and northern Mozambique region of people and landscapes interactions would be an avenue to follow. There are few studies on this subject in Mozambique, where political ecology kind of studies detailing people’s loss of landscapes and livelihoods are pervasive.

When I first learned about Mount Mabo and prepared to go to the field, I had planned to climb the mountain. Despite my initial drive to climb Mount Mabo, I never did. I felt divided about my initial intention. My initial plan was also to follow the different actors in the area in their daily lives and their interactions with Mount Mabo. But few tourists and scientists came to visit the mountain during my time in the field, a fact probably associated with external agencies having classified Mozambique as a “no-go” zone because of the political conflict in central Mozambique involving opposing Renamo and Frelimo armies. As I followed some residents, I realised they seldom if ever went to the mountain’s summit or to the mountain at all, other than when accompanying scientists, tourists and NGOs’ activists, or hunting. I got halfway to the summit once—when I was in Nvava and following two hunters who had cleared a plot for agriculture in Mount Mabo’s foothills. Despite Ângelo Agostinho, a hunter and an agriculturalist, having suggested that we walk to the summit, this was the closest I got to the summit. Ângelo’s suggestion followed from his knowing that tourists visited Mount Mabo to summit and his assuming I too was a tourist. I turned down the invitation, insisting that I would go to the summit following people, not as an act of curiosity, tourism, or conquest. As I write this thesis, I am left with the question: what if I had visited the summit? Are there stories I would have heard? The residents lived on the mountain during the war, what a visit to those areas could tell us about that period?

Another of my unrealised initial plans when I was preparing my research proposal was to carry out archival work on Madal, the former Monegasque and then Norwegian-owned colonial tea plantation that owned rights to use a large parcel of land near Mount Mabo (Reiersen 2014; Bertelsen 2014). Madal had built a small dam on one river running across the mountain for electricity production and the by now abandoned house of the former director of the company was in Mount Mabo's foothills. JA! had proposed turning this abandoned structure into an accommodation centre for visitors and tried to convince the current land use right owners of the area, Mozambique Holdings Limited permit this. The corporation's manager refused to give away the infrastructure.

With that archival work, I was hoping to find information about the mountain including photos, audio files, videos or any other files that might enable me to understand the earlier enactment of a "colonial Mount Mabo" and which would help me understand the area's present configurations. Mime did not permit me to gather any such data, and it was soon clear that I would have struggled to gain access to quite limited archival sources. Since Madal occupied a significant place in the memories, lives, and imaginaries of the local people living in the area, this is a project I intend to follow. That could give an archive of Mount Mabo as a deliverable.

While walking around in Limbue and Nangaze I often heard stories about Madal and the various other tea plantations that from the colonial era until the present make up part of the area's biodiversity. I was interested in learning more about the "teascapes" in the area and the ways residents are living with the "failed" projects' lands and infrastructures. I limited the archival work I did to focusing on land, forest, and conservation laws in Mozambique from the colonial period, through 2017. That has allowed me to understand what versions of nature the state has enacted over time. It also allowed me to connect the performances of scientists, tourists, NGOs, and state bureaucrats to the Judaeo-Christian and Euro-American ontology that separates nature from culture and frames modern forms of citizenry in Mozambique as distinct from that of residents and their relational ontology.

As I write this thesis (December 2020), BIOFUND, a Biodiversity Conservation Foundation based in Maputo, with funding from the EU has finished evaluating proposals after NGOs, private sector, international actors, and others have applied for BIOFUND's call for bids for community development projects around Mount Mabo in a total monetary value of 1,503,000

Euros. What this suggests is that there is a strong international interest on Mount Mabo. I read the terms of the reference of the bid, and I realized it continued the same modernist view of the mountain, because the work of conservationists was the base for the initiation of BIOFUND's activities. To highlight this connection, in a phone call with one activist of JA!, I learned that JA! had written a letter complaining about the fact that the call for bid that BIOFUND had written used much of JA!'s work but BIOFUND did not quote JA!. JA!'s activist stated that BIOFUND consultants visited them and interviewed them regarding their work on Mount Mabo. JA! had submitted a bid, as hoped that with the money from BIOFUND, it could finally take a step further in their project. I asked the JA!'s activist what they would do if BIOFUND rejected their project funding application, instead another organization. The activist told me they would continue with their work anyway since the NGO had already invested so much money and resources in the area. There is also much that could be important for future research. These recent developments made me feel secure about my claim that there is a stark competition among the conservation NGOs operating in Mozambique. Such competition in most cases results in delayed responses to the needs of people, and duplication of efforts. RADEZA and another Zambézia-based NGO won the bid, even though such organizations hardly worked in the *povoados* and left many residents baffled since they had not heard from RADEZA for a long time but RADEZA's development project had succeeded. I did not follow up in this thesis on the work being carried out by BIOFUND, RADEZA and the other NGO.

As stated in the introduction, the region in focus is rich in historical records about kingdoms, however, not much information exists about lineages and existing local chiefs in the region. This is a research avenue that I would love to continue.

In concluding this methodological section, I introduce a personal note, one related to the gains that closer relations between humans and nature can bring to humans and that health approaches currently gaining currency in Europe and North America under the name of Nature Based Therapy or Ecotherapy are recommending (see Jordan 2015; Williams 2018; Harper, Rose and Segal 2019). Whenever, during my fieldwork, I felt lonely, missed home, my wife, something troubled me, I walked to the River Múgue and spent time there. I would then come back to the *povoado* refreshed and reassured. I discovered that there was something healing about walking in the forest and sitting on the riverside being with other entities. The experience made most of my anxieties seem meaningless. This healing nature of nature, and the need to promote closer

relations between humans and nature, runs counter to a current conservationist narrative which still privileges the separation of nature and (poor and black people). Instead, as I argue in this thesis, one needs to support an opposing movement towards building stronger ties between humans and their natures and between modern and local traditional institutions and knowledges. I sense that, at least at present, such a line of research is non-existent in Mozambique where pharmaceuticals, access, resources, infrastructures are still tropes through which people discuss health. This is rightfully so, given the infrastructure and resource shortages in the country. But, as people in the “West” are slowly realizing, money, pharmaceuticals or modern technology alone cannot heal modern day maladies but also intimate bonds, including with nature.

Chapter two: Protecting “Google Forest”: The Land Question, NGOs’ and Scientists’ Approaches to Protection of Nature

When scientists separate out the world into land and sea, or nature and society, and leave the weaving together of their facts and probabilities to others, and when they fail to see that the questions they ask derive in large part from how they look at the world, and that their investigative technologies have not escaped the complicated, messy, entangled, and contingent world, then they are as vulnerable to capture (Lesley Green 2020, 134).

I first arrived in Nangaze *povoado* on June 13, 2016. I had had to walk from Limbue with my guide for nearly five hours, mostly through what residents called the former Madal Tea Estate’s lands. I was then still familiarizing myself with residents and their relations with Mount Mabo, and I had recently learned about the work that JA! had been doing in the area since 2009 and that Calisto was JA!’s point man. I therefore wanted to meet Calisto and talk to him about JA!’s work and about local inhabitants’ relations to Mount Mabo. Having arrived in Nangaze, Calisto and his wife offered my guide and I a chair to sit on, then a meal that his wife had prepared. After sharing the lunch, I asked Calisto to talk about Mount Mabo and the associations that JA! had created to protect it. Calisto urged me to call JA! before we could start any conversation about his work. Calisto then called JA! activist Gizela Zunguze and, after a while, passed me the phone to talk to her. After introductions, Gizela asked me whether I had introduced myself to the district and local government. I responded that I had introduced myself to those institutions and to the local chief. Gizela then invited me for a meeting to talk about my work with JA! when I returned to Maputo. She also told me she would travel to Quelimane a week later and suggested we could meet in Quelimane if that was possible. I agreed and thanked her. After the call I felt that JA! appeared to exert much control over the area and Calisto, however remotely.

After the call, Calisto and I talked about JA! and its activities in the area since 2009. Some minutes into the conversation, Calisto went into his house and came back with a bundle of documents in a bag he wanted to show me to support some points he was making.



Figure 3. This photograph I took in Nangaze in 2016 shows Calisto's archive which consists of the Constitution of the Republic, the Land Law, legislation on land, and other anti-REDD+ booklets that JA! had given him as part of their struggle for local inhabitants' land tenure security. The photograph showcases the centrality of law in these struggles.

First, he brought forth hand-written documents that he had produced with the meeting minutes that residents had had with RADEZA; then a typed document containing a chronogram of activities that RADEZA, in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), had planned for the area, for the period November 2013 to December 2014. The RADEZA and UNDP logos at the head of the document, and the table written in it, attracted my attention. I glanced at the document and saw that RADEZA had planned a project for the support of “community participation” in the conservation of Mount Mabo. According to the RADEZA document, the intended activities included:

identifying and organizing communities affected by the project; training of the communities, community leaders and local government officials; creating management committees and associations for protecting Mount Mabu [sic]; training for the management committees and association members on ecotourism; identifying and training community rangers and environmental education activists; training [the committees and associations] on the land, forest, fauna and flora, tourism and

environmental legislation; communicating the legislation among the communities: raising awareness about and performing environmental education and finally monitoring and evaluation [translated from Portuguese].

The activities mentioned above, the pedagogic, and programmatic design they entailed were “textbook” or commonplace environmental activism activities among environmental NGOs and their effects on residents’ livelihoods are not monolithic, but complex and at times contradicting. As I watched, Calisto studiously went through his archive and told stories of how each of the documents he pulled from the bag had ended up with him. Calisto displayed a hand-written list of the newly formed associations’ members in Nvava, Nangaze, Namadoe, and Limbue, including a list with the name of the Limbue-based association comprising women. All members of the associations JA! helped create to protect Mount Mabo were local people. The documents followed in a series, the hand-written documents first and then giving way to a copy of each of the Constitution of the Republic, the Land Law, the Land decrees, the anti-REDD+ and JA’s booklets.

Seeing these documents, I realized that even in supposedly “spatially isolated” areas like Nangaze, global conflict over land use and control had made their way into local people’s modes of living. What became even more clear was the fact that, as evidenced by RADEZA’s chronogram and JA!’s booklets and the handing over copies of land and other legislation, the law was central in the battlefield over land and access to natural resources. During my fieldwork, I found myself in conversations about land demarcations, exchanges that raised my interest in understanding the interconnection between the land and conservation laws, and their effects on Mount Mabo and local inhabitants—effects which became extremely salient after RBG Kew scientists had put Mount Mabo on the conservation map.

As I show in this chapter, there has been a messy interaction between environmentalists’ concerns over biodiversity loss and protection of nature from human destruction and the Mozambican “land question”. I show that the state and conservationists articulated Mount Mabo’s attachment to local inhabitants through a language of property rights, and through the technical artefact of land use rights certificate (DUAT) as a legitimation of that relation. In trying to protect biodiversity, scientists had produced a map demarcating what they called the “Core Zone” determined at 900m while JA! produced a map showing the “*Área Pretendida*”

(lit. sing. targeted area) determined at 1000m which they intended to protect from human activities whilst using it for scientific and eco-touristic activities. Both scientists and JA! in the process produced novel imagined geographies and subjectivities. All the actors mentioned above could be considered part of the environmental globalization as described by Zimmerer (2006, 1). And like with the globalization process in general, environmental globalization's operations happen in specific locales with specific people and resulting in mixed and contradicting results (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Beck 2000; Tsing 2005; Ferguson 2006).

Following Ferguson's (1994) criticism of development projects in Lesotho, I seek in this chapter to show that by espousing a Western-centric, Modernist, top-down, techno-scientific and managerial approach to nature conservation, NGOs and scientists on the one hand become implicated in the continued disfranchisement of local people's ontologies and, on the other hand, by seeking to implement their conservation projects and applying for a DUAT, NGOs and scientists extend the state's reach and control over an otherwise 'remote' area into its slow bureaucratic process, and how that results in increasing tensions among residents and external actors. I argue that by espousing the above-mentioned approach to nature conservation, NGOs and scientists become implicated in the continued disenfranchisement of local people's ontologies. The NGOs', scientists', and land state's narratives, also understood as practices (see Fairclough 1995), the land, Mount Mabo and the forest emerged as a "scene" of political, economic, and social practices, the attachment to which the state and conservationists base on the technical artefact—DUAT. These narratives revive a now widely challenged modernist nature-culture, human-nonhuman, Western-non-Western divide (*contra*, Latour 1988; Haraway 2008; Viveiros de Castro 2014). While this narrative is useful in "commoning," to borrow Marisol de la Cadena's (2015b) expression, global concerns over what conservationists have called accelerated mass extinctions (Leakey and Lewin 1995; Lemos 2014; Kolbert 2016; Wilson 2016) and climate crisis it loses sight of other modes of attachment conjoining the Nangaze and Nvava *povoados*, residents and the mountain, modes which include and transcend such divides.

“Land questions”: nature conservation and legislation in Mozambique

To understand the current messy entanglements to protect Mount Mabo and their effects on local inhabitants, two important global processes deserve bearing in mind. The first is the neo-liberalization process that started in the late 1980s; the second is the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. In the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991 (Hogan 1992), a neo-liberalization wave swept through the African continent (Beckman 1993). Mozambique was then still recovering from the devastation of the 1976-1992 war between the apartheid backed Renamo and the Frelimo government and still trying to build a democratic state with IMF and World Bank aid. This aid was conditional on Mozambique adopting structural adjustment programmes (henceforth, SAPs), withdrawing the state from the economic and welfare sectors since IMF and the World Bank perceived the state as inefficient, ostensibly to strengthen market agents and civil society as catalysts of development and liberal democracy (see Zack-Williams and Mohan 2007). It is in this global political economy, that Zack-Williams and Mohan (2007) have dubbed “imperial” because of its imposition of foreign policies onto relatively newly independent states, that the present global fight against climate change and biological diversity loss, and “community” development, became one of the many challenges with which the newly turned neoliberal states had to grapple. After the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, participating states had signed the Convention on Biological Diversity—(CBD) which, among other things, aimed to reduce biological diversity loss caused by certain “human” activities, but only at the discretion of signatory states (UN 1992). Since then, biological diversity conservation has increasingly become a global and pressing concern for these and other states, and for various local and global private actors, academics, and NGOs all of which have started acting to identify, study and protect biodiversity.

As stated earlier, in African countries, the above-mentioned global conservation movement grew alongside neo-liberalization. The complicity between nature conservation and neoliberal capitalism is best captured by Maano Ramutsindela who contends that “TFCAs [Transfrontier Conservation Areas] should be understood in the context of intersections between the environmental movement and the private sector, and the place and role of the state in those intersections” (Ramutsindela 2007, 4). Similarly, Dan Brockington, Rosaleen Duffy and Jim Igoe show how “conservation and capitalism are allying mutually to reshape the world” (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008, 4). My reading of these scholars’ works, coupled with my

fieldwork on Mount Mabo, suggests that “nature conservation”, “community development” and “state building” in Africa revolve around the ancient, messy, and unresolved “land question” (see Ellis 1994; Alexander 2006)—control over land access, resources, and its multiple (and often competing) uses (see Ferguson 2006) and through which residents continue to be stripped off their lands. A 2015 report issued by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) states that “[o]nly 13 percent of the total land of the countries studied in Sub-Saharan Africa is owned or controlled by Indigenous [endogenous black] People [...]” The same report states that only 25,54 percent of Mozambique’s land is controlled by indigenous people, and that only 1,26 percent of the land is designated to indigenous people. In most cases such lands are unproductive and/or overcrowded (Negrão 2001a).

As Sam Moyo, Dzodzi Tsikata and Yakhum Diop (2015, 1) remind us “the land questions vary in different African countries according to their historical specificities, including their diverse patterns of colonization, ecological and demographic transformations, their development trajectories and democratization process.” In Mozambique, 1975 saw the demise of colonial administration of the land and people, an administration that was predominantly based on monoculture and forced labour. By 1977, Frelimo’s modernist socialist government had nationalized the land and all-natural resources as assets for the creation of wealth for the majority poor people. Ten years later, the country changed its ideological stance when obliged by the IMF and World Bank to adopt their SAPs, which brought about a switch to a neoliberal approach. That did not change the principle of national ownership of the land, and in both socialist and the neoliberal Mozambique “the land is property of the state and cannot be sold or otherwise alienated, mortgaged, or encumbered” (Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique 2018, number 1 and 2 article 109 [translated from Portuguese]).

What distinguishes the two periods is the fact that before 1987 the socialist state made it costly and hard for individually held rights to land, hence favouring collective forms of land grants. However, it continued with the marginalization of land property relations premised on customary authority that had preceded the colonial administration. The 1997 Land Law, introduced during the SAPs period, followed international and national pressure on the state to ensure secure land tenure to the land use rights (DUAT) holders. It stated that private individuals and organizations can have rights to use land through renewable 50-year concessions.

The 1997 Land Law was built around consensus and public engagement and introduced two novel developments in post-colonial and post-socialist Mozambican legislation in relation to how it organized land property. The first was to recognize endogenous forms of land use rights. The second was to attract private investors, who, according to the Land Law, could also negotiate directly with local inhabitants over their use and exploitation of local people's land and resources available in it (see also chapter five). The law framed this negotiation process as *consultas comunitárias* (lit.plur. community consultation). It also specified that “the state determines the conditions of use of the land” (Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique 2018, number 1, article 110 [translated from Portuguese]) and also that the state does this through “considering the social and economic ends [of land use]” (ibid. [translated from Portuguese]), in the name of “public interest” or “common good” which is defined by the government holding state power, thus far Frelimo's. This novel land tenure arrangement came as a huge blow to international organizations and some local political and economic elite who were advocating for full privatization of the land in Mozambique, based on an argument that privatization of land would mean that investors, individuals, and organizations could hold land as a capital asset and a basis for accumulation (Negrão 2001b).

The intention of those who introduced the 1997 Land Law was to ensure secure land tenure to the land use rights holders while simultaneously attracting and encouraging investments and generating wealth (Constitution of the Republic 2018, number 3, article 109 [translated from Portuguese]) for the poor. The mechanism for this was to permit transfer of those rights to investors who would use land for production and natural resources exploration but under state regulated conditions. Despite the initial optimism around the Land Law, two decades later Mozambique continues living in poverty (World Bank 2017). Secure land tenure is still a mirage for many residents, many of whom are also now seeing their “unmapped” lands being encroached on by conservation projects (see Witter 2013; Massé 2016; Lunstrum 2016) and by growing extractive industries (see Borrás, Fig and Suárez 2011; Lillywhite, Kemp and Sturman 2015; Matusse 2018; der Ploeg and Vanclay 2018; Lesutis 2019). The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) (2015) report illustrates how most of Mozambique's indigenous [poor black] people, whether in community or as individuals, are still without a DUAT over the lands they inhabit, where they hunt, perform rituals, produce, or carry out their daily lives. The state and development agents usually framed such lands in which they have interest as “idle” or

“unoccupied” to be explored often through extractive projects and conservationists where wildlife exists framed those lands as “wilderness” to be protected for scientific and touristic ends, in both cases resorting to their respective valuing systems.

Valuing nature: forestry and configurations of the threats in Zambézia province

My fieldwork occurred in a context where the Mozambican government had launched an “offensive” called *Operação Tronco* (lit.sing. Operation Log) against illegal logging in Mozambique’s northern and central provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula, Zambézia, Manica, and Sofala in the context of growing concerns over deforestation due to illegal logging. The Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development (MITADER) initiated the three-months long “operation” in March 2017, with what the Ministry framed as a zero-tolerance policy on illegal logging. The Operation included workers from the Ministry of Land, Environment, and Rural Development (MITADER), Customs, Police of the Republic of Mozambique, and Police for the Protection of Natural Resources also known as forest rangers.

The booming Chinese economy, and its insatiable need for raw materials, has raised concerns from governmental and non-governmental organizations, in Mozambique and around the world, about its pernicious effects on nature and Mozambique’s people (Mackenzie 2006). According to the 2014 environmental impact assessment’s *First-Class Crisis* report, between 2007-2014 an average of 81% of all logging in Mozambique was illegal. In 2013, a staggering 93% of logging in the country was illegal. Most exports (93% on average between 2007 and 2013) were shipped to China (EIA 2014b, 1). The 2014 report painted a gruesome picture of the future of Mozambique’s forests and stated that a profound transformation in how Mozambique’s government and law enforcement community do their jobs could halt a complete depletion of the forests that was being caused by Chinese traders (EIA 2014, 1). The report also pointed a finger suggesting that Mozambique’s weak and corrupt government was complicit in the ongoing forest plundering in the country.

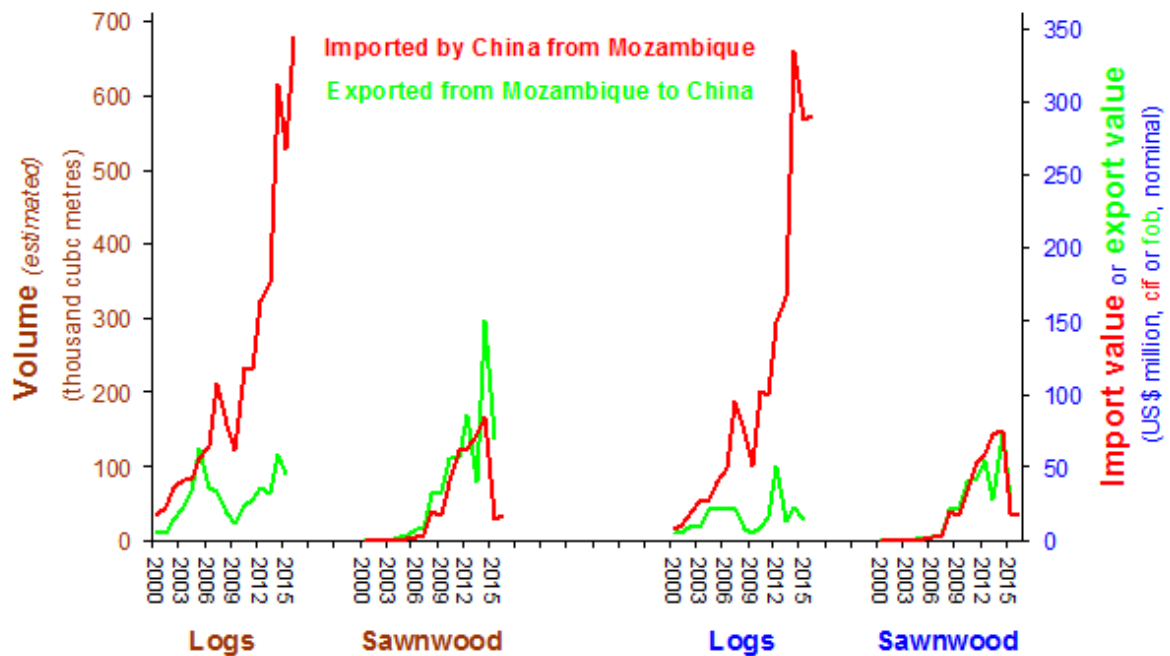


Figure 4. This graph shows the discrepancies between quantities of logs and sawn wood declared by Mozambican and Chinese customs as well as between import and export value of the forest products (source *Global Timber UK Mozambique tropical wood export statistics China Illegal Timber Illegal Logging debt logs allowable cut Chinese Takeaway* (globaltimber.org.uk))

The numbers presented above painted a clear picture for the Mozambican government: forest loss because of illegal logging equalled “economic losses”, something recognised by the Mozambican government three years later: “illegal logging of timber has damaged Mozambique in about 200 million USD, a significant amount to trigger development in the country” (Portal do Governo 2017, para. 1 [translated from Portuguese]). Estimates of such economic losses vary, for example, forgone tax revenues in unreported timber exports sent mostly to Asia from Mozambique were estimated at \$540 million between 2003-2013 (Fage 2018). Agência Lusa, a news outlet, quoting the Minister of Earth, Environment and Rural Development, Celso Correia, stated that “after *operação tronco* was implemented to combat contraband and illegal logging of timber, the annual revenues from timber exploration in Mozambique rose from 7 million Euros to 70 million” (Agência Lusa 2018, para.1 [translated from Portuguese]).

Apart from enlarging the country's revenues, the operation also ended with the state appropriating illegally felled timber (see DW Africa 2017c). This then led to a polarized debate over what to do with the timber now in the state's custody. One set of organizations and individuals claimed that the government should incinerate all illegal fauna and flora resources, as a deterrent to future illegal logging, for example, by the Mozambique's Logger Association. Faced with poverty, which characterizes the country, the minister of MITADER, and some civil society organizations, recommended using the timber for production of school desks while also auctioning a portion, the income to accrue to the state and to be used for economic development. The polar-opposite positions these stances represent signal a tension between conservation and development in Mozambique. This tension was reinforced by then President Armando Guebuza's and thereafter President Filipe Nyusi's governments' interest in establishing and expanding the extractive industries in cooperation with private investment to ensure economic development, while also claiming to care for nature protection.

The government's neo-extractivist policies, specifically in the forestry sector, were also behind RBG Kew scientists' fears of losing the newly found "wilderness" on Mount Mabo. Faced with this policy position, JA! has been vocal against the government's neo-extractivist policies and has worked to ensure sustainability and respect over local land rights across the country, as the booklets resisting most government-led interventions handed to Calisto by the NGO suggest. According to JA!'s website,

JA! is a volunteer-based NGO which operates out of Mozambique. The organization was founded in 2004 by a group of friends who had grown concerned about the way Mozambique was developing in the unregulated global economy. We were concerned that with rapid foreign investment into our fledgling democracy, with its relatively weak civil society and inaccessible legal system, that we might lose much of our country's natural beauty which we believe belongs to the people of this country and is not for sale to big business [translated from Portuguese].¹¹

As this quote shows, JA! positioned itself as an ethically unquestionable NGO fighting against corporation land grabs in Mozambique (Lemos 2018), a stance which allegedly Lemos stated that led to the state describing JA! as radicals. JA! had been vocal about the increasing extent

¹¹ Visit <https://landportal.org/organization/justi%C3%A7a-ambiental>

of extractive industries and about their devastating effects on the environment and local people's livelihoods.

The same threat to biodiversity from forestry, in combination with a potential loss of land-use rights such development would entail, were also behind JA!'s work on Mount Mabo. As JA! activist, Vanessa Cabanelas, told me, JA! feared that the government would also explore the area for mineral resources. Another fear she mentioned related to the current government's interests in monetizing nature through the global carbon trade under the REDD+ scheme. JA! has strongly resisted REDD+, a stance showed by its formulaic "REDD + Indigenous people = Genocide" (JA! 2019) and by the clever title of the same post on JA!'s Facebook page, "STOP ROBBING THE PLANET with CO2lonialism" (JA! 2019), and in JA!'s booklets specifying the risks of embracing REDD+. This resistance is in the face of Timberlake and Bayliss (2016) having suggested that "Carbon storage is worthy of mention as there are possibilities for carbon accreditation schemes for Mabu's [sic] forest and the surrounding lands which could support conservation of the area" (Timberlake and Bayliss 2016, 27), and where they estimate that

The total storage value including above-ground live vegetation, little layer, coarse woody debris, below-ground live matter, and soil carbon is estimated to be around 3,643,539 Mg (3,6 Tg) for the forest area only. Following the carbon storage values presented in Willcock et al. (2012), if the total forest area was converted to bushland with scattered crops (117.8 Mg ha⁻¹) a value of 0.9 Tg of carbon would be lost, a loss of 2.7 Tg of carbon into the atmosphere. Likewise, if the area was converted to woodland with scattered crops (183.3 Mg ha⁻¹) the value would be 1.4 Tg, a loss of 2.2 Tg of carbon (ibid.)

The calculations above indicate that the RBG Kew scientists recommended such REDD+ programmes being implemented for Mount Mabo forest. They then suggested that

Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) should be explored, highlighting the environmental services used by the surrounding *povoados* and the tea estates provided by the forest and forest cover, especially the plentiful and clean water supply. Payment does not have to come in the form of direct financial contribution, but can also take the form of conservation actions that protect the forest area (2016, 29)

By this the RBG Kew scientists meant firstly that the “wilderness” that they constructed technically on Mount Mabo forest had nothing to do with residents’ own actions and knowledges; and secondly that residents should henceforth have to pay for the ecosystem services the forest provided them. This stance reflects the “strong conservation” (Timberlake and Bayliss 2016, 28) measures that the scientists referred to—measures based not on community conservation but rather on global actors and economic mechanisms, much like Lesley Green (2020, 134) described in South African environmentalism, where the *homo oeconomicus* (“Man”) and his financialized view of nature prevailed.

As stated above, JA! strongly resisted utilising such economic mechanisms and instead started training local people about the negative effects of embracing REDD+ projects in their forests, and the challenges of having access to money generated by such projects. The extract below, from an interview with Vanessa Cabanelas, illustrates.

[...] with the Clean Development Mechanism [a carbon trade scheme born after the Kyoto Protocol] we speak about a lot of money, but when we move down the ladder, through whom [the money must go], and who pays who, and when it reaches the communities, it’s close to nothing. It doesn’t make sense because the ones who are doing the work, living there, living with difficulties, are the communities. Either it is a direct thing [money sent directly to the community] or it’s not worth it. Eliminate all the middle people. This has happened, here, for example, we have the case of Inabita with the carbon credits, and I speak about carbon credits because there is much greed to put Mabo under the REDD, with the REDD system, and receive carbon credits from the forest. It is an issue. At this moment, the communities are not aware of what is going on outside [...] [translated from Portuguese].

Rather than pointing to outright resistance to global schemes like REDD+ and CDM projects, the above extract highlights a commonly held view of the Mozambican state as the middleman between global schemes and local people which constantly prevents local inhabitants from getting full access to their potential gains. The words “eliminating the middlemen” suggest an alternative of sending money through NGOs or by directly injecting funds into local associations’ accounts, thereby minimizing the state’s intervention. The NGOs were not framed as middlemen in Vanessas’ perspective. What emerges here is some sort of what George

Holmes described as an instance of neoliberal conservation based on his study in Chile (Holmes 2015) and globally (Holmes and Cavanagh 2016) which produced complex effects. These effects, according to Holmes and Cavanagh (2016, 204-206) included inscription of novel forms of power and neoliberal subjects, since such projects are imposed in the residents' everyday lives; representation and spectacle in which neoliberal projects rely both on selling particular goods or services and normative ideas of the ways such commodities are to be experienced through, for example, ecotourism or carbon markets; and inequality differentiation in which such projects influence dynamics of both new and pre-existing conservation projects.

With Mount Mabo, while different actors have gathered around the idea—born from reported experiences elsewhere—of a potential threat or risk to Mount Mabo, it has yet to materialize on Mount Mabo. For RBG Kew's scientists, "rapid development" which might include extraction of local resources posed a threat to biodiversity which drove them to assert that there was an urgent need to persuade the government to protect Mount Mabo. In their turn, NGOs sought to persuade the government to ensure that local inhabitants' rights, as stipulated by the Constitution and Land Law, were respected as a core part of efforts to curb deforestation and consequent biodiversity loss. For that reason, the government with its neo-extractivist policies, the global (2007 Kyoto Protocol's) Clean Development Mechanism and the UN's REDD+ projects were of major concern to JA's activists. The government too accepted the idea of "threat" and configured it around the likelihood of financial loss. The NGOs and scientists had in common that the nature devastating actions happened with the complicity or active participation of residents, in collusion with corrupt state officials, licenced loggers, rangers, and local chiefs—in their views, the threat was a lucrative transnational network of (il)legal logging that could be stopped at the local level.

The Timberlake and Bayliss' 2016 report was, however, sober on its findings in that it showed that "at present there are no immediate or major threats to the forests of Mount Mabu [sic], although encroachment of agricultural fields or commercial plantations *could* rapidly develop into a *real* threat. The increased frequency of wildfires does damage the forest margins and inhibits forest regeneration" (2016, 28, my italics). The scientists did not show any evidence behind their claim that wildfires damaged the forest's margins and inhibited the forest's regeneration due to residents' practices. Despite not evidencing any real damage to the forest caused by residents who had managed their forest through local institutions, the scientists stated

that “although not urgent, any longer-term future of the Mount Mabu [sic] forests will involve some sort of protected status,” (Timberlake and Bayliss 2016, 57). This protection status needed to be “strong” (Timberlake and Bayliss 2016, 29) as opposed to the existing weak protection of Mount Mabo.

Timberlake and Bayliss’s approach resonated with Wilson’s (2016) Half Earth’s proposal to protect “wilderness” areas that might host species unknown to science that has drawn both praise and much criticism. They also resounded the one-sidedness of the scientists and their denial to acknowledge residents’ ontologies and practices managing the forest and the mountains through non-economic terms, which informed much of the ongoing transformations on the ground.

Constructing a neoliberal nature conservation: DUAT, bureaucratic time, nature conservation, and land politics

Media depictions of Mount Mabo as the “Lost Eden amid forgotten forest of Africa” (Jowitt 2008) or “Google Forest” (Fisher 2009) or “Butterfly forest” (Bayliss et al. 2014), intertwined with global concerns over biodiversity loss have attracted international and local attention. As shown, that led to the two NGOs, RADEZA and JA!, starting work with locals to protect Mount Mabo. JA! had received a USD250,000 Fauna and Flora International (FFI)¹² grant to build an ecotourism visitor and research centre by rehabilitating the ruins of the former colonial tea plantation manager’s house in what was by then a camping site in the mountain’s foothills (Timberlake et al. 2012; Timberlake and Bayliss 2016). Previously owned by Société du Madal, the ruins are within the 4,046.86ha of land over which Mozambique Holdings currently holds land-use rights and has rubber tree plantations there, developed in collaboration with the Rubber Board of India. Mozambique Holdings Limited’s business portfolio also includes a transport and automobile division, transit warehousing and national distribution, production and distribution of military and police uniforms, groundwater development and irrigation systems, toll road construction and maintenance, mining [...].¹³

¹² Julian Bayliss was also associated with FFI.

¹³ For more details visit <http://www.mozambiqueholdings.com/>

The proposed ecotourism centre would be JA!’s first large-scale project. Begun in 2009, it turned out to be long, challenging, and its most costly one. Given JA!’s acknowledged “failure” to complete earlier long-term projects that the NGO n had implemented in Maputo it hoped intensely to succeed on Mount Mabo.

Once JA! had learned about the newly “discovered” forest, and the many species there that were unknown to science, the NGO knew it could not protect the forest and mountain without the strategic alliance with local people who JA! needed to model around JA!’s version of environment and nature. For JA!, that meant that these residents needed training to raise their awareness of the importance of the forest and mountain, and sustainable practices of using the soil, forest and its faunal resources.¹⁴

Presuming that JA! needed to unify these local inhabitants to protect Mount Mabo and the forest from what JA! saw as unruly tourists, scientists, local residents—including loggers—and other NGOs and the state, in partnership with FFI, JA! worked towards creating, and having legally recognised, an association in each of four local *povoados*: Associação Wiwanana Wa Nvava (AWIWAN) in Nvava, Associação Ambiental de Namadoe (AANA), in Namadoe, Associação Comunitária de Nangaze (ACONAZ) in Nangaze, and Associação Nifugule Mento (ANIME), in Limbue. JA! helped formalize them in 2016. JA!’s goal was that there would be a community conservation area and that it would be managed according to residents’ *usos e costumes* (lit.plur. habits and customs) in which, according to JA!’s Vanessa Cabanelas, there would be restrictions on hunting and gathering, but mainly for outsiders. The principal purpose, she added, was to empower local people in natural resources management. In my readings, nowhere in JA!’s documentation, nor in interviews I have had with JA!’s personnel, nor in the Conservation Law, is there any description of what those *usos e costumes* in the area were and how proponents of the project in Mabo were going to include such *usos e costumes* in their nature protection project planning, design, and implementation.

The frames of a community conservation area are defined by the 2014 Conservation Law. However, as pointed out to me by JA!’s Vanessa Cabanelas,

¹⁴ See JA! 2015, *Contexto da visita* section, para. 3, unpublished.

there were few models [for community conservation areas] in Mozambique. Such kinds of models that work are not many, even outside of Mozambique around the world. The few [community conservation areas] we deem good examples, when you look closely at them, you see they are steered by a large NGO, or an international corporation; and when you analyse their interests, you see they [those NGOs or international corporations] are focused on the Clean Development Mechanisms, REDD+, carbon credits [translated from Portuguese].

One of the few models that JA! activists deemed positive and tried to emulate was that used by the Mount Mulanje Conservation Trust (MMCT) in Malawi.¹⁵ JA! therefore prepared a field visit for some Mabo area residents to MMCT. The aim was to inspire the representatives of local people and persuade the local government to protect Mount Mabo. The field visit consisted in two parts. The first was a meeting between the Mozambican group and the MMCT staff. The second enabled the Mozambican group to visit the associations that had been created around the MMCT, associations which reportedly generated income “through community ecotourism, sustainable production of tea, beehives, brooms using local plants, among other activities” (JA! 2015, section *Porquê a visita ao Monte Mulanje*, para. 5). At the end of the visit, according to the formal report, the participants said that they were motivated and gave positive feedback. The report also indicated that the participants welcomed JA!’s initiative, and that one (unnamed) participant stated that “we thank for everything we learned here, and we hope to transmit [the experiences] accurately to our brothers and sisters in Mozambique. In fact, we were not aware of the wealth and the services that Mount Mabu [sic] could provide us; from now on, *we will look at our mountain differently* (JA! 2015, section *Encontro do feedback*, para. 3, my italics [translated from Portuguese]).

What the procedures started by JA! reveal is that JA’s goal was (and remains) to turn Mabo into a protected area, which at first was to be materialized through an ecotourism project. To initiate the process, and after community consultations in which participants allegedly agreed to turn Mount Mabo into a protected area, JA! had submitted a proposal to the government in

¹⁵ FAO, Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust, accessed June 30, 2020, available at <http://www.fao.org/mountain-partnership/members/members-detail/en/c/156873/>

2012 that included an application for a DUAT to permit ecotourism in a conservation area. As Vanessa Cabanelas explained to me:

one thing we noticed was that the only way to protect an area effectively is to have a DUAT over that area. But in Mozambique there was no DUAT that allowed communities to manage a certain area. Either it is a DUAT for community lands, but it is not really that...because community lands can have other uses [other than ones previously designed for] for some reasons, and the state can cancel the rights to use the land [and reverted to the state], and it's over. But that's not what we wanted. We wanted to turn that area into a conservation area. But the state manages conservation areas. And, if you truly look at the conservation areas in Mozambique, you can see that they are not being properly managed. The ones that are being well managed and offer good examples are private [conservation areas]. But those private [conservation areas] that provide the best examples and results in conservation also have the worst examples in social aspects. That is always a problem [translated from Portuguese].

Vanessa Cabanelas complained that the government had demanded that JA! produce a Category A environmental impact assessment which meant that, in terms of Mozambique's 1997 Land Law, and 1997 Environmental Law, JA! had itself to commission and pay for an EIA that reported on the potential threats to people and the environment by any actions such as, for example, constructing dams, implementing tourism, exploring the forest and/or creating national parks, reserves or hunting reserves. What it now required was a complex, expensive and time-consuming EIA which, according to Vanessa Cabanelas, was unreasonable for the ecotourism project that JA! was planning to implement in the area. In her opinion, a Simplified EIA should have been sufficient. In her own words:

the biggest challenge in all that [application for a DUAT for ecotourism, as initially suggested by the RBG Kew scientists] is the requirements that it involves. When we talk about ecotourism, we are talking about business, we are talking about environmental impact assessment studies of Category A [according to the Decree no.54/2015], which are expensive and take a lot of time, in this case, a process that is heavy for a structure [the communities]; first because the communities don't have financial and human capacity to do it, etc. They don't. And even us, a small NGO that

we are, don't have [that capacity]. Financially, we can't and, back then, we thought, okay, we can [do the study ourselves], we are qualified technicians. But to carry out an environmental study assessment, firstly the proponent cannot do the study themselves; secondly, it's not just any technician who can do these studies. It's not enough to be a technician. One must be registered [as an environmental consultant at MITADER], etc. The process took a long time, but we submitted a request and we kept pushing the problem forward. Yet when we finally received an answer, unfortunately we had [to do] a Category A [EIA]. But when we discussed with the communities about ecotourism, [we showed that] those were small constructions made of local materials, so it didn't make any sense to have [to do] a category A, which is the same as for a coal mine, a dam; so, it didn't make any sense and we tried to renegotiate that [translated from Portuguese].

By 2014, the state enacted the Conservation Law (16/2014) legally recognizing as legitimate customary institutions and practices for conserving nature. This signalled a shift from the previous (1990s) legislation in its relation to residents' rights to land amidst growing neo-extractive projects. At that point, JA! dropped the initial application for an eco-tourism project which was proposed by the RBG Kew scientists and instead to apply for a DUAT allowing JA! to turn Mount Mabo into a community conservation area—one which would be the first of its kind in Mozambique. The Draft project that René Machoco sent me showed that the project “would be entirely the responsibility of JA! in partnership with local people through the community associations” (JA! s/d, draft Community Conservation of Mount Mabu [sic] [translated from Portuguese]).

The 2014 Conservation Law distinguishes two kinds of conservation areas: those that are called total conservation areas and those that are called conservation areas for sustainable use. The total conservation areas are areas that continue to be and are destined for the preservation of ecosystems and species with no extraction of resources. Total conservation areas are and remain public property, although the state and the private sector can share the management of such areas. In such areas, people's movement and economic activities are policed or restricted. In contrast, conservation areas for sustainable use are areas where permission has been granted by the state for conservation and sustainable exploration of the natural resources subject to that occurring within sustainable limits according to and approved by an established state-

administered integrated management plan that sets what are sustainable limits for resource use. Rights to explore such conservation areas for sustainable resource use can be issued to and held by private individuals and/or organizations or by the state.

Total conservation areas can be nature reserves, national parks, and cultural or natural monuments. With national parks or national reserves, the law prohibits to “hunt [or to] exercise any forest, agricultural, mining or husbandry exploration” (Mozambique, Conservation Law 14/2014, articles 15 and 16, number 2, line a [translated from Portuguese]) although such exploration is permitted for scientific and management purposes. “Human presence in these areas is accepted under controlled conditions [as] prescribed in the management plan, as long as they do not pose a threat to the preservation of natural resources and biological biodiversity” (Mozambique, Conservation Law 14/2014, articles 15 and 16, number 3 [translated from Portuguese]). Prior to any planned activity in a total conservation area, an environmental impact assessment report is required, and it must include a management plan for the area and the planned activities in it. That said, the law is unclear about what “controlled conditions” entail or about who ensures adherence to those conditions and based on which criteria.

Again, in contrast, areas of sustainable use include special reserves, environmental protection areas, *official coutadas* (privately held rights over a land in which hunting is restricted), community conservation areas, sanctuaries, *fazendas do bravio* (lit.plur. game farms), and municipal ecological parks. The 2014 Conservation Law defines community conservation areas as areas that are delimited and placed under the management of one or more local inhabitants *possessing a DUAT* and for purposes of ensuring the conservation of fauna and flora and sustainable use of natural resources. The legislation allows the licensing of a community conservation area by a third party only with the consent of local inhabitants, after a process of *consultas comunitárias*, which must result in a contract between the parts and a conservation project. Community conservation areas seek to protect natural resources; to guarantee sustainable management of natural resources; to ensure sustainable local development; and to ensure continuity of access to medicinal plants and to the local biological diversity. In addition, they are to be managed by local people through their own local institutions and practices, but with the caveat that they are in line with the national legislation and the Constitution (Mozambique, Conservation Law 14/2014, [translated from Portuguese]). The Conservation Law makes no reference to how such local institutions are to be included in

conservation projects. Just as for total conservation areas, establishment of community conservation areas also requires an environmental impact assessment (albeit a smaller one than applies when extractive projects are planned). It must study threats to biodiversity and design management plans that must then be approved by the state.

Once the state had enacted the 2014 Conservation Law, JA! dropped the initial ecotourism project which the state had classified as a “development project” according to the 1997 Land Law and 1997 Environmental Law. JA! applied instead for the newly created category of a “community conservation area”, which would then require JA! instead to commission a Simplified EIA, of a kind reserved for category B activities. Category B activities were reserved to “all activities that do not affect in a meaningful way living beings, neither environmentally sensitive areas, compared to activities in category A” (Decree no.54/2015, annex III, 1 [translated from Portuguese]). JA! submitted the Simplified EIA report in 2016 to the Provincial Directorate of Environment, Land and Rural Development of Zambézia - DPATDRZ, and the DPATDRZ is yet to approve the report. With the approval JA! could then proceed with the bureaucratic process.

Intending to turn the area into a community conservation area, JA! then successfully did an environmental assessment study (EIA) and prepared an environmental management plan (PGA) as required by the 2014 Conservation Law and the 1997 Land Law. The 2014 Conservation Law requires the proponents of conservation or exploration projects to identify, in an EIA, the existing biodiversity and all possible and expected effects that the proposed activities will have on the biodiversity, and on the lives of local people living in the intended areas. After the projects proponents submit the environmental impact assessments reports, a government body in the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development (MITADER) reviews them. Once approved, the proponents must also develop Environmental Management Plans, which the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development must also approve before the Ministry grants environmental licences to project proponents. Only after acquiring the environmental licence, project proponents can move on to next bureaucratic steps, and of interest to this chapter is the acquisition of a DUAT. JA! was granted an environmental licence, in October 2016. JA! submitted a request for a DUAT in the same year.

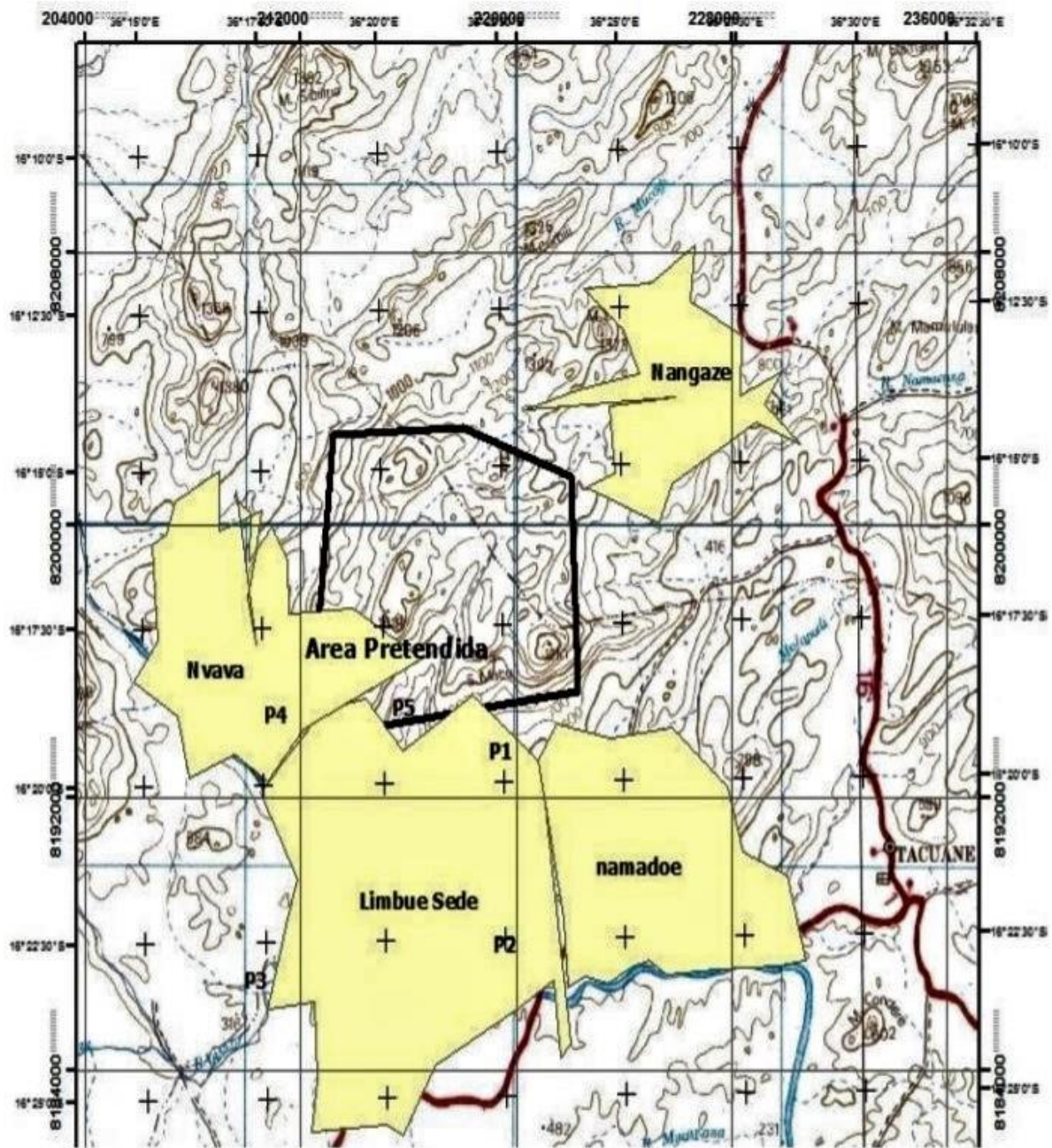


Figure 5. This map shows the location of the area that JA! proposed to turn into a protected area and the community lands adjacent to it (source: JA! 2016).

Throughout these bureaucratic processes, project proponents, the state requires the project proponents to consult residents living in the projects' implementation targeted areas. A closer reading of the 1997 Land and 2014 Conservation Laws shows that they do not give actual

power to residents to veto any such project and have a say about the outcome. That decision remains largely at the hands of the state. What this means is that residents can do nothing other than wait and, if they wish such a project to take off, passively to hope that the state will make decisions that consider their predicaments and interests.

Despite JA! having taken all these steps to meet the state's requirements, and despite continued lobbying and meetings with the Minister and state officials, by the time of my writing (Late December 2020) no DUAT have yet been issued, hence making it impossible for JA! to legally and effectively control access to the area and implement a protection project. This has thus left Mount Mabo by default a state property, in terms of the Mozambican constitution. In a personal conversation on July 5, 2018, at JA!'s office in Maputo, with René Machoco, a JA! activist responsible for JA's Mount Mabo's programs, explained the delay to me saying that "our work would be at an advanced stage. Everything was going slowly because conservation projects don't have priority. The state prioritizes extraction" [translated from Portuguese].

The legal documents, the anti-REDD+ booklets JA! had handed Calisto and Machoco's comment all indicated that the NGO was framing the DUAT as a tool to curb possible incursions by the neo-extractive state, private investors, and greedy elite incursion into the area, specifically, for extractive industries. In addition, JA! saw the DUAT as means hopefully, different from the RBG Kew scientists' plans, to curb REDD+ programmes and, in line with the RBG Kew scientists' concern, to stop residents from destroying biodiversity through agriculture and hunting. JA! also saw the establishment of a formally constituted conservation area to control both scientists and tourists coming to the mountain and local inhabitants' access to the forest—all to ensure the forest's well-being while intending to create mechanisms for generating income in the area through small and sustainable tourism and agroecological practices. To be able to exert this kind of control JA! had first to navigate a state bureaucracy to acquire a DUAT. This was alongside having to face competition from RADEZA.

RADEZA started working in the area in 2013 and created eleven committees of natural resources management that included the four *povoados* with which JA! was working and seven more, namely Mucuera, Matequenha, Mpemula, Ndavo, Seane, Ndoda, and Mucua. Some of the JA!-established association members with whom I interacted, specifically in Limbue, reported that RADEZA was the first to come, and it wanted the residents to give their rights

over the land to RADEZA to explore the area. Some of the interlocutors of this study reported that RADEZA's personnel promised bicycles and cellular phones (in themselves considered by RADEZA signs of development) to those local people who chose to work with the organization. They also reported that after JA! had started visiting the area and informed them about the community conservation project, and once they had realized that RADEZA's personnel did not keep their promises, they declined RADEZA's request for a concession over the mountain.

In 2017, RADEZA won a call for bids, issued by a private sector Initiative for Community Lands (iTC-F)¹⁶, to demarcate “community” lands and apply for “community” DUATs in the eleven *povoados* where RADEZA had established natural resources management committees. Once the community land demarcations had been done, the state issued land-use certificates to the eleven *povoados*, certificates that RADEZA handed to the respective local natural resources management committees' presidents during an official ceremony in Lugela in 2017. RADEZA's handing over of the certificates to local resources management committee presidents rather than to respective *amwene*, whom the law and the local people with whom I interacted recognized as legitimate authorities in their respective *povoados*, was a break from the customary institutions, and constituted an act of disregard of the *amwene* and resulted in tensions between the committee presidents and their respective *amwene*, mostly in Nangaze (see also chapter three).

According to RADEZA's executive director, Daniel Maula, the production of DUATs for “community” lands was a “participative” process since it involved RADEZA's technicians walking and consulting with the *mwene*, and-or local people who then showed the technicians where their lands started and ended. Maula also stated that in the process of community land demarcations in which residents participated, he had unilaterally identified space for conservation and tourism close to the mountain and had removed the “community” lands, and the plots set aside for *mida*. It was this exercise in reserving space for conservation and tourism—“wilderness”—that distinguished RADEZA's work from JA!'s. On the one hand JA!

¹⁶ iTC-F's own mission, as per its webpage, was to “complement government's efforts in the implementation of the Land Law regarding the protection of local inhabitants' rights over land and other resources, and promotion of inclusive economic development through partnerships between communities and investors, public and or private. For more details visit: <http://www.itc.co.mz/>

has applied for and hoped to be granted a DUAT for the area to gain control over Mount Mabo and its forested areas. JA! sought a DUAT over the area (or at least the whole area demarcated by the RBG scientists as requiring protection) and that RADEZA sought to do much the same, but by obtaining land-use certificates for each of the Committees it had established and through which it then would gain control of those areas.

RADEZA and JA! were both working in the field of environmental protection, local inhabitants' rights to land and both did not work closely with *amwene* or residents' ontology, rather they organized residents that would then facilitate the NGOs to advance their versions of environmentalism. The two NGOs differed in their approaches to protecting Mount Mabo and there was a manifest animosity between the two organizations. JA!'s activists that I interacted with accused Maula and RADEZA of being complicit in illegal logging without showing me any evidence. In contrast, Daniel Maula claimed that RADEZA had started working on Mabo long before JA! and had created local management of natural resources committees, which differed from JA!'s associations, in that they did not hold formal or legal status. According to Maula, JA! had come later to the area and had only formalized some of the existing RADEZA-facilitated local committees into associations with such formal and legal status. The difference rested on the fact that RADEZAs' plan was to turn Mount Mabo into a national park or reserve rather than a community-based nature conservation area of the kind JA! had planned. According to the current legal set up, ownership of such national parks and reserves are necessarily at the hands of the state, while their management can be shared between the state and the private sector.

The two NGOs displayed the animosity between them openly. JA!'s René Machoco told me how both organizations had participated in the III Biodiversity Conservation Fair and Multimedia Exposition event held in Quelimane and organized by BIOFUND, a private environmental fund, (October 17-31, 2017)¹⁷. He described how during his presentation, Maula had accused JA! of blocking RADEZA's work. As Machoco remembered it, Maula had stated that there was an NGO that, when visiting the Mabo communities, says bad things about other NGOs, telling the community members not to work with any other NGOs. Maula also allegedly added something to the effect that they (that NGO) think they can come from Maputo and

¹⁷ For more details read, <http://www.biofund.org.mz/en/about-us/what-is-biofund/>, accessed July 07, 2020

dictate how things work here (see my discussion about *anoda*—newcomers in chapter three), but they will fail. Machoco, who understood this to be a direct reference to JA! and a provocation, chose not to respond. Though the exact wording of Maula’s talk is not documented, he himself also referred to this event when we met in Mocuba and emphatically used words like those reported by Machoco: He also invited me for an interview at RADEZA’s office in Quelimane to, he suggested, further discuss RADEZA’s projects—thus implying that he wanted to tell me more about the tensions between RADEZA and JA!

As Vanessa Cabanelas explained in an interview, regarding the relations between JA!, RADEZA and other organizations in Mozambique: “there is no collective effort. There is no communication. No one contacts us. We know RADEZA works there, and we will not set our foot there, and [start to] work with something [when] we don’t know what they are doing” (Vanessa, July 5, 2018 [translated from Portuguese]). From the interviews and personal conversations, I had with others in both NGOs, it was clear that there was no intention in either NGO to collaborate in their work of protecting Mount Mabo, making the neoliberal “environmental globalization” seem like a fragmented process in Mozambique. As Vanessa put it, JA!’s goal is to avoid “compromising (*manchar*, lit. to stain) JA’s reputation and name with such a collaboration” [translated from Portuguese].

My interactions with RADEZA’s Daniel Maula on two occasions made me realize how connected he was in the region. He mentioned the different activities RADEZA has been doing in the region to ensure natural resources sustainable use in partnership with other NGOs, businesspeople, and state bureaucrats. In conversations with various of my other interlocutors, I learned that most of the public state officials in Lugela were part of his personal relation network. All these factors and the fact that JA! was not as popular as RADEZA among local government officials meant that, even were JA! to have succeeded in their implementation of a community-based conservation project, Maula and RADEZA would have unavoidably been entities with which JA! would have to engage during its operations in the region and on Mount Mabo in particular.

As already shown, by the time of writing April 2021, the Mozambican state had not yet decided about JA’s 2016 application for a DUAT, Julieta Lichuge, a National Directorate of

Conservation Areas (ANAC) official, said, during an interview in Maputo, on May 8, 2018, had not received that application.

For JA! activists, the state's denial of having received their application in the national office reflects two problems. The first is a suspicion that JA's constant critique of the state's policies had resulted in their organization being treated as politically suspect by the state, provincial authorities, and local authorities and that for that reason consideration of their application was being stalled. A JA! activist confided in me that a BIOFUND official offered to help JA! *desbloquear* (lit. unblock) JA!'s DUAT application. The second is that the denial was a cover because the DUAT formalization process is slow because of bureaucratic ineptitude and incompetence. JA! personnel cited as an example of the latter that they suspected their application file had been lost in the district offices in Mocuba, Zambézia province where they had submitted it. JA! representatives also argued that their project proposal for the Mount Mabo area had appeared in other contexts plagiarized and without referring to who had been proposed and prepared it nor to the purposes which that had been done. Whether these suspicions were well-grounded or not, the fact that JA's personnel held them and their experiences of a four-year delay in handling their application and the fact that the application now appeared to have been lost or buried are all examples of what Cabral and Norfolk (2016) call a "bad politics" around implementing Mozambique's otherwise well-designed Land and Conservation Laws. The stories told here informed me about the practices of doing environmentalism in Mozambique which (re)inscribe novel sets of spatio-temporalities, subjectivities and relations aligned with the generalized version of nature as a natural resource, at the centre of which is the state and NGOs' push to counter its power and hold it accountable.

On imagined geographies of nature protection, state power, community participation, and visions of a better life

A fundamental difference between RADEZA and JA!, as mentioned above, was their respective approaches to how Mount Mabo could be protected. The extract below of a brief interview I had with RADEZA's director, Daniel Maula (DM), in Mocuba, on November 18, 2017, captures and exemplifies this conflict well:

DM: "... It is best we meet at my office with my technicians to make you understand better more things both about the work in the field and questions about community

consultations, how they were organized. That area has a huge potential. Have you climbed [Mount Mabo]”?

AM: “Not yet. I was just in the surrounding area.”

DM: “You must climb [the mountain], right? Then you must walk around those five communities which are there, and you will understand how the fauna and flora resources are being used. It is true what they will tell you. Those areas are not being used because they are in hilly terrains, you don’t cut timber from there. But we always said that. That was the discovery we made, so we must protect this, and declare that area a conservation area, not a community concession. It must be a conservation area, not a community concession area as JA! wants it to be. No! No! because of the species that exist there, the community will continue destroying them, saying that this belongs to everybody. I am from Zambézia, and no one can come from Maputo to fool me. The communities will make the ecotourism management while you want to make actual profit. There are tourists there that work in the name of JA!, how the community will [inaudible]. What are you doing if you are using the communities? For them to continue being peaceful, and [yet] you keep bringing tourists from Malawi here. Zambézia doesn’t know them. Then, we don’t want that; we want to declare the area [as] a conservation area.”

AM: “So, like the Gilé [National] Reserve?”

DM: “Yes, sir.”

AM: “Like Gorongosa [National Park]?”

DM: “When you turn that [area into a] community concession, what community is it that you are referring to? Which capacity could you create? With Lino?”

AM: “Lino?”

DM: “That president... it is Lino. What’s his name?”

AM: “Calisto?”

M: “With Calisto? Do you think Calisto can [inaudible] a community concession? Let me tell you something. They booed us when we were launching the project there, because JA! entered there and said that they [the communities] shouldn’t allow RADEZA to enter. In what country are we, in which someone who is working in Lugela or Mucubela, says that a certain organization cannot be there? What is the capacity that I must satisfy the needs of the communities? [...]”

Maula thus expressed disagreement with JA’s suggested plans is informative in three ways. First, it gives yet another hint of the inter-NGOs politics around environmental activism in Mozambique. Second, it shows how the organization of land as property, in terms of ownership of it, who is to decide the use and control the area, shapes the work of NGOs. Third, it shows how different stakeholders perceive the options made available by the legislation and resources differently.

Since it is the state who can decide whether to grant a DUAT or not. This means that despite the decentralization process, conservation areas and DUATs could be interpreted as governance tools to expand state control over areas and people, a realization that is at odds with the commonplace understanding of the Mozambican state as weak (see Lunstrum 2013). My argument is like James Ferguson's (1994, 21) in his study about a "failed" development project based in Lesotho. Ferguson showed how "outcomes that at first appear as mere 'side effects' of an unsuccessful attempt to engineer an economic transformation become legible in another perspective as unintended yet instrumental elements of a particular sort of state power while simultaneously exerting a powerful depoliticizing effect." Ferguson called this an "unauthorized resultant constellation—the anti-politics machine" (ibid.). In the same way in Mozambique, DUATs, while serving as a tool to ensure secure land-use rights for local inhabitants, have unintended consequences in the form of increasing state's on-the-ground hold over land and people which in the Mabo case, are not yet demarcated areas. Although ultimately all land in Mozambique is state property in terms of the national Land Law, the state could not exercise control over areas of land in remote rural areas. Introducing DUATs, which only the state can grant or cancel, and using them as a basis for establishing community conservation areas, means that that process subjects people, to whom a DUAT grants land-use rights, to state rules, surveillance and ultimately control.

A further problem in JA!'s draft project proposal is that the project was to be run by JA! and that there was no mention of what the role would be of customary institutions and practices. This project design suggested some sort of concession of the intended conservation area to JA!, meaning that locals, to whom the DUAT granted land-use rights, would allow an outside investor to explore the area of their land-use rights (albeit possibly with their involvement). This kind of arrangement means that locals and their customary institutions and practices would have been left, as previously, at the "edge of the state and conservation", to use Abrams' (2018) words, whilst simultaneously being drawn into the state's administrative reach and control. The conservationists' and NGOs' work to turn Mount Mabo into a conservation area thus put locals and the mountain within the reach of the markets' and state's grip, so much so that the future of the mountain and nearby *povoados* had now come to depend on these entities. Hence, the DUAT principle emerges as a state governing technology *par excellence* continuously

overshadowing local forms of articulating property and mutual belonging between them and their landscapes.

The state's unresponsiveness to JA!'s application, as detailed earlier, and the constant and energy consuming work that was demanded of local people by the NGOs to comply with state laws, ostensibly to protect Mount Mabo, resulted in frustrations for them about repeated delays, especially when what they expected gains like those they had witnessed at Malawi's Mount Mulanje Conservation Trust. Speaking about these expected gains, one participant in a group interview I conducted in Limbué said, on June 13, 2016, expressed the following:

JA! took us there [Mount Mulanje Conservation Trust, in Malawi, in March 2015], two people from each group, so there were 10 of us. From Limbué, it was a woman and me because they wanted women to be included. They applauded us in Malawi because our group was gender mixed. In fact, we realized that there were cars, ambulances and other instruments that were bought with the money from the community, and we wanted that to happen here [Translated from Portuguese].

None of the material gains he mentioned have occurred, even as I write five years after the visit to Malawi. These suspended material gains attest to the failures of both the state and NGOs as institutions that seek to provide services and improve the living conditions of the people with whom they work. However, everyday life in the *povoados* could not be suspended with that waiting, so residents continued making their living using agriculture, hunting and what they called *ganho-ganho* (lit.sing. win-win, informal businesses). The waiting persisted for all other possibly than Calisto who dedicated nearly all his time to earning his income through his work with JA!—though JA! paid him what was called a *subsídio* (lit.sing. subsidy, subsistence allowance), since he was neither directly employed by the NGO nor part of the associations that he oversaw. Other members of JA!'s associations were forced to continue straddling between being involved in frustrating and non-income generating association work and their agricultural activities, and they were becoming increasingly disillusioned.

Conclusion

Global concerns over biodiversity loss and a perceived need to protect nature from human destruction, even though framed in neutral and techno-scientific terms, described in this chapter

are political and messy. The attractiveness of Mount Mabo as a “wilderness” started a series of actions involving residents, NGOs, scientists, and state bureaucrats to turn the mountain into a protected area. Doing that would itself have constituted a form of claiming nature in a process that was at odds with local claims of belonging to Mount Mabo. At the centre of what I called “Google Forest” claims to nature on Mount Mabo was the long-standing and still unresolved issue of land access and control over it and hierarchization of subjects and ontologies—all of which are compounded by colonial legacies.

What I have shown is how the interlocutors of this study, specifically residents and NGOs, framed their hope of being granted a DUAT as a potential tool whereby to control what they saw as unruly tourists, and scientists and illegal loggers, while allowing them, as residents, to have power over what they regarded as their land and to keep the state in check and control the extent to which it might intervene in their lives. Despite local people’s hopes, the fact that land in Mozambique is state property and that only the state can grant or revoke a DUAT, NGOs’ and scientists work to protect Mount Mabo through their efforts to obtain DUATs paradoxically helped to extend the reach of the growingly neo-extractivist and donor-dependent Mozambican state’s grip over local people in what was otherwise a remote area. This finding resonates with James Ferguson’s (2006, 27) argument that “in weakly governed African states, the question of sovereignty is not one about effective control of national borders or the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, but the ability to provide contractual legal authority that can legitimate the extractive work of transnational firms.” In the present case, that is the state’s contractual power to allow NGOs or other entities to “protect” Mount Mabo or not.

I have also shown in this chapter how with the struggles around the national land-use rights, local peoples’ attachment to Mount Mabo, which they have long referred to as their belonging to the mountain, is articulated in the language of property ownership/control, and how the cartographically designed artefact of DUATs has become the legitimate mode of showing or communicating that relation. The geographer John Brian Harley (1989) proposes that we should look at maps, such as those through which a DUAT is produced, as a narrative rather than as a fact. In an essay, Harley (1987) goes as far as to suggest that maps are biographies, because the artefact itself has a biography and its life cycle, the maps are connected to the biographies of its producers; the map is a biography of the landscapes it produces and finally it reciprocates the users’ biography and coordinates the users’ memories. Harley’s proposition

implies that we look at the lines that bound *povoados* lands and separate them from the conservationists' "*Área Pretendida*" or the "Core Area" also as narratives that tell one side of the story: that of the modernist ontology's "Man" or "Human" as framed by the conservationist and the state. There are other ways for landscapes and the people who inhabit them to be visible and legible. As Ingold (2000, 242) puts it "[...] life [and death] is not contained within things, nor is it transported about. It is rather laid down along paths of movement, of action and perception. Every living [and dead] being, accordingly, grows and reaches out into the environment along the sum of its paths", as I will describe in the following chapters residents' paths do not conform to the lines the maps draw nor to the ontology that presupposes the separation of nature to society.

Each DUAT and the cadastral logics upon which the state and conservationists construct it cannot recognize residents' ontologies that such logics forces into the nature-culture divide by also surpass it, in what Marisol de la Cadena (2015b) would call "uncommon nature". Those maps also cannot acknowledge the routes, paths, and movements of Mozambique's residents as they go about their daily activities, and it is at odds with the ecopolitics necessary to protect nature and people living with it from capture. What this means on the ground is that the Mozambican Land Law gives rights to use the land through a rather synchronic snapshot of occupancy and not through movement that occurs through time.

The consistent failure to acknowledge these ontological differences amid the growing neo-extractive projects thirst for land and the resources in it has exacerbated the already poor implementation of Mozambique's Land Law in relation to Mount Mabo and in other rural areas in Mozambique. This is also particularly so to articulate the relation between local ontologies and Mozambican land and conservation legislation. It is in line with Vertanen's (2004) findings—from a comparison of the implementation of two community-based nature-management projects, in Mpunga in Manica Province and Goba in Maputo Province—that the position of local institutions in Mozambique remains vague; this is despite several new laws passed between 1997 and 1999 dealing with what such laws framed as natural resources. These new laws provide no clear sign as to the role reserved for locally based institutions such as traditional authorities and customary law in dealing with landscapes.

According to Wisborg and Jumbe (2010), similarly shaky relations between conservation area managers, state bureaucrats, and local people were found also in Malawi's Mount Mulanje Conservation Trust that JA! is trying to emulate. In their mid-term report that Project, Wisborg and Jumbe (2010) explained that they "did not feel convinced that there was a genuine effort to learn from residents, to embrace or negotiate with their values and knowledge of the mountain or to contribute to behavioural change and conflict resolution among different stakeholders" (2010, xiii). This was the case too with the NGOs and scientists working on Mount Mabo in that, rather than working with existing systems of controlling access over Mount Mabo, they seek to establish formal land tenure systems, and in the process of so doing, they displace local ontologies and forms of relationality.

Even though the NGOs portrayed themselves as "mediators or facilitators" and the scientists as the "arbiters" or ultimate authority in establishing scientific facts, what these findings suggest is that they were in fact stakeholders immersed in disputable claims to truth, who like Lesley Green (2020) quoted in the epigraph suggested by assuming a naïve and "naturalistic" stance are equally vulnerable to the kind of capture that I have been describing.

Chapter three: Ruling with the “Secret Mount Mabo”: Land, Landscapes, *matoa*, and Relational Ecology

“I don’t know much about [Mount] Mabo, but the local *amwene* do. They are the most indicated people to talk about [Mount] Mabo. I have been there just once since I started working here.” (Chief of Tacuane Post, Maria Elias Viegas, June 2016) [translated from Portuguese].

“*Mio di Nangaze*” (lit. I am Nangaze)! (*mwene* Mpida Tacalanavo, March 2017) [translated from Manhaua].

It was June 2, 2016, a sunny, humid day in Quelimane, capital city of Zambézia province. As I stood by the street outside the hostel, waiting for a bicycle-taxi boy to pass by so I could get a ride, I kept thinking about what awaited me. Shortly after, a taxi boy rode towards the direction I was going. I pointed my finger in the same direction, signalling him to stop. He crossed over the road from the other lane and came to pick me up. The bicycle had some locally made improvements, including a welded back rack on which passengers sat and two metal bars welded on the rear wheel frame next to the axle where passengers rested their feet. It was an old, back pedal-brake bicycle with a single gear. Fortunately, Quelimane’s surface is flat. I had seen passengers of all sizes and ages being transported by bicycle around Quelimane city, making the job of bicycle-taxi boys and the ride look easy. I passed the taxi by my backpack, which he put on the top tube frame between his legs and the handlebars. Then I hopped onto the bicycle’s passenger seat. It immediately became clear to him that this was my first time doing so. I could barely find my balance as he started pedalling, and we snaked across the road until he soon controlled the bike. We started chatting as we moved towards the Ramoza bus stop, where I was going to get my bus to Mocuba and thence a truck ride to Lugela district. He asked me why I was in Quelimane. “I am a student. I am going to Lugela because I am interested in learning about Mount Mabo.” I replied before asking if he had heard about Mount Mabo. He responded with a laugh, saying he was from Lugela district where the mountain was located. What were the odds? I did not know much about people from Lugela and Mount Mabo, apart from what I had read in the media because of the scientists’ “discovery” of the mountain

(see chapter one). “You must be prepared. If you want to go to the forest, first you must talk to the *mwene*. He is going to prepare you so you can go to the forest. You cannot just go there. You are lucky, man”. [...], he continued, and I listened attentively. “You know, people from Tacuane [an Administrative Post in Lugela] differ from people from here [Quelimane city]. I suggest you do not act arrogant there. Be humble, *mano* (colloq. brother),” he instructed me. I nodded acceptingly, even though I knew he could not see me sitting behind him. “All this city behaviour and arrogance you should leave behind or else you will die. People from Tacuane are difficult but if you are sociable and talk to them, you might get chickens or other gifts from them on your way back,” he continued [translated from Portuguese].

Three aspects became clear to me in that encounter. First, that there was an ethics shaping people’s behaviour in the district different from that of the city; second, that a mountain’s visitor needed to be “*preparado*” (lit. prepared). Third, and connected to the previous aspect, that only a *mwene* could perform such a task, suggesting a centralized access control working under the premises of a local ontology, much like the extract that constitutes this chapter’s epigraph suggests.

After I arrived in Lugela district, I repeatedly heard about the need for me to be “*preparado*” and how I should behave when I was among residents. I repeatedly received such advice also from Lugela district’s permanent secretary, Tacuane locality chief and district residents with whom I interacted. These bits of conversation prompted me to think about the complex, central, and transforming institution of the *amwene* in contemporary Mozambique. The conversations also hinted at the fact that the *amwene* were the gatekeeper to Mount Mabo and to residents, and that the institution of *amwene* shaped life in the *povoados*. The role of the *amwene* in controlling access to the mountain and forest which, as I explained in chapter two, was what the NGOs, echoing conservation scientists, were seeking to seize through implementing a community conservation area that permitted little to no room for local ontologies. As I argued in chapter two, such approaches end up displacing local ontologies and institutions and extending state power into areas that the state controlled, often without having implemented any kind of nature conservation project or improved the living conditions in the area.

Current scholarship on local chiefs in Mozambique and southern Africa postulates that local chiefs are tools of the government of the day, an argument that, on the one hand, acknowledges

local traditions and practices while, on the other hand, falls very close to its colonial depiction as “indirect rule” (see chapter one). “Indirect rule” was a means of what some scholars (Orre 2009; Campbell 2010) have framed as “instrumentalization” of local political systems. It is often embedded in conversations about whether African traditional authorities are colonial inventions/imprints or authentic African political systems, or something in between (Mamdani 1996; West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999; Nyamnjoh 2015; Gonçalves 2004; 2006).

In this thesis, I bypass the debate about the alleged authenticity or the colonial construction of local authority, and instead, I prefer to take a position that comes from having immersed myself in the actual and messy contemporary world of the *amwene*, and its historical legacies, and thereby resorting to what residents articulated as *passear*—taking a journey (see chapter one). I do that to analyse how *amwene* articulated their relations with local people and with landscapes. My intention is to show how, despite a series of historical transformations that have fragmented and re-signified the institution of local authority, *amwene* in contemporary Nangaze and Nvava have maintained significant locally legitimated power through residents’ authorisation of that power (*cf.* Meneses et al. 2006; Howard 2013; Ekblom, Notelid and Witter 2017). I also contend that, by attending to the *amwene*’s ontologies, it is possible to espouse a relational ecology whereby mountains, rivers, and forest, rather than being treated as natural formations, emerge as persons involved in social relations which I call “sibling landscapes”. This is an approach much like that taken by the proponents of political ontology scholarship that is based on advocacy work amongst Andean, Amerindian, and Aboriginal study scholars (*e.g.*, Viveiros de Castro 1986; 1998; 2004; 2014; Povinelli 1995; Kohn 2006; de la Cadena 2010; 2015).

In this chapter, I focus on the changing figure of the *amwene*. I do so to explore first how Mount Mabo emerges in the social relations of the residents between the *amwene* and the landscapes, residents, the state, and conservationists, and secondly to understand the ambivalent *ethos* of these relations in postcolonial Mozambique, and in the context of the nature protection activities that scientists and NGO activists are performing. As already discussed in chapter two, Mount Mabo, the river Múgue and Mount Muriba are more than just passive arenas of social struggles over access to “natural resources”. As I explain further below, for the *amwene* the mountains and the river emerge as entities that bestow power and a right on the *amwene* to rule legitimately over the dead and the living, and to claim legitimate mutual belonging to Mount Mabo. The

Nangaze's *mwene* mobilizes kinship and the secret names of Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue to show his attachments (and claims) to the mountains and river, the dead and the living—a process that challenges the limited framing of kinship only as “networks that connect [human] individuals as relatives [...]” (Schneider 1980, 68). Similarly, and as discussed by Marisol de la Cadena (2010), it challenges prevailing but limited understandings of politics and ecology open rooms to a conceptualization of an ecopolitics.

The *amwene*'s attachment and claims to Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue, on the one hand, has given the *amwene* the power to self-activate to rise above and rule over other residents. On the other hand, it has created local logics of social exclusion that are based on spatial origin and that have negative impacts on security of access to land and to resources for those who are considered *anoda* (lit.plur. newcomers) whilst residing in a local *povoado*. I contend that both the social production and the exclusionary roles of the *mwene* deserve serious scrutiny that enables one to go beyond either “demonization” or “romantization” narratives around local chief in contemporary Mozambique, much like West and Jenson-Kloeck (1999) and Mamdani (1996) suggest.

Complexifying the “indirect rule” narrative: *amwene* in Nangaze and Nava in postcolonial Mozambique

The institution of local chiefs in Mozambique is highly slippery to grasp or delimit (see Newitt 1995; West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999; Gonçalves 2004; 2006). In the current Zambézia Province, the fifteenth century Makua and Lolo migrations mixing with the San people, the sixteenth century Maravi, the Portuguese, and then the nineteenth century Ngoni incursions into Mozambique, capitalism, colonialism, socialism, and neoliberalism have created conditions for reconfiguration and resignification of the institution.

Prior to colonial administration imposition, according to local accounts, territories belonged to a paramount chief and were circulated through a larger matrilineal descent group (see also Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995). In my fieldwork site, the Nangaze's *mwene* belonged to the clan of the Munema who controlled the big part of the region surrounding Mount Mabo including today's Mukwera, Dabuada and Mpemula all currently under the control of the Marenguele clan, and Mukua currently controlled by the m-Muidini clan. The Munema clan also controlled and

continues to control today's Limbue locality. The Nvava *povoado* was then part of the region that belonged to and was under the control of the Mudimba clan who were then based in Ceani. The same Mudimba clan also controlled and continues to control today's *povoado* of Ndoda. These clans were matrilineal and uxori-local.

According to local accounts, the Munema then the Marenguele clans seemed to have been dominant lineages in the region around Mount Mabo and seemed to be working in a two-tier political system in which "a local chief who was the uppermost authority to whom a number of lineage heads made appeal" (Phiri 1979, 7). Their existence, manifestation and contestations in the present resuscitated the troubled history of chiefdoms in the region (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995).

When the Portuguese settlers ventured into new territories after their arrival in the 1500s, they sought to identify 'paramount' chiefs who, they hoped, would facilitate the settlers' trade and movement in their lands, in return for taxes or tribute. In that period the Makua and Lolo had dominated the whole region that once was occupied by the San people (Newitt 1995, 63). Since Portugal did not have the financial capacity to administer its colonial lands, it then rented out lands to Portuguese-descent individuals—a practice and institution that became known as *prazos*. Those were private individuals who at first occupied the coastal areas of the province and later engaged in trade with local kingdoms for gold and ivory. They became involved in messy ways with the political life of the region (see also the introduction of the thesis).

After the Berlin Conference in 1884-5, Portugal and other colonies were obliged to exert and formalize effective occupation and exploration of their colonies. The modern administrative state apparatus was established between 1885-1930 (Hedges et al. 1993). This modernization required Portugal to part ways with the "failed" colonization institution of the *prazos* and instead rented out lands to private companies, which among other things had to pacify and police their territories and facilitate colonization through development. Those companies had the rights to collect taxes, impose forced labour and explore the territories (Hedges et al. 1993; Newitt 1995; Adalima 2016). In Zambézia Province, such companies were Zambézia, Boror and later Lugela companies. The companies' work was facilitated by existing local political structures—paramount chiefs—who controlled the territories and people according to their traditions but as part of the colonial administration.

The imposition of the new colonial administration was met with resistance from some paramount chiefs who the companies had to dethrone and replace them with chiefs who were more amicable to their presence and extractive intentions. The Provincial Portuguese Decree No. 5.639, of July 29, 1944, attributed to *régulos* and their assistants, the *cabos de terra*, the status of *auxiliares da administração* (lit.plur. administrative assistants). The existing paramount chiefs were then turned into *régulos*, and control over territories and people was handed over to them. The *régulos* were the lowest level of the administrative colonial system. Like the pre-colonial time, the position of chiefdom was passed through generations (de Sousa Santos 2006, 41) of the same lineage. While the colonial-constructed figure of *régulos* sought to obey traditional forms of power circulation which was through lineage, the position of *cabos de terra* could be occupied by any person. It could happen that the appointed *cabo de terra* was also part of the ruling lineage of the region. That was the case for example with *mwene* Mpida, as he told me proudly. In *mwene* Mpida's words, the colonial period was better than his present.

The Portuguese maintained some of the functions paramount chiefs had had. With Portuguese rule the *régulos'* roles were expanded to include mobilising forced labour for the large plantations (West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999, 472) in exchange for the chiefs retaining their positions of authority as well as a fraction of the taxes they collected (West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999; de Sousa Santos and Meneses 2009). In Mozambique, only a *régulo*, a chief occupying the highest rank of quasi-indigenous institutions of colonial governance, was permitted to interact directly with the colonial administrators on matters of their jurisdiction (West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999).

The process of forcing or seducing paramount chiefs into the colonial administration apparatus was far from monolithic. As Mamdani (1996) shows, while some leaders accepted being subjugated by colonial rulers, others used their positions to defend the interests of their people, in some instances to the extent that when what Mamdani called "tribal wars" that he viewed as a form of proto-nationalism, started not *all* local chiefs were toppled; only those that their fellow "tribesmen" [residents] considered compromised. In Mozambique, the imposition of the colonial administration was met with military resistance by some paramount chiefs including the *prazos* that had formed military states in the context of slave trade (see introduction of the thesis). Some of those revolts included the Bárue revolt headed by the Bárue

people and other smaller ethnic groups that were part of the great Mwenemutapa kingdom in Manica central Mozambique (see Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995; Dzinduwa and Saiconde 2017).

When the national-wide anticolonial war struggles headed by Frelimo started, some of the existing paramount chiefs that had lost their authority and territories to the Portuguese hoping to regain it, helped or were part of Frelimo army that started a liberation war in the 1960s, after Frelimo's Eduardo Mondlane had united different groups fighting against Portuguese domination (Geffrey 1990; Sumich 2010). After independence in 1975, and the implementation of the socialist state in 1977, the fact of colonial links between local chiefs and the Portuguese colonial system soon led Frelimo's socialist government to enact a decree, in 1978, abolishing the institution altogether instead privileged scientific progress and the rule of the western law. That was because the socialist state considered the local chiefs "*comprometidos*"—that is, they were ideologically compromised by their attachment to a colonial system. Accordingly, the then newly established socialist state replaced the *régulos*, and other customary leadership statuses with *secretários*. The Frelimo-enacted *secretários* differed from the *régulos* in that the position was acquired through a local level election system, different from the traditional lineage system (Mamdani 1996, 108) (I discuss some of the implications of this figure in the political life of Nangaze in chapter six).

When the civil war broke out a year after independence, in 1976, some scholars claimed that because of Frelimo's insistence on demonizing and disenfranchising local authorities who some had fought side by side with Frelimo, they allied to Renamo who allegedly had promised those local chiefs the regaining of their power and authority. However, Renamo itself had difficulties in doing so because Frelimo controlled most of the trade centre regions to which hinterland communities under Renamo control depended (see Geffrey 1990; Sumich 2010). Those observations could be corroborated by *my passear* in present Lugela district, where some of the *amwene* that I interacted with restated their allegiance to Renamo and complained about the lack of respect and recognition from Frelimo. These shifts suggest that *amwene* based their allegiance on the fact that they hoped they would get benefits for holding positions of authority as their predecessors had. Local chiefs were faced with the fact that few individuals living in territories under their jurisdiction seemed to be doing better economically and socially than them.

When peace talks issued and ended with the peace agreement in 1992, the conversations then were focused on the introduction of a democratic and electoral system, demobilization, and reintegration of Renamo or Frelimo ex-militants and building of a democratic nation, not much was talked about local chiefs and their place in the new democratic state (Gentili 2019). Frelimo's candidate, Joaquim Chissano, had won the first 1994 general elections, and as such, Frelimo imposed their view on the local authorities. There was a renewed debate on the role of local chiefs in post-war Mozambique in development and peacebuilding (see West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999; de Sousa Santos 2006; Ore 2009; Gentili 2019, 50), which led to a series of reforms. The reforms resulted among other things in the revisions to the status of local chiefs who became legally recognized. But that did not mean the abolition of the local socialist political system with its politically appointed leaders—the *secretários*. Moreover, there was little to no formal or regulated distinction between re-empowered local chiefs' roles and those of *secretários* nor regarding how they articulated with Mozambique's public administration. Only in 2000 did this lack of clarity result in the enactment of a three-page long decree (Mozambique 15/2000) that sought to enlighten the articulation between the Mozambican public administration and what the decree called “community leaders”.

The decree stipulates that “in their administrative function, local state institutions must articulate with the local authorities, listening to their opinions about the best way to mobilize and organize the participation of local people, in the conception and implementation of social, economic and cultural programs and plans towards local development.”¹⁸ Among other benefits accruing to local chiefs for allegiance to the state's agenda, they have the right to “receive a *subsídio* (lit.sing. subsidy—allowance) resulting from their participation in collecting taxes.”¹⁹ This wording has led scholars like Orre (2009) to call local chiefs “puppets” of the regime, and to argue that the stipend is premised on the old colonial administrative technique of “indirect rule.” Additionally, decree 15/2000 is not clear in terms of how such an articulation between the state and local chiefs is to be implemented, how competing values regarding administrative practices between state bureaucrats at various levels and local chiefs are to be dealt with, nor what the role of traditional knowledge systems (as expressed in the local chiefs' opinions) should be in project planning, design, and implementation in the areas

¹⁸ Republic of Mozambique, Decree 15/2000 of 15 November, article 2

¹⁹ Republic of Mozambique, Decree 15/2000 of 15 November, article 2, line e

they oversee. On a basic level, maybe due to the porosity of the institution of local chiefs, the decree did not define who local chiefs were, but made a list that suggested that anyone regarded in the communities as a legitimate leader was a local leader. Particularly relevant to my own case study, the decree was unclear how such an articulation should occur between local chiefs, NGOs, and private investors.

Both the colonial “*régulos*” with their pre-colonial norms and clan-based modes of existence, and the Frelimo-instituted structure of the *secretário* prevails to this day, and currently being articulated within political party lines (see Sumich 2010). As West and Jenson-Kloeck (1999, 465) show, the discussion of local chiefs as either genuine African institutions or as colonial constructs has continued to follow a party-political line with Frelimo cadres continuing to see local chiefs as “compromised” colonial constructions whilst Renamo, in its fight against Frelimo, has treated them as genuinely African and has revised the institution accordingly. Historically speaking, the institution is one that revolved around domination, resistance, and cross-fertilizations to ensure control of territories, trade and reproduction, meaning that historical conflicts still informed its contemporary workings making it a contested and contingent entity.

Two decades later after proclamation of decree 15/2000, the place of local chiefs remains ambiguous while the framing of local chiefs as tools of hegemonic power, as “compromised” or as self-serving individuals persists. That labelling has enabled RADEZA and JA!, as I showed in chapter two, to have bypassed the *amwene* in their work to protect Mount Mabo, and instead to have sought to seize control that the *amwene* exerted over Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue by seeking to implement what they framed as a “formal” structure for nature protection following the Mozambican state bureaucracy, which was itself a colonial heritage. In part, the two NGOs did this by framing the *amwene* as being connected to conflicts over access to natural resources in rural areas (also mentioned in Catherine’ Mackenzie’s Chinese Take Away report)—something that led RADEZA to pass community land-use right titles it had obtained to the presidents of the natural resources management committees it had established in the *povoados* but not to the respective *amwene*. In distrusting the local chiefs’ integrity as Frelimo and various scholars had done, the NGOs took one facet of the institution of local chiefs for its totality, and in the process lost sight of the fact that although contested, local authorities, in their work to reproduce their authority, had in place institutions and

practices that enabled harmonious relations with landscapes and people. By their so doing, the NGOs have thus shut off the opportunity for a dialogue between the encountering ontologies from the onset.

On local forms of tenure system: kinship, *matoa*, *amwene*, and belonging

In Nangaze's and Nvava's residents' cosmology aspects such as descent, succession, and inheritance are also matrilineal (see also Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995). While I had learned that the lineage system was central in determining local chiefdom, I could not trace the genealogies of the Mudimba and the Munema in the historical struggles over territorial control of district²⁰, mostly between the Bantu people, the Makua Lolo and the Maravi. The Mudimba and Munema lineage seemed to have had prominent roles in the region and held contested narratives about who legitimately belonged to Mount Mabo.

When I visited the *mwene* Nvava, Costa Moreno, a Mudimba himself, he had replaced his deceased uncle from his mother side as *mwene*. After I had asked him about the importance of the mountain for them—the Mudimba clan—and the residents of Nvava, *mwene* Costa told me that when the first Mudimba *mwene*, a man called Munherou, had long in the past become sick and had realized he was about to die, he had taken his jacket and his machete and gone to a cave in the mountain with his nephew from Munherou's sister side. Munherou's nephew stayed outside the cave and, whenever there was a problem in the *povoado* and someone wanted to talk to Munherou, the nephew would push a bamboo rod inside the cave to wake him up. Munherou would then take his machete and chop the bamboo rod to show that he was awake and would thereafter give the visiting people the solutions they requested. After a while, the nephew abandoned Munherou, and Munherou eventually died in the cave alone. Since then, I was told, the Nvava's *mwene* goes to that same cave on Mount Mabo to perform large *nicuto* which are related to the *povoado* life. For smaller *nicuto*, the *mwene* performed them in the *povoado*. He also told me that the name Nvava was given by the Portuguese meaning the people who could fly.

²⁰ I did search the surnames using www.forebears.io database, a genealogy portal launched in 2012, of Munema that showed it was commonly used as a surname in Dr Congo and the surname Mudimba was mostly used in Zimbabwe and to a certain extent in Dr Congo. The search suggests that both Nangaze's Munema and Nvava's Mudimba migrated to the Zambézia area.

Whenever the Nvava's *mwene* performed a *mucuto*, he would summon the Mudimba *matoa* by their names, Munherou, Muthengo, and Nvava three times (he did not explain why three times), and then Lingongo, Namuiaia, Muerengo, Namussoro, who were his predecessors. I was also told by Nvava's *mwene* Costa that there are other secret caves in the mountain where his predecessors used to go to perform *nicuto*. From his narrative, the mountain seemed to be a site of ritual practice that in turn enabled him and his lineage to retain authority and the authorization from the residents. *Mwene* Costa promised he would show me those caves one day, but in the end, we never made the trips.

Nvava's *mwene* Costa on another occasion told me a different version of the legend regarding the cave. It is that a Nvava *mwene* married a woman who was a Munema, the Nangaze's *mwene*'s clan. That marriage resulted in Nangaze's Munema gifting Nvava's Mudimba the side of the mountain that Nvava's clan and residents currently occupy when their *povoado*'s *mwene* performed *nicuto*. According to Nvava's *mwene*, Costa, the founding fathers of each of [ancestors after whom each of] Nangaze, Ndoda, and Ceani *povoados* [were named], were siblings. The clans ruling over Ceani, Naruço Ndoda and Nvava were connected through kinship.

Interested in understanding the Nangaze's *mwene*'s, Mpida Tacalanavo, a Munema himself, viewpoint on *mwene* Costa's claims to Mount Mabo, I related these stories to him. He immediately refuted them adding that the Mudimba never belonged to Mount Mabo but did belong to Mount Nicurrimine just as the Limbue's Munema belonged to Mount Namadoe, all of which are in Lugela district. In his view, the amalgamation of the various *povoados* on Mount Mabo had started only when RADEZA and JA! had created respectively local committees and associations, ostensibly to protect Mount Mabo, and had used physical proximity as parameters to determine legitimate belonging and had based claims to place and heritage on that in local negotiations. Nvava's *mwene* narrative suggested that their attachment to the mountain was long before the arrival of the conservationists, even further before the arrival of Europeans in the region. *Mwene* Mpida continued by stating that when the people now living in Nvava had moved from their original lands near Mount Nicurrimine, after the 1990s civil war, they and their *mwene* whom Costa replaced had asked the residents and *amwene* in each of Limbué (Munema clan) and Ndavo (Mudimba) for land to establish their *povoado*. This was, in Nangaze's *mwene*'s view, how Mudimba's Nvava had come to occupy

their current location. *Mwene* Mpida's story of the Nvava's Mudimba seemed to suggest that they were newcomers in their current location and that their arrival was as recent as during the 1976-1992 war.

In explaining his claim to Mount Mabo, Nangaze's *mwene*, Mpida, told me that, when the first Munema *mwene* had fallen ill and realized that he was about to die, a rainbow had come to his house, and he had flown through this rainbow to the mountain where his spirit lives until today. The rainbow's appearance and the flight of the first Nangaze *mwene* to Mount Mabo has made it so that the Nangaze's Munema legitimately belong to Mount Mabo. This version seemed to be more popular among various people with whom I interacted in Mount Mabo surroundings. Based on his claim that Mount Mabo belonged to Nangaze's Munema, *mwene* Mpida said too that only he could perform *nicuto* on behalf of the mountain to allow visitors access to it and the surrounding forest. Looking at the territorial distribution of the Munema clan in the area including Limbue and Nangaze, and the fact that prior to the introduction of *régulos* and later the *secretários*, the Nangaze's Munema *mwene* was considered by the residents the only paramount chief. A position that the Munema would lose to the Marenguele clan who ruled over Dabuada, Mpemula and Mukwera during colonialism.

Since the Marenguele clan ruled Mukwera then the capital of the region became Mukwera, instead of Nangaze. Then the Munema of Nangaze were demoted to a second rank in relation to Mukwera's Marenguele clan: a condition that prevails²¹. Calisto and *mwene* Mpida told me that in the present Mukwera region the Nangaze's Munema is considered the most powerful authority, specifically *mwene* Mpida in part due to his lineage, and his expertise in spiritual matters.

Both Nangaze's *mwene* and Nvava's *mwene* narratives suggested that their attachment to the mountain and forest was articulated through their ability to mobilize those nonhumans' agency in moments of *nicuto*. That power enabled them to be the ones who could ensure social reproduction of their *povoados*' residents, hence also their social reproduction. This revelation was interesting because historically the chiefs in the region would use spiritual power as a

²¹ I did not get a convincing explanation as to why the Munema were put a rank below the Marenguele. Calisto states that that happened during post-socialist Frelimo's government. Literature on local chiefs suggests that such demotions were carried out during the colonial period as punishment to local chiefs that were or accused of being Frelimo supporters.

mechanism to ensure obedience and authorization from the conquered people, as it was the case with the Maravi and Makua and Lolo kingdoms who had with them rainmaking rituals (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995). Nangaze's and Nvava's *amwene*'s narratives about their attachment to mountains seemed to be a common thread among the Makua people who also claimed to have originated from Mount Namuli also in Zambézia province (Alpers 1975; Newitt 1995, 63). Historical studies are not conclusive in terms of Makua people's origins (Newitt 1995, 63).

The stories shared above highlighted two points. First, there were contesting claims between the Mudimba-descent *mwene* of Nvava and the Munema-descent *mwene* of Nangaze over who legitimately belonged to Mount Mabo. When speaking about Mount Mabo, both *mwene* Costa and Mpida were in fact talking about relations between their clans including themselves and the landscapes that enabled them to be a continuation of the substance of their predecessors; a substance which they received from the *amwene* they replaced and will pass on to their nephews. Second, this contestation was further exacerbated when RADEZA and JA! using spatial proximity to the mountain as a mode of establishing the residents' property of landscapes (see chapter two). The *mwene* of Nvava and *mwene* of Nangaze used kinship and lineage and spiritual power as the elements to claim their mutual belonging²² to the mountain, the NGOs used spatial proximity and GIS.

While those two points enable one to begin to understand the complexities around competing local claims of belonging and the ontologies that give them structure and meaning, they represent only the tip of an iceberg. Many people with whom I engaged in Nangaze, Nvava, Limbue and Namadoe *povoados* seemed to concur that the *mwene* of Nangaze and his clan were the only one who legitimately belonged to Mount Mabo. This belonging was premised on a deeper and more central and hidden dimension (*cf.* Herdt 2013) that I came to learn about only with time.

Secrecy and power in Nangaze

On many occasions Calisto mentioned to me that Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and River Múgue had secret names through which those entities could be summoned in a *mucuto* and that

²² The phrase of 'reciprocal belonging' is one that Andrew 'Mugsy' Spiegel suggested to me, one that indicates that the mountain belongs to the *mwene* and those close to him as much as they belong to it. That idea is developed below.

Nangaze's *mwene* was the only one who knew such names. Calisto also told me that Nangaze's *mwene* would never have broken protocol by sharing his secret with me. I had that confirmed when I one day asked Nvava's *mwene* Costa whether the mountain had any other names, and he responded with a curt "no"; adding only that the name Mabo referred to small people who had lived in the forest in the distant past. Those people could have been the San people with whom the Makua and Lolo mixed as referred by Malyn Newitt (1995, 63) and Kings Phiri (1979).

The knowledge about the mountains' and river's names, including the *matoa*'s, Calisto told me, was passed only from generation to generation of local chiefs through the *mucuto wa mwene* (lit. *mwene* installation ceremony) in which the substance of the *mwene* was passed to the succeeding *mwene*. Using Viveiros de Castro's (2014) description of the Amerindian *know-how* held by the shamans as a technology that is archived, one can treat the secret knowledge that undergirds a *mwene*'s power as such a technology and the *mwene* who holds it as its archive.

Mwene Costa's denial that the mountain has any other names might be explained by something else Calisto had mentioned: that there was extreme secrecy around the other names of Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue. But it could also have meant simply that the Nvava's *mwene* Costa was ignorant of any other names for the mountain. Given the claims about Nangaze's *mwene* Mpida being the only *mwene* who, as a representative of his clan, really belonged to the mountain, he was the only person I could ask. However, I was concerned that doing that might be ethically unwise and could create a fissure between the *mwene* Mpida and me and thus compromise the relationship we had built. Indeed, even mentioning here that there were secret names has presented me with an ethical dilemma. If it was a secret, should I even mention it in my thesis? My solution to the first ethical conundrum was to ask how Mount Mabo's, Mount Muriba's and the River Múgue's secret names worked in the process of making life [and death] possible in Nangaze but without asking what the secret names are.

It was only late in my fieldwork, in 2018, that Nangaze's *mwene* Mpida and I had built sufficient rapport to enable him to start opening about Mount Mabo and his authority in the *povoado*. We had spent a lot of time together, both involved in *passar* and, sometimes, just silently contemplating the vast green areas of Nangaze with the soundscape occupied by

chirping birds, women pounding maize and faint voices in the far echoing through Nangaze's homesteads. The day the Nangaze's *mwene* Mpida shared some parts of his secret was a hot summer's day and we were sitting under a blossoming mango tree. *Mwene* Mpida was sitting on a green folding chair that Julian Bayliss from the RBG Kew had offered him. He leaned towards me and whispered the secret names of Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba, and the River Múgue. This secret, he told me, was shared only by Calisto. In *mwene* Mpida's view, this knowledge was, for him, a matter of life or death since if anyone from his clan knew it, they could kill him and claim his authority. That fear hinted to the different succession conflicts within his lineage that he had narrated to me that had rendered the Munema clan group the label "people who kill their kin" by residents. Therefore, he asked me not to reveal the secret names to anyone.

This telling moment above constituted what Bellman (1984, 50) following Goffman called a "double frame", in that the telling moment was simultaneously out of sync with what was going on proximately and (yet) in sync with another conversation, and both what was being told and the proximate context are within the same single discursive frame. Taking the idea further to focus on Japanese esotericism, Morinaga (2005, 3) has stated that "transmission, which consists of imitation and repetition, is precisely the moment when 'knowledge' is created [I prefer recreated and circulated], legitimized, and reinforced". By telling me the secret in the way he did, *mwene* Mpida made apparent to me a world that otherwise would have continued to be invisible to me (albeit not non-existent

The secret knowledge to which *mwene* Mpida gave me access is what made him, as *mwene*, the gatekeeper between humans and nonhumans and between the living and the dead. It was this secret knowledge that while contingent was deeply rooted in the history of the clan and region that he used both to lead local people and to "prepare" visitors like scientists, tourists, and myself. It was this secret knowledge that enabled him to claim his legitimate belonging to and by the mountain and thereby to ensure community-building. It also rendered him as half-living, half-dead, half-human and half-nonhuman, hence putting him in a liminal position compared to ordinary locals, a position from which he was able to mediate between them and the spiritual world that lives in and around the mountains, forest, and river. At one level this potentially gave him immense local power. But at another level it was clear that he recognised that his authority and power were under threat. This was particularly in relation to the ways the

NGOs who had come into the area, ostensibly to conserve the mountain, were making their own claims to the mountain and forest and were inciting other newly created local institutions that were distinct from the *mwene* to make such claims on those NGOs' behalf. That he shared his secret with me (and Calisto) and did so in a way that others would not know he had, suggests that he was soliciting my help in prevailing discussions about who has authority in Mount Mabo, and in the power plays regarding new multi-level claims to Mount Mabo.

Why were these names secret and important for *mwene* Mpida and his clan to bear? I could not pose any more questions to the *mwene* on this subject for fear of overstepping the newly shifted boundaries between us. I now knew he did not see me as a risk to his authority. As was Calisto, I was an outsider and not part of his kin group to a member of which his authority would eventually have to pass as their ontology requires. Therefore, I had to ask Calisto why the secret names were so important to the *mwene*. Calisto explained to me that: "If you want to understand this, you have to look at *winaliwa* (lit.plur. initiation rites)" (Calisto, Nangaze, December 17, 2017). In the case of Nangaze, as I later discuss, rather than "passage," the stages of child and adult are not separate entities in a linear (biological time) cycle but are intertwined in a way that they continuously constitute each other, and life, in Nangaze as opposed to van Gennepe's (1981) linear approach to initiation rites.

***Winaliwa*, secret life of Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Mugue**

Initiation rites could take six or more months during the summer in the past. Modern state policies, the church created conditions for the reduction of the time to a few weeks or even days since they required the children to be at school and fulfil their academic calendar year and to go to church. When elders noticed that there were many young people who had not been initiated, the elders gathered with the *mwene* and discussed whether there should be *winaliwa*. The decision depends on the agricultural production of that year. If residents expect good agricultural yields, then *winaliwa* is very likely to occur, because *winaliwa* had costs associated with it that the parents had to bear. The parents had to feed the children, the *namugo* and pay the *mole* (sing. a person acting as a father of the initiate) for his services. That payment at first was in kind and now is in money.

The *mwene* and his *rainha* (lit.sing. queen—*mwene*'s wife) are responsible for organizing the ceremony. The *rainha*'s input and participation is crucial since both the *mwene* and her are

considered parents to the children being initiated. After the elders' meeting, the *mwene* summons a *namugo* to oversee the children's initiation ritual. The children are divided into two groups, one comprising males locally called *apuali* supervised by a female *namugo*, the other comprising females locally called *anamuali* supervised by a male *namugo*. The two groups are taken to two different secret places in the forest where they are taught about life, marriage, spirits and *ori'a*.

Calisto told me that he had undergone *wNELIWA* unusually late in life when he was more than 20 years of age and already married to his first wife. He explained to me how:

you are taught how to behave in your marriage with your partner, during pregnancy, what to do during menstruation, to respect people, and participate in funerals; to visit sick people, if someone asks you to fetch water and wood, you should do it; to respect your wife, and not to assault your wife. You should never abuse your parents. If you beat your parents, you will die [...]. If you were used to urinating in the river you should not do it again. If you used to defecate in the river, you should not do it again, because in the river, the water is life (Calisto, Nangaze, April 28, 2018 [translated from Portuguese]).

After completing *wNELIWA*, the *apuali*, having by then been circumcised, are given a traditional medical preparation to drink by the *namugo*. The houses they had built in the hidden *wNELIWA* location are burned to ensure that they are not traceable, and that the place is kept secret. After they return to the *povoado*, the initiates take up an adult name, which might have a meaning or not. It is a name by which they are addressed from that day forward; and it signifies a change in social status. This is like the case of South Africa's amaXhosa whose practice of taking a new name after completing initiation rites has been discussed by Cekiso and Meyiwa (2014). As they relate, one initiate explained that: "my new name is Solanti. The name has no meaning, but it indicates that I have assumed a new stage. The name is associated with the coming of new life. It also represents dignity, and I will be addressed differently from boyhood" (2014, 5).

After they have undergone *wNELIWA*, if someone calls a new adult by their pre-initiation name, it is considered an offense, locally expressed as *oedula*, which can be taken to a local court and for which the perpetrator is liable to punishment. After having undergone *wNELIWA*, initiates

can fully participate in adult life, regardless of their biological age. If they are men and from the clan of the *mwene*, they could also be chosen as amongst his legitimate potential successors. From that moment onward, the pre-*winelewa* name is no longer used in public and it becomes a secret to others. That name is only used on very specific occasions—*nicuto*.

As *mwene* Mpida explained to me, just as initiates take up an adult name through which they are addressed in the *povoados*, so are Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba, and the River Múgue the adult names of the land formations—names through which residents know and refer to them in public. Similarly, in the world of *mwene* Mpida, those land formations are persons with a secret life. The point that I am arguing here is that the process during initiation when one's name becomes secret is one that creates an opening to other worlds in which time is entangled with space, as are the here with the there, the living with the dead, and humans with land formations. That entanglement occurs in the world of the spirits of the ancestors, or, as the residents call them, *matoa*.

In the cosmology of *mwene* Mpida, when the mountains and river were young, they had had what could be called pre-initiation names, and that local people had stopped using those names when Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue became adults and came to be known by those names. Since only the *mwene* was related and fully belonged to the mountain, only the *mwene* knew the pre-initiation names, names that were passed on secretly from generation to generation of *amwene* through the *mucuto wa mwene* during which each was installed. When, with Calisto in attendance, I pressed Nangaze's *mwene* Mpida to explain how these names worked, Calisto translated the *mwene*'s words of response to me, stating that “he is saying that, before he was circumcised..., right, before initiation rites, he is secretly saying, his name was Mulada [this is a fictitious name]; but no one knows, you see. So, after the initiation rites he changed his name, now he is called Mário [his other real name]... But because of his leadership role people do not call him by his first name, not even by his second name. Even I (Calisto), who had one name and changed to another one, nobody knows my [pre-initiation] name. You see, this is what happens. It happened with [Mount] Mabo also. The first name was a pre-initiation name; then he grew up and got the name of [Mount] Mabo. The same happened with [Mount] Muriba and [the River] Múgue” (*mwene* Mpida, Nangaze, April 28, 2018) [translated from Manhaua by Calisto]. In other words, the mountains and rivers were persons and had a social life, like with any adult person who has undergone *winelewa*: their pre-

initiation name is used in *nicuto* in times of misfortunes, festivities or other similar important events or rainmaking *nicuto*.

The statements of the *mwene* are consistent with the work of Fernando Santos-Granero (2009) who edited *The occult life of things: Native American theories of materiality and personhood*. That collection of essays sought to bring to the surface the material life of Amerindians. Santos-Granero emphasizes the concept of material culture since “by focusing on the materiality of things and grouping objects on the side of cultural production, this notion obscures the fact that, in Amazonian ontologies, things—or at least some things—are considered to be subjectivities possessed of social life” (Santos-Granero 2009, 2). As Marisol de la Cadena (2016) would put, things are things and more, *not only* things. The social life of things, the author argues, is occult because “it is extraordinary, and occult because their personas are normally not visible to lay people” (Santos-Granero 2009, 2). As described thus far, that was the case with Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue.

In the case of the mountains and the River, according to *mwene* Mpida, one can only *evocar* (lit. evoke—summon) them if one knows their secret names. It is through being the holder of this secret knowledge that each successive *mwene* of Nangaze has become the weaver of the living, the dead, the human and the mountains and river. Nangaze’s *mwene* thus occupies a role that is close to that of the transpecies figure of the shaman amongst Amerindians (Viveiros de Castros 2004, 2014), only that his legitimacy to power is inherited but the spiritual power is acquired through a ceremony.

As Nangaze’s *mwene* Mpida told me, when the *mwene* performs a *mucuto* in the presence of residents he loudly mentions (the Christian) God, the *matoa*, and the childhood names of Mabo, Muriba and Múgue while only in his heart does he (silently) mention their secret names. This dynamic between silence, public display, secrecy, and revelation enable the reproduction of the *mwene*’s authority. In these fluxes, elements such as nature and culture, child, and adult, emerge not as neatly fixed binaries but as dynamic processes connecting and thereby interweaving the child with the adult, the natural with the social, the spiritual with the secular non-spiritual, and the living with the dead, past and present, here and there. These fluxes enable certain (im)possibilities to emerge, providing Nangaze’s *mwene* with the power to self-activate and to rise beyond the everyday normality of quotidian life. The *mwene* has that capacity

despite the silencing work engendered by the notion of a “Google Forest” described in chapter two and even though the *mwene*’s ontology is secret. That secrecy means that it is difficult to bring the *mwene*’s local ontology, and its implications, to the conservation-conversation table for discussion with the persons and institutions enacting the “Google Forest” version of landscapes, even more so through what the Land and Conservation Laws called *consultas comunitárias* (see chapter two).

Sibling landscapes

While engaging in *passear* with *mwene* Mpida, I also learned about the operations of what I called sibling landscapes. Apart from the fact that Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue are persons, I also learned that Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue are bound together by kinship that links humans and the land formations. It was through recognising these relations that I was able to perceive the local understanding of ecology. The *mwene* told me that “[Mount] Mabo, [Mount] Muriba and [the River] Múgue are siblings. [Mount] Mabo is the first-born son, [the River] Múgue is the second-born daughter and [Mount] Muriba is the last-born son. Sometimes, Mabo goes to his sister’s house to eat and *passear*, and sometimes it is Muriba who goes to his sister’s house to eat and *passear*. Sometimes they all meet at Múgue’s house and *passear*”. Then, after I enquired the *mwene* what he meant when he said that Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue were siblings, he responded by saying that

When Mount Mabo and Mount Muriba were made [he didn’t say by whom], something was missing to create the fertility of Mabo and Muriba; that’s when River Múgue was created. It’s not that people can see with their eyes that the river creates directly the fertility of Mabo and Muriba. But deep inside, everybody knows that all fertility in the area, all the water available here, all the rivers that exist here, the River Múgue is the main one. Then, being Múgue, the mother of all streams that go to Muriba, that go to Mabo, that means that the springs that refresh Mabo come from Múgue, the springs that refresh Muriba also come from Múgue, that is how Muriba, and Mabo go to eat at their sister’s [translated from Manhaua by Calisto]

This description of kinship links that involved what in Western and modernist ontology are treated as just natural forms made me recognise that, for the *mwene*, Mount Mabo, Mount

Muriba, and the River Múgue were much more than just landforms (see Kohn 2006; Blaser 2013; de la Cadena 2015a,b). Rather, as the *mwene* suggested when he referred to local people “deep inside know[ing]” about them, they are beings of a kind that influence those people. It is an effect that is part and parcel of residents’ dwelling and one that they intuitively experience. These are characteristic of what is called a relational ecology, an ontological perspective that recognises relationships between what a modernist ontology separates as nature and society (see Putney 2013; Poe et al. 2014; de la Cadena 2015a; Green 2020).

Such a framing is at odds with the exercises of NGOs and scientists at *environmental awareness raising* or *natural resource management capacity building*, exercises that enforce on local residents what I would call a pedagogy of self-negation and self-mutilation amongst local people and that, as some scholars have suggested, leads to epistemicide (see de Sousa Santos and Meneses 2009; Mignolo 2011). During my *passear* with *mwene* Mpida, he used a language of lineage, *matoa*, and sibling landscapes to claim his legitimate reciprocal belonging to the mountain, which is part of Nangaze’s lands and, through it, his authority to mediate all interactions between people and those landscapes. It was not Mozambican or other written laws, GIS coordinates or DUATs that the *mwene* used to articulate his reciprocal belonging. In the language he used, Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue were not natures “out there” to be appropriated or owned. Rather, he spoke of several relations between human, Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue, and between the spiritual and the living and the natural and the social and in so doing demonstrated that all the entities involved had intentionality in an ever-going *becoming with* process. In short, it is because of all the relations mentioned above that Nangaze’s *mwene* Mpida positioned himself, and both his predecessors and successors, as the gatekeeper of the forest, the mountain, and the river. That relation was contingent and historical and deeply embedded in the violent and changing political and material history of the region, hence contested.

“We will leave them with their lands”: *mwene*, *anoda* and local processes of inclusion and exclusion

While the various relations explained above are to think alternative ecologies and modes of living, they also produced a category of the excluded—the *anoda* or *vientes* (lit.plur. newcomers) who have become even more vulnerable due to the growing interest in Mount

Mabo as “Google Forest” and the growing neo-extractive projects luring residents into capitalist capture. The whole region of Zambézia was made of such dynamic between the initial occupants and the newcomers: first the San people, the Arabs, Afro-Arabs, the Asians, the Makua and Lolo and other Lomwe-speaking people, later the Portuguese, then the Maravi and the Ngoni, the French, the British, and others (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995): a character that Anzaldúa (1999) would characterize as being “border people” and Kopytoff (1989) would call “frontier people”, a concept that later Francis Nyamnjoh (2005) reworked as incompleteness, complicating any claims of originality in the area, that in the present play a crucial role in the land and local authority question.

When, in a coup, *mwene* Mpida Tacalanavo was succeeded by his sister’s son, *mwene* Geraldo Culacie, one of the new *mwene*’s ideas was to assign all positions of power to his kin group, the Munema. In doing so, he was following a commonplace practice among local chiefs in Mozambique. As Euclides Gonçalves (2006, 32) explained in his study of Mocumbi in southern Mozambique, “a chief or sub-chief would tend to secure his territory by spreading brothers, sons and brothers-in-law throughout the territory [...]” that was the case with the Maravi and Makua kingdoms as well (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995).

In Nangaze, the positions that the new *mwene* wanted to seize included those of church leaders, the (socialist-state created position of) *secretário*, presidents of RADEZA- and JA!-established committees and associations, the local court judge and local Frelimo party secretary. According to *mwene* Geraldo, no persons from outside of his matrilineal kin of the Munema, all of whom he framed as *anoda* or *vientes*, should be permitted to take positions of power or to earn money in lands that belonged to his clan. His attitude raised a lot of concerns among residents and some of them, fearing for their lives, since the Munema clan is known as “those who can kill their own kin”, started moving out of Nangaze and into nearby *povoados* like Nvava, Namadoe, and Limbué. Among them was Calisto who told me that:

Here, what is difficult, is to have an idea. You reason and you want to advise them, but they do not understand because: the first problem is illiteracy you see; the second thing is that they do not know how to *passar*, they do not have experiences, experiences from other people, you see, because people never grow alone. Growing up is with others, it is to share with others, to talk to others. When you hear ideas from other people

you start to grow, you see. But also, to grow is not just about age ... because you were a child, and you started to grow. Ideas make you grow. But that is not what is happening here. Even if you are right and you advise them and tell them to look at what is happening in the area—you should follow this path so we should move like this, so we're going to go over the situation—they will not understand. If you say, 'let's do things like this, we'll have money, we will eat money, and this is how we'll use it, you're a friend.' But this attitude, for people who are instructed, they will never follow, never. When they sit together among themselves [the Munema clan and associates], the idea is that this money is being eaten by other people; other people are receiving money; but [meanwhile] inside the *mwene's tribo* (lit.sing. tribe—clan) nobody receives money. So, what must we do? Expel these people so their jobs will stay with us. We will occupy all the positions and we will have the money [translated from Portuguese].

Since Calisto was himself a *manoda* and therefore a target of the new *mwene*, he was also planning to leave Nangaze and to settle in Namadoe where there is better infrastructure such as roads, a constant cellular phone connection, hospital, schools, and a large market that allowed residents access to many different products. Those amenities were also some of the elements that attracted many young men out of Nangaze who sought paid labour, small businesses in the larger localities, district, or city. So, the fact that Geraldo had an oppressive rule and based on fear connected to the attractiveness of urbanizing areas made it so that people chose to relocate. Calisto was waiting for the coming maize harvest season in April 2018 to harvest all his agricultural produce and thereafter to relocate. That he, like others too, was waiting for the harvest before leaving highlights how much agricultural cycles organized temporally and sequentially residents' lives. Yet the fact that many people were planning to relocate indicates the extent to which local chiefs played a significant role in ensuring relative safety or, in this instance, increased residents' sense of vulnerability. Various of them had expressed their fear of the *mwene*. There was a shared belief among residents, also mentioned by Calisto, that the *mwene* could kill a person simply by pointing his finger at a person through their spiritual power. This fear in turn solidified the authority of the *mwene* and ensured that most people did not dare to confront him or his immediate kin—an issue to which I return in chapter six.

As already indicated, the new *mwene*'s, Geraldo Culacie, approach and attitude had led many local Nangaze residents to relocate or to consider doing so. Calisto told me that, at one time recently, Nangaze had been the most populated *povoado* in the whole Mpemula locality, it had been prior to colonialism, the capital of the reigning Munema clan, but that had now changed as many people had left. Historical studies of the region also show that when residents were confronted by an abusive chief, they fled to neighbouring *povoados*, the same had also happened with the Portuguese's *prazos* (Phiri 1979; Newitt 1995). While part of this reduction in Nangaze's population in the present could be attributed to increased sense of vulnerability on the part of the residents it is likely also attributable to the *povoado*'s remoteness and relative lack of social infrastructure. Another reason might be the prospects promised by the "Google Forest" assemblages, prospects that would have been better accessed from other *povoados* that relatively more stable. As explained in chapter two, such promises had not yet translated into effective transformations or improvements of the living conditions of the residents, including that of *mwene* Mpida and Geraldo in Nangaze. During one a *passear*, *mwene* Mpida told me that he felt that the NGOs were neglecting him, a neglect that, as I discussed in chapter two and here, was by design rather than by chance.

My *passear* moments in other contexts have highlighted that the term *manoda* refers to an exclusionary category not limited to Nangaze where it has recently been mobilized by the *mwene*. It is a term that shapes much daily life in the whole province, including urban places like Quelimane and Mocuba where I learned that bus and truck drivers who were not originally from those places were obliged to wait until last to embark passengers at those towns' bus terminals. This was even more prevalent among transporters going to districts like Lugela. *Anoda* (lit.plur. newcomers) was also a category mobilized in other Mozambican contexts, although by another (Portuguese) term – *vientes*. One example is described by Elísio Jossias (2016) in his study in Niassa Province, northern Mozambique where he found that the first to have arrived there were framed locally as the legitimate "owners" of land and with authority to decide over the issues of the areas they inhabited, while more recent arrivals (known as *viente*) were treated as a kind of second-class citizen without such rights. This is like Nyamnjoh's (2016) discussion of the category of *makwerekwere* that has been mobilized by South Africans to refer to African immigrants who are not originally from South Africa. This exclusionary logic, mobilized by some South Africans, resulted in atrocious xenophobic attacks against

immigrants. A similar logic can be found operating in other countries in Europe where populist and nationalistic political responses to migration dominate the public narratives on difference (see Keating 2004; Heras-Pedrosa et al. 2020). Although these examples of othering work at different levels and within different ontological groundings, they share the use of notions of origin to exclude or include people in contexts of perceived lack of opportunities and the presence of others—framed as “(im)migrants”—in increasingly globalized and unequal *worlds*. In short, while the *mwene*’s ontologies help destabilize the notions of a passive landscapes, nature-culture rifts, it is necessary to acknowledge that that ontology sits on a contingent, contested and often violent history as well.

Conclusion

The logic that informs *mwene* Nangaze’s and *mwene* Nvava’s claims of mutual belonging to the mountains and river, however contested, differs from the logic based on property relations espoused by the NGOs and scientists discussed in chapter two.

The legitimacy of the *mwene* is predicated on their ability to link the world of the living and the world of the dead, the humans, Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue through *nicuto*. In the case of the Nangaze’s *mwene*’s narrative, Mount Mabo, the River Múgue, and Mount Muriba rather than the context of human actions, emerged as moral subjects that bestow power on him to legitimately claim belonging to the mountains and river, renegotiate *povoado* boundaries, and rule over the living and the dead. As already indicated, the legitimate belonging to Mount Mabo is contested between the Munema *mwene* of Nangaze and the Mudimba *mwene* of Nvava. Despite their contested versions of the human and nonhuman attachments, they both shared the idea that the attachment of the *mwene* to the mountain was initiated when the first *mwene* of each Munema or Mudimba matrilineal lineage died, and their spirit went to the mountain. This finding is consistent with Mario Blaser’s argument when the author states that in the “cases the indigenous peoples are defending not simply access to and control over what conservationists would call ‘resources’; they are defending complex webs of relations between humans and nonhumans, relations that, for them, are better expressed in the language of kinship than in the language of property” (Blaser 2013, 14).

The interviews, conversations, and *passear* indicated that *mwene* Nangaze’s version seemed to have more authorization among residents. The currency of *mwene* Nangaze’s version was

further supported by the fact that he held a secret knowledge of the mountain that no other *mwene* knew of. In *mwene* Mpida's cosmology, Mount Mabo, the River Múgue and Mount Muriba emerged as persons connected through kinship networks linking the natural entities in what I called "sibling landscapes". The power of the ruling *mwene* in Nangaze emerges from his kinship link and the fact that the *mwene* (as an institution) is the sole holder of the "archive" of the secret names of the *matoa*, Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue, which is passed on from generation to generation through *mucuto wa mwene*. This archive is the one that bestows power to a legitimized *mwene* of Nangaze to summon Mount Mabo, River Múgue, Mount Muriba and the *matoa*. This archive also bequeathed to *mwene* Nangaze the ability to "prepare" the visitors before they visit the forest or mountain, hence making him the gatekeeper of the mountains and forest. A role that, as explained in chapter two, was being seized by the NGOs. This gatekeeping role currently is carried out by all the three *amwene* around Mount Mabo (in Limbue, Nangaze and Nvava).

As Mamdani (1996) rightfully reminds us, it is necessary to look at the institutions of local authority and tradition as also contradictory. The *amwene*'s mode of claiming a collective belonging to the mountain also created the category of those who do not belong, those who are from outside of the ruling lineage: the figure of *anoda* who are in precarious conditions in the *povoados*. The increased economic, touristic, scientific and environmentalist interests on Mount Mabo alongside the absent neoliberal state, poverty, and continued marginalization, the *amwene* started using their authority for their own gains which resulted in increased expulsions and agriculturalists' vulnerability. The *mwene* of Nangaze's clan (headed by *mwene* Mpida and Geraldo Culacie) felt that all the money that came with the tourists due to increased interest in Mount Mabo caused by "Google Forest" should be channelled to the Nangaze's *mwene*'s clan members in the process control the channels of wealth circulation and distribution in their economy of scale.

A nuanced reading shows that the *amwene* also sought to balance the different interests and defend the interests of their people. The position of *mwene* is, while proven resilient against the external and internal historical shocks, also precarious, requesting some skilful juggling of the many different interests and agenda, including their own social reproduction and that of the *povoado*. The secrecy behind their authority enables that reproduction but also their personal attributes. This finding is like the observation made by West and Jensen-Kloeck (1999, 475)

that chiefs at all levels occupy positions betwixt and between their populations and higher authorities, which in turn implicated them in a history of extraction and violence beyond the confines of their jurisdiction. These implications in the global extractive networks further complicate the already troubled relationship between modern institutions, like the state and local authorities.

During my *passear* with the Nangaze's *mwene*, I learned that Nangaze is a collective of residents, spirits, Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba, and the River Múgue that if any of these is subtracted or separated, a collapse is certain, or as *mwene* Mpida articulated in his own words: "I see that my time is coming, many residents are leaving Nangaze, and as that has happened in the Mukua [belonging to the m-Muidini clan] and Mukwera [belonging to Marenguele clan] areas, and when this happens, the *mwene* dies" (*mwene* Mpida, Nangaze, April 28, 2018 [translated by Calisto from Manhau]), and since the *mwene* as an institution is connected to Nangaze as a territory and its residents through lineage, then Nangaze also will die. My view is that Nangaze will continue albeit in a configuration that *mwene* Mpida and his predecessors would not recognize.

Chapter four: Hunting in and with Mount Mabo: Appropriating Nature and Negotiating Access

Being therefore a place where spirits lived—in trees, among the rocks, and in animals—the forest was a space requiring ancestral guidance for anyone moving within and through it (Mavunga 2014, 31).

It is May 9, 2017. As we walk further into the forest, I see myself immersed in a field of possibilities. My untrained eye sees an ocean of green, my ears hear indistinct chirping of birds and insects. I smell a strong scent of humus carried in humid air, which I came to find very soothing. Our voices, however low, as we talk from time to time, become so heightened, that other beings must know we are here. I can hear branches and leaves crackling underneath my feet. There are no big animals at sight. Not even the monkeys show up on top of the trees. The trees around are very tall and proud blocking most of the sun from reaching the ground making the forest feel fresh. The sound of the River Mabo and the River Múgue is omnipresent and thunderous. Once we start hearing it, it never leaves us as we venture further into the forest. We reach a *mpupu* (lit.sing. waterfall), the water droplets in the air feel cold and the water coming from the top of the rock explodes as it hits the ground. We can barely hear each other's voices. We continue walking. I am alert and very aware about my vulnerability. Throughout the walk, I cannot shake from my mind the fear of stepping on a snake or being bitten by a venomous spider. It does not help that I had not brought any anti-venom with me. And darn it, before you know it a small snake that the hunters told me the scientists were very interested in was lying on the path camouflage under the fallen leaves. Calisto who was in front of me noticed it. I later learned it was discovered in Mozambique for the first time by Julian Bayliss in 2006, and he named it *Atheris mabuensis*, a venomous forest viper (Branch and Bayliss 2009). Calisto then jumps over the snake with a laughter, my heart pounds from my chest.

We resume walking. Suddenly, we come to a place filled with ants and the two hunters in front of Calisto and me sprint and signal us to sprint past the place as fast as we can. Those ants, Calisto tells me, made soldiers strip off their uniforms during the civil war. We resume walking. I can feel my heartbeat from my ears as we keep walking upwards the mountain. The hunters

walk towards their traps following paths that are invisible to me. Paths that as quickly as they reveal themselves, they turn into unknown paths again behind me. There is no way I could find my way back or out of the forest without help if I got lost. This would be the case with most people who are unfamiliar with the landscape. This gives a hint of why people with whom I talked about the forest told me one would get lost if one was not “prepared” (see chapter three). To these hunters, the danger only lies in not knowing the forest, like with the Mbuti people of Congo studied by Colin Turnbull, whose familiarity with the forest made the fearful local agriculturalists depend on the Mbuti hunters for bushmeat, stay away from the forest or rely on the Mbuti to navigate through the forest (Turnbull 1993), but it also reminded me of Clapperton Mavunga’s (2014) concept of “guided mobility”. Elaborating on the concept of “guided mobility”, Mavunga (2014, 28-29) described how VaShona hunters in Zimbabwe prayed for the spirits of their ancestors before venturing into the forest, because forests were places inhabited by various kinds of spirits including evil spirits. Mavunga stated that “[f]orests were full of wandering spirits that could easily get antagonized or cling onto people of loose talk or those who did not respect the protocols” (Mavunga 2014, 29). In other word, spirits of ancestors guided the steps of each one of the hunters in the dangerous forest, as quoted in epigraph. The hunters in front of me, told me they had started walking on these grounds at an early age.

I imagine that the leaves that once brushed their arms and shoulders, as they walked in these paths with their elders, are now part of the crowns of the trees now towering us. As grownups, they continued hunting and expanding the geography of the forest and mountain, and now guiding me. Sometimes, I can barely see where I land my feet. I follow them as they walk, crossing rivers, walking centimetres away from a cliff where only some small roots, bushes or piece of soil keep the hunters and me from falling off a cliff. Life and death are possibilities that can happen in the blink of an eye. Vulnerability, embedded in the locally calculated risk of getting lost, getting injured, not finding animals or in the worst-case scenario death, in the forest is the norm. This sense of vulnerability requires hunters or visitors to the forest knowledge, discipline, diligence, respect, and above all “guidance”, and this brings us to the main point of this chapter: hunting as a mode of relating and (re)creating knowledge of the forest, animals, and mountain with its historical legacies in the region.

Historical studies have shown that the peoples that occupied the Zambézia region, specifically the San people, the Makua, the Lolo, the Maravi and then the Portuguese depended in different

ways on hunting (Alpers 1975; Newitt 1982; 1995; Morris 2006; Coelho 2015). Elephant trade had been part of the Makua, Lolo, Maravi and Portuguese economies and had influenced their social organization. Alpers (1975) went as far as to develop the hypothesis that ivory trade was constitutive of the Maravi's Kalonga and Lundu's kingdoms in the Zambézia region. While that hypothesis is contested (see Newitt 1982; Morris 2006), it remains a commonplace that hunting was central in the social organization and economy of the people of the region. The ivory trade had attracted businesspeople from across the world and influenced the transformation of the region's political, social, and material life. With the rise of slave trade and political tensions associated with it, ivory trade became limited and was instead taken up by the Yao people (Alpers 1975; Newitt 1982; 1995; Morris 2006).

When the Portuguese colonial administration was settled between 1885-1930 (Hedges et al. 1993), it sought to seize control of the land, people, wildlife, and economic activities in the country. Hunters that once were integral in the making of the Portuguese economy through trade (as trade partners), after the implementation of conservation laws around the 1900s, were prohibited from hunting and their continued hunting practices framed as poaching (*cf.* Cronon 1995; Steinhart 2006; Coelho 2015; du Plessis 2018; Thompsell 2015; 2020). Such laws in Mozambique, in the face of an economically weak colonizer, more than improving fauna management, sought instead to provide the colonial system with revenue through hunting licence fees (José 2017) and tourism. Such laws enacted by white settlers, oblivious and to detriment of African systems of controlling access to animals and natural affordances as described in chapter three, created conditions for the existence of novel geographies, spatio-temporalities, subjectivities and sets of relations and institutions seeking to police and punish African people who did not conform to the newly enacted laws and the nature-culture divides that they had imposed. The Colonizers did so while promoting game hunting (see Goncalves 2002; José 2017; Thompsel 2015; 2020). In most instances, residents while cognisant of such laws conformed instead to their own ontologies.

In postcolonial southern Africa, case studies indicate that much has not changed and conflicts between protected areas and residents persist (see Ramutsindela 2005; Witter 2013; Pritchard 2015; Schuetze 2015; Walker 2015; Massé 2016; Lunstrum 2014; 2015; 2016; Matose 2009; 2016; Witter and Satterfield 2019; Dlamini 2019). The increasing interconnection of local hunters to the global commodities markets and their continued marginalization, oppression,

dispossession, and objectification further complicates the debate. Following these trends, current studies in southern Africa on hunting and gathering, specifically in Mozambique, are less popular than the mounting spectacle-based studies on “poaching” or *caça furtiva* (lit.sing. illegal hunting) in protected areas. Such studies frame local ontologies constraining hunting and gathering practices and the emerging liveable and vital landscapes either as “forms of resistance of the weak” in contexts of capture and dispossessions (e.g., Holmes 2007; Matose 2016) or poaching with damaging effects to wildlife (e.g., Nijman 2004; Linder and Oates 2011; Timberlake et al. 2012; Lindsey et al. 2013; Borgerson 2014; Timberlake and Bayliss 2016; Cronin et al. 2016; Everatt, Kokes and Lopez Pereira 2019), much like the “Google Forest” proponents. Blinded by a negative bias against local forms of hunting, the latter studies cannot see hunting in Mozambique as a mode of relating to or knowing landscapes, wildlife and the resulting ecopolitics much like scholars have done among the First Nations in Canada and America (see Nadasdy 2003; Manore and Miner 2007), the aboriginal people in Australia (Povinelli 1995; Brigg, Graham and Murphy 2019.), Yukaghir in Siberia (see Willerslev 2007) or Amerindians in Latin America (Kohn 2006; Reategui 2018), much like Pierre du Plessis (2018) did among the Bushmen of Namibia, Clapperton Mavunga (2014) did among the VaShona and Matshangana in Zimbabwe, and Muyarandzi Mawere (2014) did in Norumedzo, Zimbabwe.

This chapter follows this scholarship and while it advances the argument that the “Google Forest” version of landscapes continues the colonial gaze of viewing local modes of living and relating to landscapes and wildlife as deleterious to “wilderness”, it contributes to studies in Mozambique and southern Africa focusing on hunting or tracking as a mode of knowing and relating to landscapes and wildlife portrayed as active persons, much like the “Secret Mount Mabo” version postulates. The chapter seeks to challenge the conservationists zoning practices which produce emptied spaces that conservationists consider “wilderness”. *i.e.*, “*Área Pretendida*” or “Core Zone” to be separated from human presence. By following the hunters’ mobility and use of the forest, I show that hunters populate the forest and the mountain, in ways that if the conservationists’ “zonings” are to be implemented, as discussed in chapter two, they will result in displacements.

As my fieldwork experience observed, only bushmeat hunting of small animals prevailed and the negative bias towards those practices is reproduced by conservationists who intend to curb

bushmeat hunting to keep their constructed Mabo's "wilderness". When I followed the hunters into the forest, I learned that hunting was more than catching and killing an animal. It was a collective of practices, institutions and entities that enabled the emergence of landscapes filled with vitality and intentionality. Therefore, in this chapter, I seek to understand how hunters, Mount Mabo, the forest, and the animals, which residents refer to generically as *anenyama* (the word for meat in Manhua is *nyama*), constitute each other during the hunting journey. I do so by following Ângelo and his hunting stories and experiences. I argue that by attending to hunters' practices and narratives it is possible to see how ecological knowledge is produced through the "arts of noticing" (Tsing 2015) that current conservation science and environmentalism misses out because of their limited emphasis on techno-scientific and economic designs and with their colonial legacies (see du Plessis 2018; Green 2020).

Hunting as a scholarly object and practice

Hunting and the social organizations resulting from the activity are not new topics in anthropology. Most anthropological studies on hunters-gatherer societies focused on how indigenous cosmologies, which did not fit into the modernist ontology contrasting nature to culture, could be used to protect their claims to land rights in the face of land expropriation. Tim Ingold (1986) uses foraging-predation and hunting-gathering as categories that distinguish animals (forager-predators) from people (hunter-gatherers). Hunter-gatherers, stated Ingold, produce or appropriate nature through their hunting whereas predators extract their prey without transforming the space where they collect their food. The confusion between these two categories, Ingold (1986) claimed, might be correlated with the denial of human and civil rights to hunter-gatherers. Sharing a similar perspective, Elizabeth Povinelli, argued that "since colonial period, nation-states have denied full citizenship to hunter-gatherers based partly on the belief that they had not sufficiently extracted themselves from or productively engaged their environments" (Povinelli 1995, 506) and for pragmatic reasons that they did not need to be bothered by the indigenous people's claims to lands and nature.

Showing how colonial administrators denied the aboriginal hunters the rights to citizenry in Australia, Povinelli continues stating that for the colonial officials "hunter-gatherers did not own the land through which they moved because nothing had been added and because the human subject who could 'add to' and 'transform' the land had yet to be formed" (Povinelli

1995, 507). In other words, thought from within a modernist ontology, hunters themselves were portrayed as being sub-humans and closer to nature. To highlight that supremacist modernist viewpoint, Povinelli uses the case of the Kenbi Land Claim in Belyuen, in which Commonwealth government officials were seeking to establish the legitimacy of local land ownership claims but fell short in moving beyond their own unquestioned cultural biases that could not make sense of rocks being able to listen, or leisure activities in the forest as a mode of knowing and appropriating nature (Povinelli 1995) or rocks that could dream (see also Myers 2002).

The court cases discussed by Povinelli sat in sharp contrast the system of land tenure based on what Ingold (1986, 146-150) called “two dimensional” concept of tenure which refers to a bounded surface area and could be represented on a map, like the kind of tenure system privileged by the Mozambican state and mobilized by “Google Forest” proponents; and the “zero-dimensional” tenure which “refers to places, sites or locations” which are usually nested as opposed to being bounded much like the one used by farmers; and, “one dimensional” tenure which refers to paths or tracks through which hunters move to during their hunting journeys, suggesting mobility much like the ones studied by Mavunga (2014). In the last two forms of tenure systems, humans and landscapes are, as Marilyn Strathern (2004) or Mavunga (2014) would put it, a relation.

That relation involving mobility of people while hunting or gathering wildlife and plants into forests or savannas and their respective negative effects on biodiversity is one of the pressing concerns for conservationists who, usually unaware of local forms of controlling access to animals and forests much like conservationists, propose a closure of nature through zoning, fencing and anti-poaching policies and in the process close residents’ mobilities and flows. Most studies have stated that it is hard to establish a cause-and-effect relation between wildlife decline and local hunters, provided the many other factors (including social, economic, and natural) that can cause such a decline. Moreover, (conservation) science is not value-free (Latour 2011; Lesley 2015, 2020). Dwight Barry and Max Oelschlaeger (1996, 906) stated that “‘conservation’ is normative, connoting a commitment by humanity to the goal of protecting habitat and preserving biodiversity”. It also involves decisions about what to protect or not to protect (Lele 2020), who to include or not to include using a specific ontology to make such decisions. That means that the “Google Forest” proponents’ hurry to label residents’ practices

as “threats” to “wilderness” could be informed by such an ontological bias, that I question throughout this thesis.

Hunting, tracking, noticing, storying and connecting with Ângelo

Our hunting excursion started at 5AM on May 9, 2017. It was winter, but Nvava was still sunny and warm during the days, freezing at night and early mornings. I woke to the sounds of Calisto and his brother, Eduardo, greeting and talking to each other. I could hear the flow from River Múgue as I unzipped my tent’s door and was met by a dense fog, making it impossible to see beyond some meters ahead. It was a chilly morning and cold air now flowed inside the tent. I took a glance at the landscape and saw Limbue disappear in the horizon. After washing my face with warm water that Eduardo’s wife had prepared for me, we shared a breakfast of boiled rice and vegetable oil, and then we waited for Ângelo who was going to take us hunting.

Ângelo arrived shortly after, holding a spear on the right hand, and a machete on the left hand, wearing shorts with a white worn long-sleeved shirt which he had cuffed. He was barefoot, which made me wonder whether he was ready to go to the forest. I quickly looked at his outfit and compared it with my overly protected outfit that included hiking shoes, rain pants and jacket to avoid getting wet from the morning dew. We had different understandings of what it meant to be in the forest. I carried with me a camera, a voice recorder, and an immense curiosity for the world to be revealed through the hunting interactions, but none of that apparel really prepared me for the hunting.



Figure 6. This photograph I took in Nvava in 2017 shows Ângelo Agostinho standing with a supado (lit.sing. machete) in his left hand and spear in his right hand near the river Mabo on our way to checking his traps in the forest shows how local hunters' practices are represented in visual media.

Calisto was tired from the walk from Limbue to Nvava where we were camped near Mount Mabo hills, so he stayed at the camp. Ângelo and I left the camp at around 6AM. The fact that Ângelo could speak Portuguese, a language I am fluent in, made it easy for me to communicate with him. As we walked, Ângelo suggested that he would point at things like trees, rocks, landscapes, which I could have easily walked past as regular natural entities, and later he would explain to me the reasons he had highlighted those specific entities when we returned to the camp. That was Ângelo teaching me what to notice in the landscapes. Ângelo's approach suggested that there was what Myers (2002) had called objectified experiences of the forest that shaped the hunters' behaviours, including his.

As we left the camp, we reached Ângelo's brother's muda and next to it, Ângelo showed me a string trap an animal had escaped from. Ângelo inspected the scene copiously, analysed the tracks and then told me what had happened: the animal (he did not specify which) had been to

the *muda* where it raided the maize cobs and, on its way back, it passed through the trap. But the trap was not strong enough, so the animal escaped leaving the grains of maize behind. He then shook his head. We then resumed walking. Ângelo then told me stories about his participation in the civil war, as a Renamo militant. Ângelo used to be an *alferes* (second lieutenant) in the Renamo army and was captured by Frelimo in 1983. He left the army in 1994, and contrary to Frelimo demobilized soldiers, he and other Renamo demobilized soldiers were not given any pension. He told me that while he was in the war, his first wife died, and because they had a small child, his wife's family offered him another daughter to marry him and take care of the child. During the war, residents used the forest as both a refuge and source of animal protein. He also told me about the different bombardments that the region had suffered caused by Frelimo. Such stories of bombardments and their resulting "sedimented traces of politics in landscapes" (du Plessis 2018, 112) were also retold by other residents that I had interacted with when talking about the mountain and forest. Ângelo's stories were chronotopes that oscillated from the present engagements to the past that highlighted Ângelo's biographical connection to the landscapes. Much like du Plessis (2018, 112) observed with tracking, "more than just a context for history, tracks and traces are landscapes doing emergent and contingent histories."

After a short walk, we reached a place where the River Mabo and the River Múgue intersect in a Y shape. The sound of the fresh and cold water running, falling, and hitting the rocks was omnipresent and calming, but the sound had another dimension to it. This sound, Ângelo explained to me. Hunters and other residents used it to find their way back home, like a searchlight directing ships to safe porting. "The sound of the river would take them home, they just had to listen to it," he added. After walking some minutes in open bushes (locally called *cocola*), the sunshine became scarcer and scarcer as the crowns of the trees absorbed all the sunlight and blocked it from reaching the ground. We were then inside the *mu'urú* (lit.sing. the dense forest). The temperature dropped. The smell of humus from leaves fallen long ago was strong. Plant, insect, and bird life pulsed from everywhere. Ângelo led the way, with an embodied geography of spaces stopping and pointing to a tree, a river, a rock and telling me to take pictures from time to time. With him the forest was alive.

As we walked, Ângelo chopped leaves blocking the way, or reading signs previous hunters left on the tree trunks with machetes, telling other hunters to watch for the traps that those hunters had set up to catch animals. In one instance he stopped his stories and told me to slow down

and walk carefully since the ground was slippery. Walking in the forest had many of such instances that forced us to jump between the past stories of war, to personal memories and to the present conditions of the forest requiring our immediate attention, or what Tsing (2015, 23-24) would call “arts of noticing”, both stories and emergent landscapes weaved personal and collective narratives and multiple spatio-temporalities claiming our attention, as this chapter also does.



Figure 7. This photograph I took in Nvava in 2017 shows a Buttress root that works as a meeting spot in the forest as Ângelo explained to me after he had suggested that I take photos as we walked in the forest. The hunters used the “pockets” of this buttress root to place their belongings before starting with the proper hunting journey. This is the place where the rules of the hunting are laid to the participants.

While sharing his stories, Ângelo would again stop and point at something. This tree here, Ângelo told me, pointing to a tall tree with buttress roots, is the place where the hunters met. At that place, the leader of the hunting group would explain the rules of hunting, including that the hunters were required to remove their belts, shirts, and shoes, cuff their trousers, since they

had not gone to the forest to “play” as it was said. Hunters discouraged any form of play or other forms of distraction during the hunting journey.

The most experienced hunter of the hunting group would then tell the other hunters that they must not put an *azagaia* (lit.sing. spear) and a *supado* (lit.sing. machete) in the same hand, which locally is articulated as *não pode obadanha*. *Obadanha* also seemed to be an ethics that governed what a person could take from a forest in a specific hunting journey. In Ângelo’s words:

if you take this here [he shows me a machete] and this one here [he shows me a spear], here you shouldn’t put them together. You should hold them in separate hands. Each thing you want, you go there [to the forest] on a different day to look for that thing. If you left home for the forest to get one thing and then after getting that thing you should return home. You shouldn’t find something in the forest and then continue looking for another thing. You shouldn’t do that here. *Não podia obadanha* (lit. you shouldn’t mix things). If you are going for honey, just take honey. If you are going to hunt, then you are just hunting. But now people can *obadanha* there is no problem. In that time, when the person did *obadanha*—take different things—that same person didn’t die. No. They just got lost and people back home would be sad and looking for the lost person, and when they found that person, the person would run away from people who had been looking for the lost person. The lost person would run away even from his or her own friends or family [translated from Portuguese].

According to Ângelo, there were also rules that had to do with the body of the hunters. For example, they prohibited sex before hunting. Since women could also take part in the collective hunting, they could not take part of it if they were menstruating. That buttress root was the point in which the ethics that governed life outside of the forest was “suspended” and they mobilized instead another set of rules. The buttress root was the point where the leader of the hunt reminded each hunter that their success, safety and return to their homes depended on their adherence to a set of predetermined rules that guided the relationship between the hunters, the forest, the animals, and the mountain. These pre-existing rules and the pedagogy of being in the forest while hunting is in tandem with Fred Myers’ observation, when the author states that “people do not simply ‘experience’ the world; they are taught—indeed, disciplined—to

signify their experiences in distinctive ways” (Myers 2002, 77). Rituals, as shown by Myers and that will be elaborated here, are also crucial in communicating ancestry that gives meaning to hunters’ experiences, resulting in hunters’ “guided mobility”.

Two hunting techniques used in the region are *caça de rede* (netting) and *caça de ratoeiras* (rat trap hunting—gin traps)—or snare trap. The former is done in large groups and the latter can be done individually or with small groups or individuals, at times using dogs. The individual hunting is the one that did not seem to require much preparation. *Caça de ratoeiras* usually is carried out using rat traps or traps made of ropes tied on a branch where the loop is hidden on the ground where animals walked through to drink water, mate, sleep, or eat. This kind of hunting can be called trap hunting (Rowcliffe, Cowlshaw and Long 2003) and differs from the pursuit hunting used for example by hunters on Mount Mulanje who used bows, arrows, or fire (Thompson 2013). Meanwhile, in the Game Reserve of Gilé, also in Zambézia province, Alessandro Fusari and Giuseppe Maria Carpaneto (2006) also evidenced the use of fire for small mammals together with netting (*caça de rede*) and use of firearms (although in small numbers). I did not see anyone using fire, bows, arrows, or firearms during the hunting journeys I accompanied. Since hunting is mostly based on (snare and gin) traps, hunters learn how to interpret the tracks of animals in the forest. These abilities allow the hunters to identify places where they are most likely to succeed.

The forest in which we are immersed is buzzing with life. We kept walking up hills, checking Ângelo’s string traps that he had left in the forest one after the other. After he had checked all his traps, he realized he had caught no animal. He shook his head in disappointment and uttered, “today we were not lucky. But last week when I was here, I caught a *muduba* (common duiker).” The meat of *muduba* was highly prized by residents and was the most expensive when bought from a hunter in the region. Urban visitors to the area also liked *muduba*.

That day might have been unsuccessful to Ângelo, but I felt enriched with the experiences, and Ângelo’s stories. The journey was an eye-opening experience for me because in our *passar* I learned how Ângelo’s engagement in the forest linked past, present and future. Fred Myers’ (2002) study on the Pintupi of Western Australia showed a similar connection between the biography of the hunters and the space. Myers (2002) did so by focusing on the concept of *Ngurra* (country) used by residents that was “a term which can refer as well to a specific place

of abode as to the familiar landscape around it with all its peculiar features.” But rather than an externalized nature, a Pintupi “person identifies with a country only because of his involvement, during the various phases of his life from conception to death, with particular others who are known as his ‘one countryman’”. Ângelo’s stories while talking about the forest were “in fact talking about histories of interpersonal relations” (Myers 2002, 107-108) also linking humans and nonhumans, here and there, Frelimo and Renamo, the country and him.

Communicating across species: hunting, mobility, *anemhana*, landscapes *matoa* and the *amwene*

Caça de rede usually occurs in the months of August to October, or when the forest is more amicable to human presence and there is not a lot of rain. Normally, before the hunters go to the forest, they visit the *mwene* who then performs a *mucuto*, to guarantee success and safety during the hunting period. Conversely, with *caça de ratoeira* hunters could have a small *mucuto* at home where they also ask God and the *matoa* for safety and success—communicating their intentions is key in this endeavour.

The hunters can also “prepare” themselves by visiting a *cumbaissa* (lit.sing. witch doctor) that provides a *droga* (lit.sing. spell) that allows the hunter to be successful. *Caça de rede* requires coordination. At the above-mentioned buttress roots meeting place, the leader of the group explains to other hunters about how to behave towards the forest, the mountain, and the animals. In this place, as I learnt from Ângelo,

the leader of the hunting excursion divided the collective into small groups, one group placed the net around bushes and caught the animals after they ram into the net; and another group made noise to scare the animals into the net. When the animals were caught, hunters sprinted towards the prey, since the catch was divided according to who owned the net, and thereafter, the first and second hunter to grab and kill the prey (Ângelo, Nvava, May 9, 2017) [translated from Portuguese].

In this form of hunting, hunters could catch as many as twenty to sixty *muduba* in one hunting expedition. After a *muduba* is caught in the net, hunters run towards the prey. If one is the first to grab the prey, one at the end of the hunting one would get the front leg and the ribs. The hunter who came next got the neck part of the prey. The coordinator of the hunt got the other

leg and the other rib, and the rest of the animal's remains, including the head, stayed with the owner of the net. What this suggests is that there was some sort of social hierarchization. Owning the net enabled the hunter to gather much bushmeat which could then be used for revenue, social status, or consumption. Both male and female hunters who did not own a net then relied on their dexterity and quickness to respond to get a piece of the prey during the primary distribution of the kill. As most studies on group hunting suggested, Nangaze's and Nvava's hunters considered this form of hunting mutualistic, for it allowed individual participants to have more than what they could gain if they hunted alone (see for example, Alvard and Nolin 2002; Bird et al. 2012).

The forest, according to the hunters, is full of distractions, illusions and is regarded as a dangerous entity, hence opposite to the Aboriginal women when having leisure walks in the forest as described by Povinelli (1995), hunters must refrain from engaging with such distractions. Sometimes hunters can see shapes like the breasts of a woman, a face, a chair, or something else, but one is not allowed to comment on them while hunting. Hunters must save any such comments until when everyone has returned to the *povoado*. Every hunter must remain attentive. The forest commanded that sort of alertness. Getting lost or dying in the forest is a very likely possibility. Life during hunting depended on that constant monitoring of behaviour and language and refraining of distractions. The same self-discipline was recorded by Clapperton Mavunga (2014, 29) among the VaShona people of Zimbabwe who believed that "the sacred were no places of play or loose talk, otherwise the forest would feel slighted. Pointing at things or laughing at them also carried grave consequences."

The relationship described here to me was revealing, because it underscored landscapes that shaped people's behaviours, landscapes that had feelings: they could be offended; they could lure and harm; and those landscapes could also protect. In this relationship between humans, landscapes and animals what caught my attention in my conversation with Ângelo was the importance of the language used during the hunt and how it linked human and nonhuman intentionalities, much like Kohn (2006, 171) described in his study with the Runa, where he showed that Runa understanding of nature is achieved through a poetic language in the forms of iconic and indexical signs. However, in the case of Nangaze and Nvava, communication is carried out through spoken language.

While sitting on a rock mid-way to the summit of Mount Mabo, during our hunting trip, Ângelo told me that when hunters want to talk about *nhoa* (lit.sing. snake) during the hunting trip, the hunters may not say snake but *mungoi* (lit.sing. rope) [animal – thing], when hunters want to refer to a *muduba* (lit.sing. common duiker) the hunters say instead *nyama* (lit.uncount. *meat*) [animal – food], when the hunters want to refer to a *nibwe* (lit.sing. pebble or stone), hunters call it instead *eruwa* (lit.sing. a rock) [small thing – big thing], and when the hunters want to refer to a *nharugue* (lit.sing. lion), hunters call it *paca* (lit. cat) [wild animal – domesticated animal]. When the hunters want to refer to the elephant shrews locally called *mtao*, the hunters call it *thebo* (lit.sing. elephant) [small animal – big animal]. If a hunter failed to follow these rules and use this language, the hunter would not find animals or the hunter would get lost, get injured or, in the worst-case scenario, even die. In Ângelo’s view, being in the forest coerced the hunters to adhere to a certain ethics and conduct different from the one they would adhere to in the *povoados*.

Making small animals big, Ângelo said, was a sign of showing *ori’a* (lit.sing. respect) to the forest and animals. Turning big and ferocious animals into small and domesticated animals was a way of managing fear, thus making the encounter with big, ferocious, and dangerous animals more manageable. Encountering ferocious animals in their view was a sign that the leader of the hunting collective did not “prepare” well for the hunting journey—meaning the leader of the hunting excursion might not have observed the rituals properly.

The careful use of language to not refer to the animals by their names, was also present among the Yukaghir of Siberia, studied by Rane Willerslev, in which “allegorical expressions or special terms are employed for animals, which cannot be addressed by their real names. The elk, for instance, is generally referred to as the ‘big one’, whereas the bear is called the ‘bare-footed one’” (Willerslev 2007, 100). Among the Yukaghir, this was a mode of seducing the prey whereas with the hunters in Nvava and Nangaze, as stated by Ângelo, this was also a way of showing respect to the animals and the forest, managing fear, and making sure that they attracted the right kind of animal. For example, when I asked Ângelo why they said *mungoi* instead of snake, he told me that if you said “snake” during hunting you would encounter a snake.

Using specific names was not extensive to all animals but those that seemed to be of relative significance for the hunters either in terms of being food sources or as potential life-threatening animals that one did not want to encounter. The curious aspect was the inclusion of what the adherents of the “Google Forest” would frame as inanimate objects like stones or pebbles to be enlarged to rocks. Ângelo did not explain to me why that was the case.

The conversion of “big” to “small” or from “small” to “big” or objectifying what is perceived as dangerous constitutes the language through which the relationship between hunters and Mount Mabo, and animals is established and communicated during the hunt to acquire their bounty and safety. This language is one that links things, animals, and nonhuman land formations in a web of meaning-making or material semiotics that challenges nature-culture, human-nonhuman divides and gives rise to a relational ecology. As mentioned earlier in this section, before the hunters go to the forest, they visit the *cumbaissa* or the *mwene* who “prepares” them through a *mucuto*, this suggests a form of local form of controlling access and the existence of mediating objectified experiences to use Myers’ (2002) words, putting the *amwene* at the centre of it as discussed in chapter three. The communicative event between the *amwene* and Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba, the River Múgue and the *matoa* highlights the intentionality of landscapes in guaranteeing safety and success during the hunting journey in which they are not contexts but actors.

Changing hunters-landscapes-animal relations: “preparedness”, *mwene*, and co-production

Mabo forest is a field of possibilities filled with life-threatening perils but also affordances. To make use of such affordances, hunters are required to navigate different social arrangements mediating their interaction with the forest and mountain. Using the metaphor by Verdon and Jorion, Tim Ingold (1986, 145) states that “the environment [...] is like a minefield, in which one must tread delicately and carefully. It is therefore best for everyone that it be reserved for those who know it well; and if others are to move in it, it is advisable that they should ask first and defer to their hosts on arrival.”

Calisto shared Ângelo’s view that if a hunter saw a lion during the hunt, which is rare, then the leader had not “prepared” well or someone did not respect the forest and mountain, as

instructed. Hence, the ritual process in the *povoados* highlights the centrality of the *matoa*, the personhood of the nonhumans, but also of the *mwene* in the *povoado*'s life. During a ritual, consisting of an evocation of the agency of God, the mountains, the river, and the *matoa*, the *mwene* informs Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Múgue and the *matoa* that the hunters are going to visit them and that these nonhuman persons protect the hunters and ensure their success as they carry out their activities in the forest and the mountain. Communication between human and nonhuman is central before the hunting and, as I discussed in the previous section, it is also central during the hunting.

The hunters must finetune their senses to navigate life threatening spaces in the forest. In Calisto's words (Calisto, Nangaze, December 22, 2017):

[...] sometimes there are dangers in the forest. There are animals like lions and leopards, they [the hunters] know the places that have snakes, they know, so they say we cannot go there, you don't insist, they know something they saw, that we should not approach. Even if you are young, and no adult came with you, it is a hunting journey of young people, you know that we mustn't enter there. We cannot go there. So, if it is a cliff, if I go there, I will die, they will tell you. There is no way here. It can be a beautiful place. You see that this surface is even, but that place can be dangerous, there might be a snake or animal. [...] But if you find a leopard it means that the leader of the hunt did not prepare well [translated from Portuguese].

Calisto's words above indicating the need for hunters to be attentive to the environment can also be connected to the Australian Aboriginal people, studied by Elizabeth Povinelli (1995, 509) where "everyone, even small children, monitors bodies, objects, and the environment for changes or odd behaviours that might portend critical meaning-meaning that may be the difference between a hunting trip resulting in bounty or calamity or, more seriously, in a person's life or death." This attentiveness to the landscapes is also like tracking practice by the bushmen in the Kalahari in Botswana studied by Pierre du Plessis (2018). According to du Plessis (2018, 80), "tracking, even in combination with hunting, always involves attending to the various movements of landscapes and how those movements relate to and affect each other [and the hunters]." Different from the emergent landscapes of Kalahari as studied by du Plessis in the context of tracking, experienced hunters in Nangaze and Nvava know the places that

need to be attended to or not beforehand, while also being attentive to the emergent landscapes as they hunt. For the hunters, the rules that are stated before begging the hunting journey elicit the fact that the forest is dangerous and chaotic, and the rules help in managing much of the uncertainty that the forest creates. Rules produce predictability and stability in an otherwise seemingly chaotic landscape.

Both the hunters themselves and their nature carried the reinforcement of such rules. As stated, a person who does not obey the rules could get lost in the forest for days without the person noticing it. In the hunters' view, even when lost, the transgressor would not be doomed to death, because the forest and mountain seek to inform the transgressor. In that process, the transgressor would wander in the forest, until the transgressor eventually ended up in a place with fruit trees, like pineapples, oranges, bananas, and others. When this happened, the interlocutors of this study stated that the transgressor could pick and eat from only one tree, should the transgressor break this rule, the transgressor would be further lost. And, if the transgressor respected the rule and the forest, after a while, the person would end up home or in a familiar area without knowing how the person got there. The rules made community building (including with the nonhumans) possible.

Among the interlocutors of this study in Lugela district, the mountain had built a reputation of a place where people could easily get lost (see also chapter three). This reputation enabled its respectability and the reinforcement of the *mwene*'s authority as the sole individuals who could "prepare" visitors to the area. This was due authorization of the *mwene* from the residents in the district (see Meneses et al. 2006; Howard 2013; Ekblom, Notelid and Witter 2017) even though the state and conservationists marginalized them. Other scholars have called the fear that the forest elicited as the result of it being a sacred landscape (see Byers, Cunliffe and Hudak 2001; Alison et al. 2010; Simbine 2013) but Marisol de la Cadena (2015a) would add, "and more" to highlight the excesses beyond such a framing. In the view of residents, the danger of "unprepared" and "unannounced" or "unguided" visitors is that they might disrupt the normal order of relations between humans, landscapes, animals, common spirits and the *matoa*. This compares to Ingold's (1986) discussion about the need for a visitor to announce their presence in hunting grounds, because visitors could "unknowingly disturb some sacred [and more] site and hence jeopardize the ritual renewal of natural resources, not only for the particular group on whose territory the site is located, *but for the entire collectivity*" (Ingold

1986, 144, original emphasis). In the case of Mount Mabo, from residents' perspective it seemed that the whole forest and mountain demanded respect.

Therefore, in local people's cosmology, to guarantee a safe return of the hunters and stability in the *povoados*, the visitors must be "prepared" by the *mwene*, respect Mount Mabo and build the modes of knowing that mediates between humans and nonhumans, both constituting and traversing them. The need for being "prepared" can be associated with the concept of "guided mobility" developed by Clapperton Mavunga (2014). These modes of knowing have been constantly renegotiated in the context of other modes ontologies like Christianity, modernity, and capitalism which first built a rift between nature and society, and then rendered nature inert and malleable to human managerialism, rendered non-Christian forms of spirituality evil and irrational much like it had happened with the Runakuna as studied by Marisol de la Cadena (2015). Ângelo also articulated such changes during our hunting journey.

According to Ângelo, currently, hunters attribute the lack of animals mostly to "bad luck", a framing that in some ways denies the agency of nonhumans but not completely. Hunters rarely pray to the *matoa* or ask for permission to go hunting from the local chiefs, they go hunting without observing the rules, as Ângelo sometimes would complain. This disregard for rules suggests that the authority of *amwene* was waning and hunting was becoming increasingly individualized, hence less constrained, even more so in the context of growing transformations occurring due to capitalist intrusions turning local agriculturalists and hunters into low-waged workers, and the workings of the "Google Forest" re-signifying the hunters as porters, guides and environmentalists and other historical events.

While not using a language of species extinctions used by conservation biologists, some local hunters referred to the decline of animals during my fieldwork. Their interpretation of the causes of the declining number of wildlife varied. When talking about past hunting experiences, Calisto told me that when his father was a hunter, he did not need to go too far to catch a prey, since animals could be found roaming around in the *povoados*. This is mostly so because during the civil war residents used Mount Mabo as a refuge. The high density of the forest and the rocks made it hard for both Renamo and Frelimo soldiers to bombard or attack them. This retreat from the *povoados* to the mountain made it so that animals and vegetation took over *povoados*. When the civil war ended the animals continued to roam in those lands. What

Calisto's view suggested is that human history was connected to wildlife history in the region. When I asked about some of the reasons why the animals were reducing the answers were mixed. Some of the interlocutors of this study observed that the animal numbers have been reducing in the forest because of overhunting. Other hunters told me that animals had learned to read humans, in a way that has made bushmeat hunting difficult lately. When I asked Ângelo about the fact that animals were reducing, he responded with a laugh. In his words, how could there be reduction of animals, if animals were giving birth as we spoke. In his view, animals were just hiding and becoming smarter, which made them hard to catch.

Caça de rede is scarcer now, and because it was seasonal, it could be inferred that it allowed animals a time to reproduce (as Ângelo's response suggested) and grow as opposed to *caça de ratoeira*, in which individuals or pairs from different *povoados* go to the forest nearly every day to hunt and leave behind many traps. Such traps sometimes catch unwanted animals which are then discarded if they are not part of the hunters' diet or young animals. Concerns over snaring and wildlife decline are a current topic within existing conservation areas which have led to scholars either framing residents as poachers or resistant to encroachment in wildlife protection contexts (see Nuwer 2018; Hall 2020; Mudumba et al. 2020).

Bushmeat is an integral part of the local economy where professional hunters make a living through selling their prey. I only saw men selling bushmeat in local *feiras* on Sundays or in the *povoados*. Depending on the size or type of animal the prices of bushmeat in Nangaze and Nvava could range from 50mts to 100 for rodents and birds and from 150 to 300mts for a monkey, common duiker, or a wild boar. Bushmeat hunting is a profitable business that generates income faster compared to agriculture. The price of bushmeat is dictated by the hunters and their customers giving them a fair sense of control and predictability as opposed to the price of agricultural products priced by the global market, filled with oscillations.

As stated earlier, *caça de rede* is scarcer now, but most days that Ângelo and I went hunting we came across individual hunters, sometimes a pair, or a hunter and his dog going hunting. This suggests that there is a shift to individual hunting, which takes much less work in terms of collaboration, and enables the hunters to keep what they catch and use it as they see fit. This shift highlights in part the relaxing of mutuality-based collaborations explained earlier, and of the local ontologies that constrained and controlled access to the forest and animals. In the past,

hunters after returning to the *povoado* were forced to give part of an animal to the *mwene* of the area, since wildlife and landscapes ultimately belonged to the *amwene*'s clans. While in Nangaze, *mwene* Mpida went on days without eating, and it could have been worse if Calisto and his family did not help him in getting food. The hunters that offered a kill to him once I was there, they did so because they had caught a monitor lizard that was not part of their diet. They could not eat it. They could not sell it. But they could offer it to the *mwene* who took it, due to need not as a sign of respect.

Bushmeat hunting is important to residents and is connected to their modes of living. In a 2011 report, Nathalie van Villet commissioned by the Conservation of Biological Diversity (CBD) Bushmeat Liaison Group described how on the one hand, the use of wildlife was framed by scholars as being of paramount importance for residents living in tropical areas worldwide (see also Davies and Brown 2007): it has spiritual value; it played a role in communicating social status; it was part of a staple diet of forest-dwelling people; it was a primary source of animal protein; and could constitute a source of revenue (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2011, 7). On the other hand, the report stated that there was compelling evidence that the scale of current hunting was a serious threat to many forest species and ecosystems (*ibid.*). Based on these observations, “in 2008, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) identified the unsustainable hunting of bushmeat, and its effects on non-targeted species” (*ibid.*).

The Conference of the Parties participants agreed that there should be control of bushmeat hunting in collaboration with indigenous knowledges, based on customary sustainable use rights. Following hunters' stories and practices, it is safe to state that a similar diplomacy between scientists, policymakers and local ontologies is necessary, much like Latour (2004) and Green (2015) propose in their studies. The dialogue that the CBD suggests requires criticizing the colonially produced gaze of hunters' wildlife use and their complex relations to landscapes and wildlife as “poaching” or in this case “threats” to “wilderness”, and residents' at best as potential allies to curb wildlife decline; it also requires moving away, as Mavunga (2014, 7) states, from “the view of partnerships as a relation between ‘us’ as riders and ordinary people as horses”, which “forecloses a view to ordinary people as creative beings in their own rights” (*ibid.*).

Conclusion

By following Ângelo and attending to his “art of noticing” the environment, to use Tsing’s (2015, 37) phrase, with which he retells stories of his life, of the forest, of animals and the different transformations that have occurred in such relations in the different states of Mozambican political life. In Ângelo’s and other residents’ stories, landscapes emerged as alive, vital, and intentional, not passive objects or sites of people’s actions much like conservationists would frame it. Ângelo’s stories highlighted his biographical entanglement with the landscapes with which he has been hunting since an early age. As I had a *passear* with Ângelo and followed him on his hunting journeys in the forest, I learned that each step he took was like the needle cruising around a vinyl revealing the sounds and the stories of the forest, turning what for me was indistinguishable trees, bushes, rocks, animals, sounds and textures into entities with personalities, stories and voices and a world that would otherwise remain just natural forms to me.

Ângelo would point at paths that led to different *povoados*, a place in the forest where his mother was shot dead by Frelimo soldiers during the civil war, he would tell me about the trees to be avoided, plants that heal and plants that kill, animals, read and interpret tracks, indicate places to go and not to go. In short, the routes and stories that are invisible on the conservationists’ maps and ecological knowledge emerged in their most experiential manner. Ângelo’s knowledge or familiarity with the forest and animals weaved together the physical and the social, the dead and the living, past, present, and future through the stories he told as he walked or engaged with the forest and mountains. Ângelo’s stories like Anna Tsing (2015) stated in her book, “draw attention to interrupting geographies and tempos. These interruptions elicit more stories. This is the rush of stories’ power as a science. Yet it is just these interruptions that step out of the bounds of most modern science, which demands the possibility for infinite expansion without changing the research framework.”

Ângelo’s stories, as I have been arguing in this thesis, are not visible in the conservationists’ modernist ontology register, which imposed what counted as legitimate knowledge and legitimate human-nature relations. The idea of “wilderness” encapsulating the “*Área Pretendida*” or the “Core Area”, informed by a cartographic logic or as Ingold (1986) would call it a “two-dimension land tenure”, because of its ontological bias cannot account for

hunters' mobilities, routes and ontologies like the ones described by Ângelo in this chapter. The conservationists' work is, as du Plessis (2018, 114) puts it in the context of the Kalahari, "an attempt to hold landscapes [and people living with it] still".

During my fieldwork, I encountered residents who were part of the JA!'s Associations or RADEZA's Committees, and had worked closely with the scientists and NGOs, whose narratives of separations they echoed in their meetings, and persuaded other residents to protect Mount Mabo including from hunting, and yet those same residents continued hunting, much like they have been doing in their lives. What this means is that if hunting is to become criminalized or regulated according to the 2014 Conservation Law and conservationists' plans, then these hunters most likely will become "poachers" and the landscape around Mount Mabo will become like those violent landscapes that are widespread in Mozambique and southern Africa.

Chapter five: Cultivating with Mount Mabo: Relational Ecologies, Land, Nature Conservation and Neo-extractivist Enclosures

“When Mount Mabo and Muriba were made,” *mwene* Mpida Tacalanavo explained to me, “something was missing to create fertility of Mabo and Muriba, that’s when the river Múgue was created; it’s not like people can see with their eyes that the river creates directly the fertility of Mabo and Muriba,” clarified the *mwene* “but deep inside everybody knows that all fertility in the area, all the water available here, all the rivers that exist here, the river Múgue is the main one,” continued the *mwene*. “Then, being Múgue the mother of all streams that go to Muriba, that go to Mabo, that means that the springs that refresh Mabo come from Múgue, the springs that refresh Muriba also come from Múgue, that is how Muriba, and Mabo go to eat at their sister’s” (*mwene* Mpida, Nangaze 2017). [translated from Manhaua to Portuguese by Calisto]

By contrast, an unrecorded interview in English with the manager of Mozambique Holdings Limited, a corporation planting rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*) on June 16, 2016, offered a different account of nature: one where nature is an object, in this version of nature residents stand out as employees and “noncompliant” to his version of nature. Residents referred to him as Ranga (R)—Manager Ranga (MR).

AM: “Good afternoon, I was told you had left”. I said to the Manager of Mozambique Holdings who I found chatting with another middle-aged Indian expatriate male (MAN 2) while sitting on a mat in front of their office.

MR: “Yes, you were lucky. I was about to leave,” he said.

AM: “Yes, you said we could meet this afternoon.”

MR: “You may sit,” he said.

AM: “Thank you. Well, I have some questions to ask you. Would you mind if I use a voice recorder?” I asked.

MR: “First, we talk and then we see what to do.”

AM: “Okay... How is the relationship between your company, Mozambique Holdings and the community?” I asked after taking some time explaining to him about my research and the purpose of my studies as well as informed consent to partake in the study.

MR: “Relationship?” He repeated my question, seeming rather baffled. “There is no

relationship. Just that they work here, and we employ them, he continued.”

AM: “So, it is just an employee and employer relationship?” I asked.

MR: “Yes!”

AM: I paused, feeling rather disconcerted. “Does your company have any social responsibility activities planned for this community?”

MR: “What’s that?” He asked.

AM: “Well, actions that the company does to repair some externalities or damages the company causes to the people and environment around it” I explained.

MR: “No, we don’t have that now. We just started planting two years ago and trees are not grown yet. We are still investing our own money from the bank, so we cannot use more money for the community,” he replied.

MAN2 “We plan it for later,” added the other man.

AM: “Okay. So, what is your thought about the associations that were created to protect their resources?”

MR: “People don’t protect their environment, here... Environment is nature, right? Trees and all?... People just burn things without controlling. I have told them not to burn things, but they won’t listen. Their houses are made of reed if they don’t control fire then their houses will also be burnt. Last year, I was asked to transport a child who had been burnt with the house to the hospital.”

AM: “So, do you have any kind of collaboration with the local authorities here?”

MR: “No. But I think people should be told not to burn their crops. I am planting rubber, and this can be lost with fires. People use the land that I bought to plant and then burn it. I always go after them to chase them out, but they keep coming back. I do not have money to go after them all the time. I paid them indenisations and all, so I do not understand why they are doing this. He continued. I told them they could grow food on my land if they do not burn things. But they won’t listen. The company used to open this road until the bridge on the river but now the road is closed because of fallen trees that they have burnt. I opened that road for them. It costs money to do that, for what? Now tourists when they come here cannot go all the way in with their cars because of that,” he complained.

What emerged from these two conversations, the one with *mwene* Mpida and the other with the manager of Mozambique Holdings Limited are two distinct versions of nature, both of which exist through distinct combinations of institutions, technologies, and practices, meeting one another. So far in this study (as set out in the previous chapter on hunting, chapter four), I

have already discussed two different versions of Mount Mabo: the “Secret Mount Mabo” (chapter three and four) as enacted and experienced by hunters and mediated through the *mwene*, and the “Google Forest” (chapter two) version of Mount Mabo enacted by conservationists: a version that due to its ontological bias overrides and silences the “Secret Mount Mabo” in policy fora and scientific writing as I have been arguing here. Mozambique Holdings Limited’s manager’s version of nature is one where nature is a resource to be extracted through plantations, and residents were the cheap labour power to do the extraction for a wage, a combination that resuscitates the colonial plantation regimes (see Newitt 1995; Bertelsen 2014; Adalima 2016; Li 2007; 2017). This version can be situated within the current national and global neoliberal and neo-extractivist state agendas and policies discussed in the introduction of this thesis. This is the third “extractivist” version of Mount Mabo which I argue, following Jason Moore (2015), Anna Tsing (2012) and Haraway et al. (2016), inscribes novel sets of spatio-temporalities and relations between societies and their landscapes with far more local and global negative consequences than local agriculturalists’ and hunters’ practices that conservationists have insistently categorised as “threats” to “wilderness”. Instead, following the work of Tina Li (2007; 2017), on palm oil plantations in Indonesia, and the growing casualization of labour, encroachment of lands, devastation of forests that they caused, I claim that this extractivist version of landscapes, and the state’s neo-extractivist agendas and policies and their contradicting results need more critical and urgent interventions.

My position could seem rather contradicting provided the fact that earlier in this thesis, I stated that the conservationists started their work on Mount Mabo because of their concerns over the growing extractivism in Zambézia province in specific and in Mozambique. The case I am making is that conservationists (specifically JA! and the RBG Kew scientists) aware of the large rubber plantation owned by Mozambique Holdings Limited, at first chose having more collaborative work with the corporation and requested that it allowed the conservationists to rehabilitate the former general manager’s colonial tea estate house within the corporation’s lands to work as a visitor and research centre where the science exploration laboratory would be constructed. It was only later (2020), after no agreement between the conservationists and the corporation was reached, that JA! included the corporation in its fights against residents’ rights abuse in Mozambique by corporations. The RBG Kew scientists have remained silent about the corporation and its potential effects on biodiversity.

The extractivism mentioned above has its historical roots, even though currently taking different configurations because, as I will describe, following Hans-Jürgen Burchardt and Kristina Dietz (2014) it is directly steered by the state as opposed to the previous periods when market forces and their perceived internal regulation models were framed as central to steering public and private life. Burchardt and Dietz looking at the context of Latin America call this new configuration neo-extractivism. Extractivism in Mozambique, and the spatio-temporal and social transformations it exerted are the result of long colonial and government interventions that viewed nature as a resource to be explored through raw materials extraction, including plantations, and black residents to be included in the global economy at first through slave labour (*cf.* Isaacman and Isaacman 1975; First 1977; Phiri 1979; Hedges et al. 1993). These colonial legacies, I argue, haunt contemporary neo-extractive and conservation activities being performed around Mount Mabo.

One way of bringing such ghosts and their (un)doings to the fore in postcolonial Mozambique to help re-situate the major issue behind both biological diversity depletion and continued exploitation and marginalization of residents in Lugela district in the name of development is by using the concept of “Plantationocene”. The concept of “Plantationocene” as proposed in a conversation among anthropologists, including Donna Haraway, Anna Tsing, Noboru Ishikawa (2016, 555-557) emerged out of the realization that Anthropocene scholars tend to look at the mid-18th century forward, and to focus on the fossil fuels as the key moment to determine the Anthropocene and in doing that they overlooked capitalism which preceded such fossil fuels economies, as was also the case with large plantations that resorted to slave labour. By focusing on what Anna Tsing quoting Ishikawa (2013) in the same conversation, calls “long-distance simplification of landscapes all over the world”, including “the transportation of genomes, the breeding of plants and animals”, that resulted in “alienation, changing the plants, the animals, and the organism that become part of the plantation”. This alienation and thingification, added Tsing in the same conversation, included people. The “Plantationocene”, commented Haraway, is a more descriptive term than Capitalocene; and Capitalism is a late development (Haraway et al. 2016, 556). Anna Tsing then suggested that “we need to understand the dynamics through which plants and animals [and people] are abstracted in order to become resources that can be used for investment. Plantations and feedlots are places where this [abstraction and alienation] happens.” In other words, “Plantationocene”, as a concept, helps in shifting the focus of debates to plantations in terms of how they have transformed geographies, spatio-temporalities,

subjectivities, and relations in the name of profit and have resulted in the current climate crisis and biological and social diversity depletion.

In historicizing the current agribusiness industrial complex and connecting it to the current climate crisis, Anna Tsing (2012, 145-148) developed a hypothesis according to which cereals domesticated humans. For Tsing, the story of human domestication by cereals started ten thousand years ago in the Near East, which then led to the rise of social hierarchies and later to the entanglement of state to control the territory, people, production, and reproduction (including female). With the increased number of population, agriculturalists started narrowing their crops and family forms. These rather linear historical events led to increased plantations which in turn created conditions for the accumulation of wealth, but also the materialization of “Man” as the master of both nature and other humans (see chapter one for theoretical discussions). This wealth accumulation then enabled the colonization of other parts of the world and modes of knowing and relating. Accordingly, Tsing defined plantations as “ordered cropping systems worked by non-owners” (2012, 148) to highlight the plantations’ alienating ethos. What plantations do, stated Tsing (*ibid.*), is that they “deepen domestication, re-intensifying plant dependencies and forcing fertility. Borrowing from state-endorsed cereal agriculture, they invest everything in the superabundance of a single crop [...]”, in other words, plantations are driven by profit-making using technological advances to force accelerated production and reduction of biological diversity and relations. However, continues Tsing, “one ingredient is missing. They remove love. Instead of the romance connecting people, plants, and places, European planters introduced cultivation through coercion,” meaning that the complex relations that usually accompany local agricultural systems were reduced to efficiency, efficacy and productivity and rewired through commodity chains. Tsing shows how plantations are contingent and their histories are the backbone of contemporary agribusiness.

Even though Tsing focuses on settler colonial landscape and not on the so-called South to South cooperation allegedly seeking to dismantle such colonial legacies, Tsing’s observations serve as a theoretical entry point in this chapter seeking to connect the legacies of “Plantationocene” and their contradicting intersections with the present neo-extractivist state agenda and policies in postcolonial Mozambique. I contend that these neo-extractivist agenda and policies which among other things resulted in the implementation of a rubber plantation corporation on Mount Mabo foot slopes reproduce the similar exploitative colonial landscapes of plantations with

disastrous effects to nature and residents who are forced into global neo-extractivist practices while inhabiting their own relational ecologies and sharing economies (see also chapter six). These (re)configurations raise some questions: why can the conservationists not see the ecological struggles residents are engaged in? How might conservationists' vision of earthly futures, and earthly harms, be expanded to include for instance the one presented by the *mwene* and residents? To answer these questions, I focus on seeds, pest, pesticides and soil as both analytical lenses and empirical focus to highlight the different forms of relations that they enable or disable and the constant extractivist encroachments of residents' relations and landscapes, as they play out in a poorly articulated struggle between the distinct ecological knowledges encountering one another around Mount Mabo.

Neo-extractivism and plantations: “unproductive lands”, available cheap labour power, and weak state

The state's approaches to nature, which privilege extractivism including REDD+, offer a wider context that draws attention to predatory capitalism and its devastating effects on nature and residents. In my view, and that of others (see GRAIN 2009; Cotula et al. 2009; Sulle and Nelson 2009; Havnevik, Matondi and Beyene 2011; Cotula 2011; Hall 2011; Clements and Fernandes 2012), such wider concerns could, and should be priorities for NGOs and conservationists working on Mount Mabo. Indeed, the scale of illegal logging in Mozambique, described in chapter two, had a devastating effect not only on forests but also on river valleys during the cyclones of 2019 when entire hillsides washed away. Behind this devastation is the state's belief that extractive industries and foreign private investments are the route to wellbeing in Mozambique, a stance that in the context of Latin America, Hans-Jürgen Burchardt and Kristina Dietz (2014, 470-471) called neo-extractivism. In attempting to differentiate between the old and new forms of extractivism, the authors stated that

[t]wo key features of this older form of extractivism were (1) the important role played by transnational corporations in the exploitation of raw materials and in the appropriation of profits; and (2) the fact that the state was tasked with preserving this model internally. In contrast, the concept of (neo-)extractivism refers to the post-neoliberal policies of progressive governments. These regulate the appropriation of resources and their export by nationalising companies and raw materials, revising

contracts, and increasing export duties and taxes. In addition, they use surplus revenue to expand social structures that favour development (Burchardt and Dietz 2014, 470).

The Mozambican state's belief of development attained through state regulated private investment in extractivism was epitomized at the Mocuba event on March 27, 2017, where the President of the Republic of Mozambique, Filipe Nyussi, gave a speech. The event was the First National Forum of Agricultural Commercialization, with around 500 participants including, members of the central government (Ministers and Vice-ministers), governors of all the 11 provinces of Mozambique, district administrators, *régulos* (the highest rank of local chiefs, as discussed in chapter three), partners of corporations, and people interested in the agricultural commercialization chain.²³ The choice of Mocuba was not accidental, Zambézia and Nampula provinces are considered major agricultural exploitation regions in the country. For example, in 2011 out of 3,827,797 registered agribusinesses, 43.32% were estimated to be based in the two provinces (Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2011, 14 [translated from Portuguese]).

In the forum, the President reiterated that Mozambique had all the conditions to go from being a mere consumer country to become a major agricultural producer. Nyussi proposed that the commercialization model that Mozambique practiced was essentially “reactive”, without capacity to respond proactively to the challenges and expectations of the people. In the President's view, the solution was to open more doors for regional and international markets and private investors. The President's speech highlighted two aspects: first that Mozambique was rich in (underexplored) natural resources to allow the country to move from being a consumer to a producer, and second that those resources could be exploited through private investments. As discussed in chapter two, development or conservation projects required state's approval since land and natural resources are nationalized in Mozambique, hence making the state a centralizing entity. The President urged the participants to ensure that the “results of the Forum [ought to] reflect the 2017/2018 [agricultural] campaign, across the entire value chain from production, harvest, circulation, storage, processing distribution and consumption, and in this process, the Government counts on more active and interventive

²³ Being in the field, in Nangaze where telecommunication is cumbersome, I was not informed about the Forum in advance, hence I could not secure an invitation. In informal conversations and news about the event, I learned about the content of the forum.

private sector, with a competitive *musculature* [strength] [(lit.sing. “musculature”) in the agricultural chain” (Presidência da República 2017, para. 2 [translated from Portuguese]).

The President’s words resonated the linear and neoliberal mantra that small and medium size private enterprises had the ability to transform economies from a “reactive agriculture” to “proactive agriculture” or to use similar tropes from “rudimentary agriculture” to “mechanized agriculture”, which would also include increased use of commodity-based agricultural inputs including improved seeds, fertilizers, and tractors (see O’Laughlin 1996). Even in these neoliberal mantras the state still positioned itself as the primary mediator between such private investment and land use and natural resources exploitation. In other words, the government was sovereign in deciding on the granting or not of land leases for extraction (*cf.* Ferguson 2006) (see also chapter two).

The dualisms and oversimplifications mentioned above in the agricultural sector and the President’s speech were accompanied with the other widely ingrained notion of vacant arable lands or *terra nullius* (O’Laughlin 1996; Bowen 2000; Cunguara and Hanlon 2012). In the Lugela district government, the variant of the idea of *terra nullius* framed it, *fundo de terra*, a phrase that refers to land that is available but not being used. This phrase is used, as if land is an available fund that could be made available for a particular purpose. This reference of “empty land” to be exploited or developed is framed within what I call the “banking model” of land. This capitalist framing and the rendering of lands that rural residents dwelled on, lived, and used as *terra nullius* is, as pointed about by Wendy Wolford (2019), a throwback to the liberal colonial period, dating from the first decades of the 1900s, when large scale plantations and forced labour were promoted by the Portuguese colonial government to satisfy the growing needs for raw materials in Europe (see also, Negrão 2001a; Adalima 2016, and introduction of this thesis).

Joseph Hanlon (2004b, 603) named the insistence from the international community and senior government officials (and in this case the President of the Republic) to develop through the attraction of foreign direct investment as a “cargo cult”. The cargo cult, in Hanlon’s reading of state’s actions, manifests itself in the idea that development as framed by the state will come from private investors, mainly large foreign investors, including the greater emphasis on improving conditions for would-be investors, speeding-up the consultation process, and lessen

stress on residents' land delimitation. The metaphor is explained by Peter Worsley's (1957, 11) description of cargo cult as:

strange religious movements in the South Pacific [that appeared] during the last few decades. In these movements, a prophet announces the imminence of the end of the world in a cataclysm which will destroy everything. Then the ancestors will return, or God, or some other liberating power, will appear, bringing all the goods the people desire, and ushering in a reign of eternal bliss.

The return of ancestors or God, or some other liberating power in the South Pacific was believed to be through ships loaded with (Western) cargo and whoever intercepted that cargo would be in possession of such goods towards the eternal bliss (Worsley 1957). Hanlon's metaphorical use of the concept suggests that private investments which lied in the hands of the wealthy investors was the way out of the rudimentary agriculture and "idle or unproductive lands" towards modernization in Mozambique. The optimism behind private investment and rural development in the President's speech and government's neo-extractivist policies did not open room to careful consideration of their destructive potential which were documented throughout the country.

The result of the "cargo cult" approach has been increased conflicts. For example, one "cargo cult" emerging from what was framed as South to South cooperation was the ProSAVANA project which was a cooperation between Brazil, Japan and Mozambique, to be implemented in Mozambique, replicating the Brazilian experience of *cerrado* (tropical savanna) (see Melo 2013; JA! 2013; Gonçalves and Shankland 2016). Jake Spring, in report for Reuters stated that the experience of *cerrado* meant the transformation of tropical savannas [like the ones that Mozambique has] into monocultures that catapulted Brazil into one of the major exporters of soybeans but also led to the deforestation rate four times higher than the one observed in the Amazon according to 2008 estimates (Spring 2018, para. 5). The ProSAVANA project came under explosive criticism from academics, activists and agricultural organizations in Mozambique, including from JA!, and across the world. The possible land dispossessions, erosion of food sovereignty, capitalist capture and environmental degradation were raised as key concerns that built international alliances strong enough to lead the investors and Mozambican government to abandoning ProSAVANA altogether (*cf.* Funada-Classen 2019). Other examples of large-scale projects resulting from the government's neo-extractivist

policies and their negative impacts resulting from large scale plantations have been evidenced (see Aabø and Kring 2012; Cabral and Norfolk 2016; di Matteo 2016; Adalima 2016; Arnal 2019), in mineral resources extraction, construction of dams and large-scale infrastructures, and logging. And the dismissal of ProSAVANA, following James Ferguson (1994) and Tina Li (2007; 2017) cannot be seen as just a failure, since it created conditions or pathways that gave rise to the current SUSTENTA project launched in 2019 that was hailed by most Mozambicans for its focus on national small-scale agriculturalists. Those people who hailed SUSTENTA did not seem bothered by the fact that the project still privileged a modernizing and market-oriented approach, much like its predecessor, ProSAVANA, did.

What those case studies and my fieldwork suggest is that the state's top down and neo-extractivist agenda and policies are not just narratives, but they produce effects as can be evidenced by Mozambique Holdings Limited rubber plantation in the district. Those agenda and policies, unaware of (and arguably disinterested in) the residents' everyday struggles, force residents and their ontologies into highly volatile commodity economies in the process adding pressure to them. Exploring this opening, I focus on seeds, pests, soils amid growing extractive encroachments, firstly to highlight local agriculturalists' struggles for "survival" and their relational ecologies; and secondly, criticize the reductionist conservationists' labelling of local agriculture and residents and their struggles as "threats to biodiversity" (see chapter two) by doing so ignoring the biodiversity depleting rubber monocrops' operations and the growing neo-extractivist and linear state's agendas and policies that gave existence to such a monocrop.

Seeds and local agriculture: navigating modern and traditional systems

Agriculture in Nangaze and Nvava highlights intimate humans and nonhuman relations: relations which Anna Tsing (2012) would state are based on love between plants, soil, and people. Agriculture is a household activity that includes adults and children regardless of gender at the centre of which is the soil, the seeds, other animal and plant entities and the seasons of the year.

It is not an overstatement to affirm that life in Nangaze and Nvava gravitates mostly around maize. Having originated from Mexico, James McCann (2005) shows how maize has arrived in Africa through capitalist and colonial networks and imprinted itself in the rural and urban agrarian landscapes in the continent after the European expansion. In the 1990s, for example,

maize production occupied a third (1/3) of the country's cultivated surface (DEA 1998, Howard et al. 2000) and 79% of Mozambican agriculturalists produced maize (FAO 2007). Indeed, during my fieldwork in Nangaze and Nvava, there was no single day in which I had a meal without *massa* (stiff porridge) made of maize flour. There was not a single day in which women did not interact with maize in its various shapes from plant to food or commodity. In terms of culinary habits, the most common complementary food to *massa* was *matambwi* (lit.sing. cassava leaves), a plant that according to FAO is grown by 73% of Mozambican agriculturalists) which also originated from Mexico.

I learned from the interlocutors of this study that to grow maize, local agriculturalists resort mostly to local varieties of seeds. But it is a common practice among local agriculturalists to open two different *mida* to plant in one of the *mida* with *semente de calamidade* or *nambede elubali* (lit.sing. big maize seeds—improved seeds), and on the other plot plant what local agriculturalists call *nambede vangono* (lit.sing. small seeds) which are local seeds. According to Calisto, the *mida* for the local seeds are usually larger than the *mida* for improved seeds. Local agriculturalists open larger *mida* to plant local seeds varieties because they depend more on the produce from the local seeds for their livelihoods and economic activities.

There is a distinction in how both types of seeds circulate in the local economies. Calisto told me that residents normally share and offer local seeds among fellow residents and agriculturalists, and this network of gifting can be extended across generations, giving a sense of continuity and community making. Calisto told me that the local seeds that he is currently using, his parents used in the past, and the parents of his parents had used the same as well. On the other hand, residents purchase “calamity seeds” since these are portrayed as commodities. For example, during a *passear* with Balami, a local agriculturalist and resident in Nangaze, I asked him whether he also had two *mida*, for the two varieties of seeds. Balami responded saying “I didn't have the *muda* for the calamity seeds because I didn't have money to buy them; but, if I had the money I would buy [the improved seeds]” (Balami, Nangaze, April 7, 2017).



Figure 8. This photograph taken 2017 in Nangaze shows Calisto's palms with grains of nambede elubali in his right palm and nambede vangono in his left palm. It illustrates the difference in size between the two kinds of seeds as explained by Calisto.

The name of calamity seeds is a chronotope that brings the past and the present together and the hints of Christianity that the word calamity suggests. As Calisto once explained to me, the name calamity seed has to do with the fact that improved seeds' wider circulation started in a specific historic moment in postcolonial Mozambique. Local accounts report that in Nangaze and Nvava improved seeds were massively introduced, mostly in 1994 after the peace agreement and first general democratic elections, when people started returning to their homelands. The country was then experiencing severe droughts, food scarcity, shattered social, economic infrastructures, and landscapes—all which became in the local inhabitants' imaginaries known as “*calamidades*” (lit.plur. calamities), which then gave the name to the seeds that the World Vision introduced in the area in that time.

Currently, calamity seeds are brought from Milange district or Mocuba both in Zambézia province or from Malawi and sold at local *feiras* at around 250mtn a kilogram. According to the interlocutors of this thesis, most calamity seeds in Nangaze and Nvava come from Malawi.

Residents stated their preference for the Malawian seeds in comparison to those sold in Mozambique. For example, Calisto explained more about improved seeds:

there was a time that the government was distributing those [calamity] seeds but after the general peace agreement, the government started distributing the [calamity] seeds and those seeds were good. But on the other hand, those people who know agriculture well, for example, we can talk about those are well inclined to engineering they also said that there is a seed that *causa a terra* - cause the land [damage the soil], for example, there are some seeds that come with some colouring, so they [the engineers] say that those seeds *causa a terra*. So, if we prohibit chemicals, then those products, those colourings that the seeds have are dangerous. Sometimes it kills. The other thing is that you can plant that seed this year, and you have a good yield, but after two or three years, it ends up losing equilibrium—*equilibrio*. But those normal seeds, if you know those seeds, for example, in Malawi those seeds that I had bought on their packaging there is an image of a monkey, and it is a good seed. That seed has *força* (lit.sing. strength) (Calisto, Nangaze, April 6, 2017) [translated from Portuguese].

In a Google search on seeds that are commercialized in Malawi²⁴ which had a monkey as a logo, as Calisto had mentioned in the extract above, I found a corporation named SeedCo that produced and sold hybrid seeds. The corporation was based in South Africa with registered productions in countries such as Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania Zambia, Zimbabwe, and distribution in countries such as DRC, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Uganda, but not in Mozambique. In Malawi, there were also foreign seed corporations operating, namely, Pannar, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., Cargill bought the National Seed Company and Monsanto (Kerr 2013, 865), suggesting an intense capitalist seed capture in the neighbouring country. It was also hard to know which one of these corporations' seeds operating in Malawi had made their way into the Nvava's and Nangaze's residents' food systems, which could be behind the suspicion of seeds that *causa a terra* (lit. to cause the land—harm the soil) articulated by Calisto above.

²⁴ In a personal conversation with a Malawian soil scientist on October 28, 2020, he told me that in Malawi seeds are treated with copper and maxim XL (active substances: Mefenoxam and Fludioxonil), which recent studies have not shown to cause damage to the health of soil in the short term.

Speaking about seeds in Malawi, Kerr (2013, 875) stated that the erosion of seed sovereignty in Malawi has been a long-term historical process, beginning with colonial promotion of farming practices, crop types and varieties which marginalized African control over seeds. Kerr (2013, 891-892) painted a gruesome picture in which local agriculturalists are “losing their seed sovereignty through the incursion of the private sector. This loss is further exacerbated by the state’s push for neoliberal policies which have led to limited or no availability of some seeds and a push towards limited hybrid varieties in the case of maize. Reading Kerr’s depiction, one could assume that domination from improved seed impositions seemed to not be met with any form of local contestation in Malawi.

Even though Malawi and Mozambique shared a similar history in terms of transformations of landscapes and subjectivities through capitalist relations, and negation of local forms of organization and of living by colonialists and the current push for market-based approaches to boost agricultural production, there were some significant differences between the two countries. In Mozambique, the government had a more nationalistic agenda by promoting a national seed production with the aim of reducing dependency from import with support from donors (Ministério da Agricultura 2011). The Mozambican government was not subsidizing local agriculturalists like it was the case in Malawi and the improved seeds that have made it to local agriculturalists did so through local agriculturalists’ circulations and flows, and the state was still aiming at having control of that seed circulation and flow. In a news article in the *Journal O Sol do Indico*, Carlos Matos (2015) reported that only 8.5% of local agriculturalists in Mozambique used improved seeds.

The peculiarities of Mozambique together with the intensification of improved seeds in Malawi made it so that local agriculturalists in Nangaze and Nvava were not mere passive adopters of improved seeds as it seemed to be the case in Malawi as reported by Kerr (2013). And, opposite to Rohrbach et al. (2001, 1) who stipulated that “the adoption process [of improved seeds] is generally simple,” my fieldwork showed that the process was complex and telling of the ingenuity and agency of local agriculturalists.

Rather than a “loss” of seed sovereignty through the imposition of improved and commercial seeds that replaced local seed varieties, as described by Kerr (2013) in Malawi, local agriculturalists in my field site, like in Tanzania as studied by Moore (2018) and elsewhere (see

Brush 1991; Wood and Lenné 1997; van de Wouw et al. 2009; Westengen et al. 2014; Pautasso et al. 2015), embraced improved seeds and integrated them in their genetic pool, but they policed the line dividing local seed varieties from the improved seeds to avoid possible contamination, and because of that, potential loss. I had a conversation with Calisto Andre (CA) on this need for policing the lines between local seeds and improved seeds.

AM: “You have two farms, and people never mix them?”

CA: “It is like this, if you mix them, you have destroyed [*estragou*] everything.”

AM: If you mix [the local seeds and *semente de calamidade*], everything is destroyed?

CA: “Yes!”

AM: “Why is that?”

CA: “Because you won’t be able to identify that this is the *semente de calamidade*, and that is the [...] [local seed]. For example, in a *machamba*—[*muda*]—if you plant a local seed here and a *semente de calamidade* there, and so forth, that will never happen [that's not good]. So, the best thing to do is to have two *mida*, right? And even when you have two *mida*, you must cut a portion [of the *muda*] where you will plant the calamity seed to avoid destroying your seeds. I have told you that the calamity seeds have a short duration in the barn. You see? So, if you mix them, then you lose your seeds” (Calisto, Nangaze, April 2, 2017) [translated from Portuguese].

From the extract above, Calisto makes apparent the existence of the dual farming system, and the need of diligently policing the boundaries between them to avoid mixing them. According to local accounts, calamity seeds have properties that make them both enabling and or disabling. Rather than limiting residents’ seed sovereignty, calamity seeds permitted some “affordances” (Gibson 1979) to them. Calisto and his brother, Ernesto, told me that *sementes de calamidade* were good because they had a short maturing period; for example, they were planted in October and around January and February, local agriculturalists could already harvest the produce from calamity seeds. These different temporalities of plant maturation helped residents during what they called *tempo de fome* (lit. the famine period) which is usually around January to April. During the months of January to April the local maize seeds are still maturing. Calisto and Ernesto added that the calamity seeds also helped in generating income since in the months of January/April not many people had maize available for consumption so they could sell the produce to other residents. Calamity seeds can also be disabling because they are not good to store for a long period of time. Calisto added that if one keeps the *calamity seeds* in the barn, they are easily damaged by insects, whereas local seeds can easily be stored for a long time, even across generations.

Another shortcoming of the improved seeds is that they *perder força* (lit. lose power) after three to four years of use, thus they are not good to conserve, and one is forced to buy new seeds and continuously being captured into the commodity economies. As Jason Moore (2015) would put it, this is another example of capitalism *in* nature manifesting itself. In other words, capitalism is deeply embedded in the web of life, one would also argue, following Povinelli's (2016) work, also nonlife. What this suggests is the (relative) local agriculturalists' control of their food systems which evidences their relative food sovereignty as defined by Patel (2009). Apart from external forces discussed above, local agriculturalists also face challenges resulting from internal dynamics in their endeavours to protect agricultural production.

Disasters in Mozambique are recurring. This is consistent with the observation made by David Rohrbach et al. in their report resulting from the study commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development when they reported that "Mozambique has seen an emergency or relief seed distribution program in virtually each of the past ten years" (Rohrbach et al. 2001, 20). The central and northern region of Mozambique are currently experiencing political violence, in central Mozambique caused by the dissatisfied Renamo sympathizers and in Pemba in the north by terrorist groups who are said to be affiliated to Al Shabab (an East-African-based terrorist group). Both situations have resulted in loss of life, economic and ecological devastation and forced migrations (Morier-Genoud 2020). In March 2019, Cyclone Idai swept through the city of Beira leaving devastation and deaths behind its trail and six-week later Cyclone Kenneth made landfall in northern Mozambique. An international call for humanitarian aid ensued after both the political conflicts and cyclones. Looking at the idea proposed by David Rohrbach et al. (2001) that disasters in Mozambique are a good opportunity to introduce improved seeds in a controlled manner, and the fact that such disasters are far from over, it is possible to predict that catastrophe and disruption will continue to offer an entry point for genetically modified seeds into the residents' food systems, since then the options that will be made available by the state and private investors will be adapt or starve with complex results, including trapping residents into commodity networks.

Pests and pesticides: technologies of mass production, technologies of death

As stated earlier, agriculture in Nangaze and Nvava is inherently a relational practice involving humans and nonhumans. Monkeys, rodents, warthogs, and birds are some of the animals (or

pests) that local agriculturalists must deal with since they raid their produce and influence agricultural production. Birds and rodents unearth and eat planted seeds, monkeys eat the maize cobs and bugs feast on the maize leaves or cobs, hence emerging as pests to be controlled.

Troubled relations between local agriculturalists and wildlife have been evidenced elsewhere (Knight 1999; Saj, Sicotte and Paterson 2003; Engeman et al. 2009; Riley and Priston 2010; Priston, Wyper and Lee 2011). Almost all these studies have concluded that anthropogenic habitat alteration has forced many animal species into conflicts with humans (Saj, Sicotte and Paterson 2003; Priston, Wyper and Lee 2011).

This habitat invasion and resulting troubled relations with crop raiding species was also the case with local agriculturalists in Nangaze and Nvava. The species raiding crops have forced local agriculturalists to devise strategies to halt the pests from destroying their crops. In the past, one of those strategies used to be the use of pesticides, which residents also bought from Malawi, Milange district or Mocuba. Pesticides, like improved seeds, are also part of the massive agribusiness complex. Alavanja (2009, 1), resorting to 1998-1999 estimates, stated that over 1 billion pounds of pesticides were used in the United State (US) each year and approximately 5.6 billion pounds were used worldwide. Pesticides are a technological artefact that comes with the promise of humans controlling life to ensure secure agricultural production. However, as I will show, pesticides intrude in soil and animal and human life.

In many developing countries programs to control exposures to pesticides are limited or non-existent, and it is estimated that as many as 25 million agricultural workers worldwide experience unintentional pesticide poisonings each year. Ashish Goel and Praveen Aggarwal (2007, 182), for example, stated that “acute poisoning with pesticides is a global public health problem and accounts for as many as 300,000 deaths worldwide every year.”

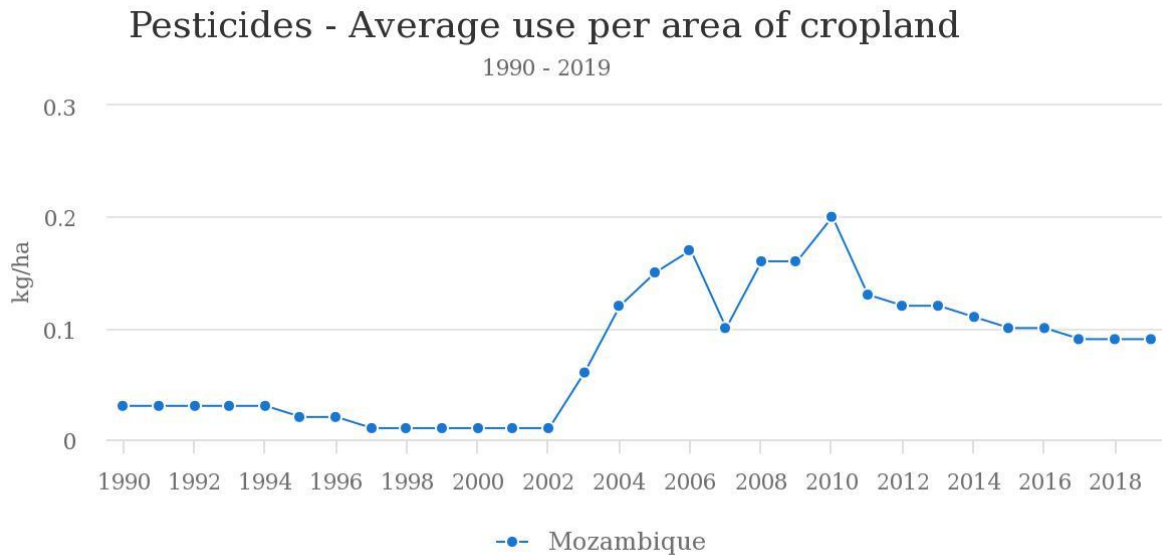


Figure 9. Pesticides-average use per area of cropland in Mozambique. Source FAOSTAT available at <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/EP/visualize>

Some of this industrial complex of pesticide products were used in Nangaze and Nvava and some Nangaze residents believed that poison had claimed the life of some of its inhabitants. When I arrived in Nangaze in 2017, the use of pesticides was forbidden because of its unintended consequences and contamination. On April 2, 2017, I participated in a gathering in Nangaze to talk about the mysterious death of a couple. First, the wife got sick. Her belly bloated and she then died. This death had raised suspicion in Nangaze. According to some residents, one day after the burial of the deceased wife, on March 26, 2017, the surviving husband allegedly fearing prosecution from the local court drank a substance that people believed had killed his wife. After drinking the pesticide, the man started vomiting blood and after a while he also died. Both deaths in the eyes of local inhabitants were odd.

During that meeting, one hypothesis that emerged among the participants was that *okwiri* (see chapter six) was involved. Another emerging hypothesis was that the deceased couple had ingested pesticide. This hypothesis seemed to have more acceptance among the participants, who started sharing similar stories of family members who died from pesticide ingestion from Nangaze and other *povoados* in what one could call a “local epidemiological study”. The story shared above suggests that these numbers could be much higher, but it is hard to estimate since

there is no systematic registration of these cases in Mozambique, as was the couple which was buried without proper autopsy to determine the causes of their death.

In this case, technologies that are prevalent in the new form of industrial agriculture intended to accelerate agricultural productivity under the neo-extractivist policies were behind the devastation of soils and river ecosystems, groundwater and environment at large (Schipper, Vissers and van der Linden 2008; Saki, Moran and Harris 2011; Toccalino et al. 2011; Kabir and Rainis 2012; Mahmood et al. 2016; Carvalho 2017; AllAfrica 2019), and were also behind deaths and increased vulnerabilities in the *povoados* and elsewhere (van der Hoek et al. 1998; Alavanja 2009; Balme et al. 2010; Gunnel and Eddleston 2003; Mew et al. 2017).

Since pesticides became prohibited local agriculturalists had to devise other strategies to curb yield loss due to pests. These strategies involved learning to live with the pests. When opening new *mida*, residents leave a thick barrier of bush around the *muda* to slow down the monkeys. Another technique is to put *ratoeiras* (lit. plur. rat traps, or gin traps) around the *muda* since monkeys are a part of residents' diet. One of the most considerable changes the animals create in the local inhabitants' social fabric is the extension of the living space from the *povoados* to their *mida*, mostly if the *mida* are located far from the residents' homesteads, which is usually the case. Those residents live in the *mida* houses to control the raiding animals and protect their yields which are no easy tasks to do year-round. This is where the calamity seeds also proved useful, as the extract below from a conversation, in Nangaze on April 6, 2017, with Calisto shows:

for example, I was saying that the grants that JA! gave us to develop projects in the *povoados*, we thought about using them to buy the *calamity* seeds which have a short maturation after planting. Because it is a seed that *adianta muito* (lit. advances a lot—fast to grow). For example, in our case, in terms of monkeys, right, because the people abandon their houses to live in the *mida* because of the monkeys. So, if it is our [local] seeds, then you spend many days there [in the *mida*]. So, if it is the *calamity* seed you are there for a few days [translated from Portuguese].

What Calisto's words evidence is the fact that residents measure time according to agricultural cycles, and by exploring the short cycles of improved seeds in the farms funded by JA! they then would spend less time in those projects but on their own *mida*, which are already hard to

maintain. However, JA! was against such use of improved seeds, favouring instead the local seeds without understanding the local logics of agricultural production and the economies behind it. Based on their own understandings, JA! is currently building seed banks to save residents local seeds amid JA!'s struggle to curb to counter the domination of genetically modified seeds.

Soil, kinship, relational ecologies, and local agricultural systems in Nangaze and Nvava

In a conversation on April 7, 2017, I learned from Balami that residents in Nangaze and Nvava don't treat the land as a commodity, instead they view it as a commons that is to be circulated among the *povoado* members mostly through kinship networks. Nangaze's and Nvava's residents are matrilineal and uxorilocal, meaning that when people marry, the man moves to the area of the woman, and the family of the woman allocates a plot to the man to produce food, where the man with works his wife and children. Residents are matrilineal in that the kinship and circulation of inheritance and progeny is carried through the maternal side.

To ensure that the soil remains a commons, they have in place local institutions like local courts. For example, I once asked Balami what could happen if people sold their plot. Before I could finish my question, Balami interjected with an assertive, "No". Then he continued saying that "You can't sell the *terra* (lit.sing. land) here. That is prohibited. You can sell a house but not the *terra*. If the leaders find out that you have sold it, they can take you to the local court" (Balami, Nangaze, April 7, 2017, [translated from Portuguese]), where land disputes and other social conflicts were mediated. What this meant is that people owned the work they had done on the soil and as such they had the right to protect that work from intrusions or even sell it but not the soil itself. Balami added that people could also borrow plots from their friends or relatives if they did not arrive in Nangaze and Nvava through marriage. In other words, kinship networks and relatedness were the circuits through which land and soil circulated and, in the process, building solidarity networks and community. Care for their kin and building of solidarity emerged as the mode of connection between residents and the soil.



Figure 90. This is a photograph that I took in 2017 in Nvava shows a cassava farm in a residents' homestead, with a local vegetation and then Mount Mabo in the background.

Local agriculturalists in Nangaze and Nvava seldom work on the same *mida* for two or more consecutive seasons, unless the *mida* are in their homesteads. The *mida* that are left to rest are called *ruínas* (lit. plur. ruins) and they can be reused after a while, a system that is called fallow agriculture—which works with local landscapes to ensure fertility. According to the interlocutors of this study, they use fallow cultivation as a strategy to allow soils to rest and regenerate. This means that unaware state and government officials using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and other technologies to render landscapes legible could categorize *ruínas* as “unproductive lands” to be counted in the “land fund”, hence open for exploitation by private corporations.

Local agriculturalists usually open new *mida* in the period comprising the months of August to October, during the dry season. The *mida* are commonly located on mountain foothills, or near rivers, streams, or forests. The choice of the location of the *mida* depends on the kind of variety of products local agriculturalists grow. For example, according to the interlocutors of this

study, there are two types of rice in the region, namely *arroz de baixa* (lit. rice of lowlands—rice grown in lowlands) and *arroz de montanha* (lit. rice of the mountain—rice grown on mountain foothills). The lowland rice is grown in swamps or near streams.

After the local agriculturalists have cut down the trees and grass from the land, they leave the grass and branches to dry and then burn them. The burning is done in the same period, hence constituting a choreography linking seasons of the year, nonhumans, and humans. This choreography must be followed copiously, because when the time to burn the dried trees and grass comes, those local agriculturalists who had not harvested all their maize or produce until then, run a serious risk of losing all their remaining crops with the fires. In the past, Mount Mabo and the forest used to play a significant role in signalling the start of this burning period, hence making the cultivation of soil a truly human-nonhuman choreography. For this to occur, residents stated that the *amwene* performed a *mucuto* and then the spirits would start a fire on the mountain, meaning nature itself participated in the burning of dry grass. When the local agriculturalists saw that fire, they knew that it was time to start burning the dried tree branches and grass on their newly opened *mida*.

What emerged in attending to soil and local agricultural systems is that holistically and dialogically it connects landscapes, people, and spirits and celebrates biodiversity in what one could call a relational ecology which in turn enables community building as was evidenced with the “Secret Mount Mabo” version of landscapes (see chapter three and four). Since local agriculturalists use slash-and-burn agriculture, the relationalities described above, including the *mwene* Nangaze’s intervention at the beginning of this chapter, are reduced to “threats” to “wilderness” by conservationists (see chapter two), local agriculturalists’ predicaments and struggles are framed as reactionary, and the soils that they leave to rest to regenerate are generally framed as “unproductive lands” by the neo-extractivist state. Both conservationists’ and neo-extractive state’s framings in their short-sightedness end up creating conditions for residents to continuously have their landscapes, temporalities, subjectivities, and relations between them transformed to cheap “resources” or factors of production.

“Haunted” landscapes: monocultures, relational ecologies, and nature protection

As Anna Tsing (2012) stated, monocultures are a process of simplification and reduction or denying diversity of life as in the name of increased production and profit. The same observation was made by James Scott (1998, 4) who stated that the state through privileging what Scott called a high-modernist ideology, complex social relations and landscapes were rendered legible through simplification. Plantations have had a longstanding history with contradictory effects in my fieldwork site.

The state’s increased focus on private investment, as framed by the President’s speech, to transform local modes of agriculture towards modernization and development has resulted in multiple forms of dispossession in areas located near Mount Mabo all in the name of capital accumulation, as I detail below. This process has led to increased conflicts between the corporation working in the area and residents. I resort to the Marxist scholar David Harvey’s definition of accumulation by dispossession to describe the various forms of dispossessions that residents have experienced after the implementation of the Corporation. According to Harvey, accumulation by dispossession is

the commodification and privatisation of land and the forceful expulsion [and Arnall (2019) would add manipulation] of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights [...; the commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (and indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial and imperial processes of appropriation of assets [...] (Harvey 2003, 145)

Harvey’s definition of accumulation by dispossession can be criticized for being presented in the form of checklist that might not account for other forms of dispossessions beyond the list, like the one that I have been describing throughout the thesis—the modernist ontology impositions—that enable material dispossessions as the ones described by Harvey. However, Harvey’s definition is good to describe the material transformations occurring in my fieldwork site.

The establishment of exploitative labour relations intensified after the imposition of colonial plantations, specifically tea estates in Lugela district in the 1930s resulting in novel geographies of exploitation that still “haunt” present landscapes, as landscapes of simplification, to use Tsing et al.’s (2017) words. The introduction of tea and the changing landscapes in the foot slopes of Mount Mabo as stated earlier was facilitated by RBG Kew in its aid of the British Empire expansion that ultimately led to the scientific organization’s rise to being one of the major plant-life genome banks on Earth.

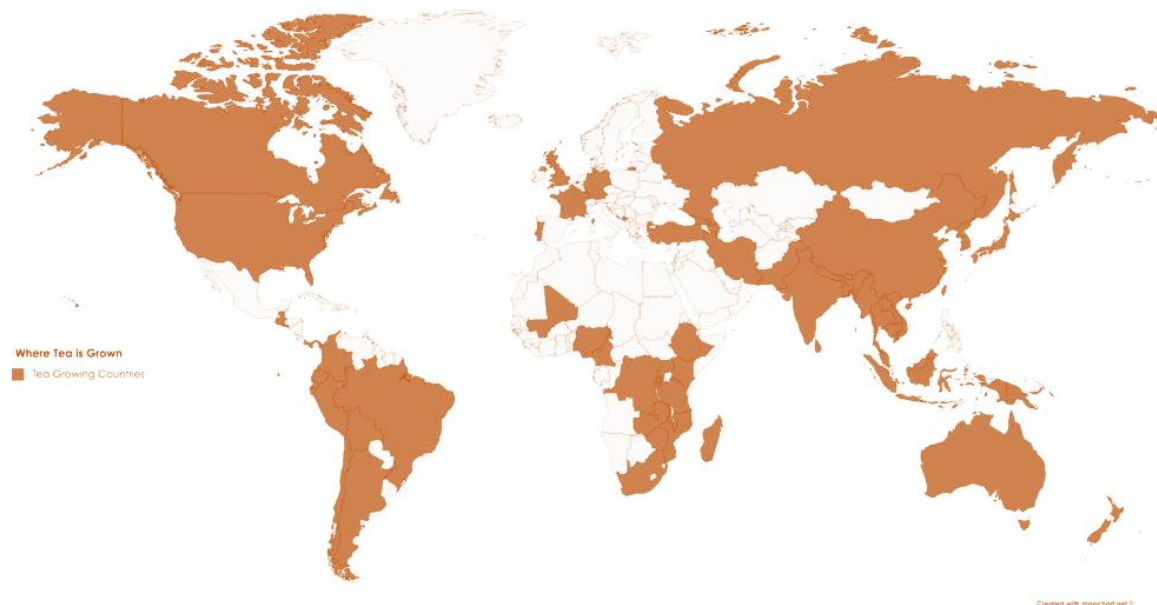


Figure 101. Map showing tea growing countries (dark grey). Source: American Specialty Tea Alliance (<https://specialtyteaalliance.org/world-of-tea/tea-producing-countries/>)

Wilson et al. (1960) describes how tea was firstly grown in Durban, South Africa, after the success of tea plantations in Mulanje, in Malawi 1878 because previous attempts to grow coffee plantations had “failed” (cf. Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; 2017) private investors and colonial governments in turn expanded tea plantations to other parts of the continent using slave labour. Tea plantations then reached global markets, and currently implicated in the ongoing climate crisis, constituting what Donna Haraway (2015) and Anna Tsing (2015) named the “Plantationocene”. Revisiting and expanding the concept of “Plantationocene”, Murphy (2020, 402) suggests that the concept holds the potential for implicating raciality, coloniality, and capitalism in the past and present. By focusing on the concept of “Plantationocene”, the

implication of the current nature saving RBG Kew institution on the establishment and spread of large tea plantations across Africa alongside coloniality, raciality and capitalism emerges.

Both Mount Mulanje and Mount Mabo, whose biodiversity the RGB Kew scientists are currently trying to save from *human* activity, were in the early 20th century attached to this large-scale tea plantation monocultures. Such monocultures still comprised the major forms of capital exploitation of land, seeds, people, and natures specifically in Lugela district affecting also other types of ecological relationships. After the civil war (1976-1992), the company's land use rights had been acquired by different private companies after the post-colonial Mozambican state's attempts at modernizing agriculture by making use of what the state framed as "idle lands" and the private investments. Those companies subsequently went bankrupt.

Mozambique Holdings Limited acquired the rights to explore production of commercial rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*). In the same way that RBG Kew was behind the implementation of the tea industry in Africa, the organization was also behind the rise of the British Rubber industry during the Nineteenth Century after their explorations in the Amazon rainforest (Woodruff 1958; Brockway 1979). RGB Kew was both instrumental for the economy of imperialists and for its expansion as described by Lucile Brockway (1979). Currently, tea and rubber are multi-billion US dollars industries worldwide. FAO (2001) estimates that in 1997, 9,675,000ha were being explored in the world for commercial rubber production, 92% of which is in Asia, 5,5% in Africa and 2,4% in Latin America. Also, tea is still largely produced across the world, cultivated on the total of 3,691,938 ha land globally with an annual production of around 4,1 million tones (Basu Majumder, Bera and Rajan 2010). In Latina America, Asia, and Africa, cheap labour power, cheap land, and arguably development-thirsty weak states are crucial for those kinds of large plantations (see Ferguson 1994; Moore 2015; Li 2007; 2017).

In Lugela, after Mozambique Holdings Limited was established promising jobs and development, mostly young men were hired as casual workers which meant they did not possess any secure jobs or social benefits. The responsibility to deal with injuries associated with the work were transferred to the workers and their families. According to the interlocutors of this study, workers earned 100mtn for a task that could take up to three days to complete at Mozambique Holdings Limited, which meant they had to work to exhaustion to secure such a

pay, and at times work beyond the 8-hour labour as constituted by Mozambique and the lapse of appropriate overtime work payment. Workers also complained about the constant and unjustified salary cuts and unjustified and uncompensated firings, about insults, lack of provision of food, despite long work hours. Community members also voiced complaints about the way the corporation secluded itself from the *povoado*, since in the view of the manager “there is no relationship” (Mozambique Holdings Limited’s Manager June 16, 2016). Labour relations are the relations and emerged as exploitative and devoid of love for plants, soils, and people.

What the residents’ complaints above and the manager’s response suggest is the similar inscription of novel forms of exploitative relations resulting in land grabs, erosion of local forms of property relations, and exploitation of what investors and the state frame as cheap and abundant labour power in the face of development-thirsty and weak state found by Kenney-Lazar (2012) in Laos or in Indonesia by Tina Li (2017), and in Zambézia province by Adalima (2016). Such transformations do not limit themselves to the creation of a labour force to be exploited by low-wages or the separation of local agriculturalists from the factors of production (*cf.* Tsing 2012; Brockington 2019), but also effect human relations between people and their environments.

The Limbue’s *mwene*, Augusto Maricema, reported that the Mozambique Holdings’ manager was *bruto* (lit.sing. rude). On different occasions the local chief along with other stakeholders went to talk with the manager about some of the complaints that residents and workers had made against the corporation. The local chief and his committee were reportedly met with disdain. The Limbue’s *mwene* said that they were made to talk to the manager while standing on their feet even though he was old. In the local ontology, when a guest visits it is considered a sign of respect to offer a chair for the guest to sit, and if possible, food to eat and water to drink, even more so if that guest is the *mwene*. The interlocutors of my study always offered me a chair, food, and water during my visits in their homesteads (see chapter two and four).



Figure 112. This photograph that I took in 2017, from Nvava from the mid-way to the top of Mount Mabo shows the landscape in Limbue, Namadoe and beyond but also the vast area being explored by Mozambique Holdings Limited for rubber plants.

Plantations code subjectivities, landscapes and relations as mentioned above and such plantations also block local dwellers' flows and mobilities as described elsewhere by Tim Ingold (2000), Elizabeth Povinelli (1995). This coding is due to their inscription of new forms of private property relations where the commons regime operated previously. The enclosures in most cases are carried out with the complicity of the political and economic elite. These inscriptions of private property relations and the enclosures they create result in counterclaims from residents formulated around the chronotope like our grandparents used to dwell in these (newly enclosed) areas, which has been evoked on different studies on land disputes or landscapes disposessions. In my case, one example of such enclosure as reported by residents was that Mozambique Holdings Limited manager ordered his employees to block access to a road that passes through the corporation's lands, but which residents used to reach other *povoados*. Residents had used the same road even during the colonial company Madal. Now the current manager of Mozambique Holdings Limited had blocked access to the same road, at

times using physical violence against residents who were found using the road. Recently, JA! (2020) reported a case in which a local resident was physically assaulted by the workers from Mozambique Holdings after they had found him using the road. Being found true, these allegations highlight serious violations of labourers' and human rights abuse in general were being committed by the corporation.

The conversation with the manager quoted at the beginning of this chapter was not conclusive in terms of the claims that the residents and workers had made against the corporation, but the simple fact that the corporation's manager saw the relation between the residents and the corporation as something which could merely be reduced to employee and employer relation was revealing. To me it shows how residents' livelihoods and personhood were reduced to being what in economic sectors is labelled a "human resource", that was abundant and cheap. Additionally, the conversation was telling in terms of how some of the "negative" practices of local agriculturalists like the use of fires to open the *mida* were used by the manager to state that "people do not protect their environment". In that way, the corporation manager put himself as the one who respects the environment in comparison to residents. The manager suggests that residents needed to be controlled and educated about the need to start caring for and protecting their environment, much like the scientists and NGOs also stipulated. Paulo Freire (2005), drawing from Louis Althusser's work on ideology, calls the kind of education implied by the manager a banking education, since it aims at enslaving people and continuity of the systems of oppression. That kind of education is oppressive because it denies the knowledge and experiences of its subjects of its action by imposing a version of nature and human, and the kinds of relations that are counted as valid on such subjects. Its sole purpose is to sustain the *status quo* described earlier.

The Mozambican state has (labour, land, conservation and environmental) laws that specify procedures for environmental impact assessments and institutions that protect labourers' rights and human rights abuses. Assuming that environmental assessment impacts were carried out by the corporation as mandated by the laws (see also chapter two), this meant Mozambique Holdings Limited was aware of the laws and so were local state authorities. When I returned to Namadoe after the visit to the corporation, I asked the same residents and the Limbue's *mwene* why they had not reported the violations to the district government. Their response was

that the government not only knew about the Corporation's abuses but took no action because high up Frelimo members were associated with the corporation.

Even though I could not find evidence of such allegations of the Frelimo elite being involved in the rubber plantation investment, the fact that residents articulated it, suggested that they felt that the Mozambican state had been captured by Frelimo elite who used state authority to advance their own extractive interests. This elite capture coupled with the fact that as James Ferguson stated, in weakly governed African states [like Mozambique], it is not on the effective control of national borders or monopoly of violence that sovereignty lies, but “the ability to provide contractual legal authority that can legitimate the extractive work of transnational firms” (Ferguson 2006, 27). This ability to enable and steer extractivism through state authority was also pointed out by Burchardt and Dietz (2014) as one of the characteristics of what they called neo-extractivism in Latin America.

Both tea and rubber are an integral part and parcel of the modern global economies and constituting individual people's lifestyles and identities. Both commodities are labour intensive, requiring intensive use of agricultural inputs and usually unskilled cheap and disposable labour. The production of tea and rubber occupy large tracts of lands, and products circulate globally, carried by narratives of progress and economic development. Most importantly these crops are produced in locales where labour and human rights against residents are reported to be systematically violated, and slavery-like conditions and human trafficking are reported (see Peluso 2009; Chamberlain 2014; Anantharaman 2019; Lunn 2019), including child (slave) labour (Lee-Wright 1990). Additionally, corporations producing tea or rubber plants seldom respect environmental laws (see Jayasuriya 2003; Reis 2008; Yüksek et al. 2009; Hall 2011; Kenney-Lazar 2012; Hung 2015). Enriching economic and political elite in the countries where such tea and rubber cash crops are implemented have led in most cases to land dispossessions in Asia, Africa and Latin America and other contexts (Saigenji and Zeller 2009). In other words, rubber plantations have their own “ghosts” haunting the present in Lugela (JA2020)²⁵ as elsewhere (see Peck 2011; Farge 2012; Harford 2019). In all instances, much like Moore (2016, 27) described, the plantation system was built on the four cheaps: “cheap food”, “cheap energy”, “cheap labour” and “cheap raw materials”—*i.e.*,

²⁵ For more details visit, <https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/fiquemsegurosmasn%C3%A3oemsil%C3%A3Ancio>

Cheap Nature—and, following Tsing (2012), Haraway et al. (2016, 270) and Tina Li (2017) and my fieldwork material, I add that the plantation resulted in the thingification and simplification of humans, nature and relations and the denial of social and biological diversity to thrive.

In a group meeting held in Namadoe, on June 11, 2016, one of the participants yelled for everyone around to hear and instructed me to record his intervention and display it to people where I came from, with him saying that “this land is not [Armando] Guebuza’s [the name of the former President]. Here people don’t know [Armando] Guebuza. They know the *mwene*, they know me, but not [Armando] Guebuza. This land is ours and they sold it. These people don’t respect us” [translated from Portuguese].

These strong words attested to the contradictions of the neoliberal and neo-extractive model of development that the current President, Filipe Nyusi, was promoting in his speech. In short, the state’s focus on modernizing agriculture for progress and economic acceleration with little to no state regulation has shown, like with the example of Mozambique Holdings Limited, that it has few benefits for residents. In addition, it has had more immediate and visible devastating effects on people and nature than the local forms of agriculture carried out. Capitalist explorations for cash crops represent further shock on the household and may lead to increased erosion of local food systems and a higher environmental pressure on communal land and resources. This in turn leads to increased poverty and internal conflicts among residents (*cf.* Burchardt and Dietz 2014). The RBK Kew scientists are historically attached to plantations, and they benefited and continue to benefit from them (see also, Woodruff 1958; Turrill 1959; Brockway 1979; Bridges 2002; Antonelli 2020) or allured by as Isabelle Stengers and Pignarre call it the “capitalist sorcery”. Yet, this fact was not being energetically addressed by the conservationists working on Mount Mabo during my fieldwork.

Conclusion

The literature on land ownership, seeds and the commons in southern Africa has pointed out the growing enclosure of the commons either by conservation, or by extractivism and the transformations they exert within rural areas in which novel constellations of marketization, privatization, commodification, financialization, and decentralisation are inscribed (Holmes and Cavanagh 2016, 206). I found similar patterns of dispossession and transformations in my

fieldwork, where neo-extractive development promoted by the state and international actors facilitates corporate land grabs resulting in increased conflicts over land, questionable growth of an elite and erosion of local modes of sociality. These transformations and resulting conflicts are not limited to Mount Mabo residents in Lugela district. Case studies have shown similar cases in Asia, Latin America, and other African countries in which assemblages including coloniality, raciality, capitalism and nature devastation have led to objectification of human lives, commoditization of nature and social relations, inscription of novel geographies, subjectivities, and temporalities, threatening local modes of relating that both include and surpass such newly established sets of relations, spatio-temporalities and subjectivities. In Mozambique, Marle Bowen (2000) went as far as to title such state's facilitation of capitalist encroachment on rural areas, "the state against the peasantry", a condition that started after the implementation of monocultures and forced labour in colonial Mozambique and has ever since produced complex results.

As I described, following the work of Anna Tsing (2012), Donna Haraway et al. (2016) and Tina Li (2007; 2017) plantations are *contra* social and biological diversity. What this means is that their implementation results in the introduction of monocultures: one cash crop plantation and employer-worker exploitative labour relations contra the relational ecologies and sharing economies in which local agriculturalists inhabit. Conservationists working to protect Mount Mabo, while combating land grabs and environmental devastation elsewhere in Mozambique, have not given proper attention to the workings of the same neo-extractivist dynamics in Lugela, where the rubber plantation corporation, its increased land grabs, and exploitation of residents as cheap and disposable labour power are adding vulnerability to residents. What the President called economic development through private investments in his speech does not account for these complex relations that escape the labour, land, and technical production simplistic equation. With the rise of what Hanlon (2004b) called a "cargo cult" as the catalyst of economic growth and poverty alleviation in Mozambique, as the President's speech attested, more conflicts between investors, newly created elite and residents have been on the rise.

A historical analysis as the one made by Tsing (2012) on "Plantationocene" helps denaturalize the current *status quo* in agribusiness in which money and domination continue to be the binding elements between landscapes, soils, plants, residents and plantation owners, not love. This framing, however exploitative and reductionist, is a form of a relation that keeps pulling

into its core more residents, soils, and landscapes that the state and investors using maps and poorly made land registration records have framed them as “idle”, “unoccupied” or “unproductive” and “cheap” resources. Commonplace areas of concerns like fires and animal and wildlife use have made it so that local forms of agriculture receive disproportionate attention as potential “threats” to the newly constructed “wilderness” on Mount Mabo, resulting in the conservationists’ push to protect the mountain from residents, in the process ignoring the giant rubber plantation, its historical legacies and its negative impacts on nature and social relations on Mount Mabo foot slopes.

If conservationists are to ensure conviviality and collaborative work with residents, they will need to acknowledge their own ontological bias, and open to the kinds of eco-politics as practiced by residents in which landscapes emerge as relational entities and circulated through sharing and kinship. Additionally, conservationists, like any other stakeholders involved in the struggle to improve the human and nature condition, need to acknowledge that they could themselves be the “minions” of “neo-extractivism” and capitalism. As Stengers and Pignarre reminds us they are minions because “[...] it is perhaps all these ‘minions’ who put us on the right path, who tell us how to name capitalism. Because they do not present them-selves, they do not think of themselves as, ‘in the service of capitalism’” (Stengers and Pignarre 2011, 31).

In a Facebook post in April 2020, JA! published the following claims about the Mozambique Holdings Limited, all of which were consistent with my observations:

Since entering the area, several cases of conflict have been reported between members of local communities, namely from Nvava, Limbue Sede, Namadoe and Nangaze. The conflicts and problems reported by those affected have been diverse, from cases of land conflict to the lack of respect with which company managers treat community members, until more recently a ban on passing through paths and routes that cross their area but have always been used by communities as there are no alternative access routes. According to the communities, the relationship with the management personnel of Madal was positive, as they did not use their entire area and allowed the local communities to establish their *machambas* (lit.plur. fields for crops), houses and family cemeteries in certain areas, and this has been the case over many years [...]. With the arrival of Mozambique Holdings Limited. everything changed and the *machambas*,

houses and cemeteries were removed, large areas of vegetation destroyed to make room for their trees [...] but no one presents the documentation of the DUAT transfer process, the environmental licensing process, nothing [...] nothing that the Law provides for as public information is in fact made public [translated from Portuguese].

As explained above,

the growing “capitalist sorcery” capturing relations, seeds, and soils, landscapes into the global commodity markets controlled by corporations, with complicity of an elite and the state has made some of the residents believe that some sort of occult economy was happening in the area. In this “capitalist sorcery”, persons and relations become increasingly commoditized and as a result *povoados*’ bonds with one another and nature become reconfigured in complex ways, resulting in increased conflicts, and added vulnerabilities.

Chapter six: Bewitching Mount Mabo: Power, Social Exclusion and Wellbeing in Nangaze

In my opinion the real explanation for the phenomenon of superstition lies in the fact that the people concerned have not been educated in the proper sense of education, education and once more education! I cannot emphasize enough the importance of modern education. It's the only long-term solution for the problem of superstition. In the short term, the state should do its work: enforce the respect for the rule of law and hold those who are suspected of human rights violations and ritualistic murders accountable for their heinous crimes (Fred van der Kraaij, albinism in Tanzania, 2018)!

I did not need to ask residents about *okwiri* during my fieldwork in Nvava and Nangaze before they repeatedly mentioned it. It was not on my academic radar. But as I lived and did *passer* with residents, stories of *okwiri* emerged on different occasions. Much as Evans-Pritchard (1937, 1) had experienced in his fieldwork among the Azande of South Sudan, “these ideas and actions [witchcraft, magic and oracles] are on the surface of their life and are accessible to anyone who lives for a few weeks in their homesteads.” Therefore, I had to pay extra attention to *okwiri* accusations after I, myself, was included in the rumours of people exhuming remains or extracting natural resources from the *povoados*. The same rumours were levelled against NGO activists, scientists and residents who worked closely with the NGOs and scientists. I could have easily dismissed these accusations as rumours based on misinformation since I had not witnessed any case of NGOs or scientists exhuming human remains. The scientists did in fact extract specimens of animals and plants for scientific enquiry—a normal practice among conservation scientists, as they also reported after their expeditions. There was nothing illegal about their extraction of animal and plant specimens, in the eyes of the Mozambican civil law. Still there was something to residents’ accusations that arguably consisted in some sort of questioning of and perceived power imbalances between residents, scientists, NGO activists and local associations. In these power imbalances, residents working closely with these external actors became implicated by association to the views of residents at large who were not directly involved in nature protection projects.

I focus on *okwiri* not in the same exorcising spirit of Fred van der Kraaij's education contra superstition that forms the epigraph to this chapter. The killing of people accused of witchcraft, including violence against them or social exclusion, are horrendous and reprehensible deeds that need to be urgently addressed, however, I contend that dismissing the validity of the whole conceptualisation of witchcraft as a social institution would be a catastrophic move—like throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. Such attitude as expressed by van der Kraaij is impregnated by the now invalidated (however, evidently extant) evolutionist and colonial framings of difference in which that which was not Western was considered primitive or living museums of a Western past that needed to either be brought to modernity through scientific education and Christianity or preserved to tell the story of modernity's infancy. If anything, the epigraph above shows that modernity has not produced the intended outcomes that it promised—specifically that of unifying the world and humans. The promise was based on the idea of constructing a universe or “one-world world” (Law 2011) premised on a dualized view of nature-culture, master-slave, subject-object, currently tied together by capitalism (see Stengers and Pignarre 2011; Moore 2015; Green 2020), as presented in the previous chapters. As Comaroff and Comaroff (1999, 295) put it the: “enchantment, far from slipping away with the resolute march of modernity, seems everywhere on the rise,” and behind that enchantment is the sanity threatening feeling that “there is a maleficent power; it exists. [And] its revelation is the restoration of mental [and social] coherence” (Siegel 2006, 213).

Scholars like Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser (2018) speak of a “world of many worlds”, a multiverse (Halbmayer 2012) or pluriverse (Escobar 2016) and all these worlds have their own ways of defining centres and peripheries, normality, and anomaly. In this chapter, I tease out one world in those many worlds—the world of the people in Nangaze and Nvava—and argue that the *okwiri* accusations are a mechanism through which residents try to make sense of the unfortunate and inexplicable to safeguard the integrity of their *povoados* and self (understood as produced in relation to others). This builds on one of the core interventions of the previous chapter: the growing neoliberal and neo-extractivist enclosures bringing further inconsistencies and vulnerability in residents' “web of life” to use Jason Moore's (2015) phrase.

Attending to *okwiri* in this chapter, I argue that one can understand how local people make sense of otherwise invisible, inexplicable, and destructive effects of modernity, capitalism and

neo-extractivism that bring with them relational transformations that in turn produce new social hierarchies, and reshape old ones in the *povoados*, as discussed in the previous chapters. Moreover, at the local level, following the case of Balami, a local agriculturalist and resident, as both a person and a concept, I will argue that witchcraft is a way of contesting dominant power and claiming a stake in a context where he is otherwise portrayed as marginal or an “anomaly”. By Balami refusing to be dominated by the social, I show that he forces further negotiation of the social boundaries within the *povoado*. What this means is that *akwiri* (lit.plur. witches) possess attributes that cause concerns to residents, and while such concerns are not eliminated residents must constantly deal with such attributes and concerns and in the process experience the elasticity of social boundaries.

By extension, my insistence on the use of *okwiri* as both analytical lens and empirical focus lies in the fact that by refusing to delimit *okwiri* to an anomaly resulting from illiteracy or mental ineptitude, as the exorcist stance of both science and theology would have it, I seek to stay with the trouble, to use Haraway’s (2016) words, produced by the tension between Modernist and local ontologies that *okwiri* accusations inhabit. That tension, I contend, should be dealt with through constant dialogue conducive to recognition and redistribution, not alienating education as suggested in the epigraph.

***Okwiri*, politics and living and dying well in Post-colonial Mozambique**

Witchcraft accusations and containment are a current phenomenon operating in different African urban and rural locales (Ehrenreich 1990; Geschiere 1997; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Bowen 2001; Ashforth 2005; Englund 2007; Geschiere 2013; Israel 2014). The scholarly analysis of the workings of witchcraft oscillates between two attitudes towards it: one group of scholars describe people who believe in witchcraft as being incapable and uneducated to grasp and explain facts (*i.e.*, Pritchard 1937; Igwe 2004; Macamo 2010). For example, scholars like the Dutch economist, quoted in the epigraph, who focused solely on the ritual killings for witchcraft question the whole institution of witchcraft (van der Kraaij 2018). Elísio Macamo (2010) dismisses witchcraft and the spirituality it entails as a “*desmaio da razão*” (lit. the fainting of reason). The second group of scholars take an opposite stance, arguing that witchcraft is a means for grasping or negotiating the worlds modern and traditional, and of giving a framework for people who believe in it to reason around,

reorganized, interpret and act on inexplicable facts in modern societies (Ehrenreich 1990; Geschiere 1997; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Bowen 2001; Ashforth 2005; Siegel 2006; Englund 2007; Geschiere 2013; Israel 2009; 2014).

In line with the latter chain of thought, Niehaus (1995), in his study on post-apartheid South Africa in an eastern Transvaal lowveld village, shows how after the country's first democratic election 1994, witchcraft accusations included whites, for the first time. Niehaus (1995, 9) shows how radical shifts, or as the author called it "a world turned upside down" allowed for new interpretations of witchcraft in which the whites became seen as resentful and dominated, hence susceptible of bewitching the blacks. In this framing, witchcraft emerged as the weapon of the newly weakened whites, to paraphrase James Scott (1987). Other scholars have studied witchcraft to suggest how witchcraft emerges as a weapon of dominant people to exploit the dominated (see Nyamnjoh 2005; Parish 2005; 2011; Ojong 2012; Geldenhuys 2019; DW Africa 2020). In this framing, dominated people use *witchcraft accusations* as a mode of questioning hegemonic power. What this means is that witches are considered the people who objectify, oppress, or exploit the alleged victims for their own interests. Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), writing on what they call the "occult economy" also in post-apartheid South Africa, connected the increase in witchcraft accusations to the encounters of rural South Africa with the contradictory effects of millennial capitalism. In that encounter class or race were no longer at the core of the struggles, but generations.

Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), inspired by Max Gluckman's (1940) insistence on a unitary explanation beyond the seemingly diverse and disperse events, argued that what seemed to be disparate and disconnected phenomena like an epidemic of witchcraft and the killing of those suspected of magical evil or moral panics about the piracy of body parts were in fact symptoms of an occult economy. "Drawing on cultural elements with long indigenous histories", argue Comaroff and Comaroff, "this economy is itself an integral feature of millennial capitalism—that odd fusion of the modern and the postmodern, of hope and hopelessness, of utility and futility, of promise and its perversions" (1999, 283). This occult economy puts on contrasting sides the few increasingly rich individuals and the increasingly poor people and communities. For Niehaus (1995), and for Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), witchcraft accusations thus were more than a localized phenomenon, emerging instead at an intersection between global and local processes, in the here and now in the face of intense and unequal transformations.

Similarly, in Mozambique, specifically in Nampula and Zambézia province scholars like Carlos Serra (1996), Joseph Hanlon (2017), Sérgio Chichava (2009) and others have studied a figure of the blood-sucking vampires, locally called *chupa-sangues* which the authors interpreted as some sort of a mechanism through which local people challenged the oppressing Frelimo political and economic elite. According to those authors, residents believed that such creatures sucked blood from their victims at night while the victims slept using syringes. Serra shows that the emergence of this figure of *chupa-sangue* in Zambézia province can be traced between 1978 and 1979, a period when the government “implemented the authoritarian experiments of the “*Homem Novo*” (lit.sing. New Man) which included vaccination campaigns and blood donations. These campaigns were countered by Rhodesian and anti-Frelimo radio emissions based on disinformation campaigns” (Serra 1996, 1 [translated from Portuguese]). In this period, there was a belief among local inhabitants that “the blood extracted was destined for the creation of a new currency, consolidation of the national unity and to supply hospitals” (ibid.). One of the fascinating aspects about the occurrence of the *chupa-sangue* was the fact that Zambézia province was often quoted as the epicentre of the phenomenon. Chichava (2009), two decades later after Serra’s study, showed how Zambézia province has been a “Renamo province” and how during the civil war the province was “hated by Frelimo” (Chichava 2009, 19). This perceived Renamo attachment to Zambézia by Frelimo, according to Chichava and local accounts led to allegedly Frelimo-led army destroying places that were considered Renamo strongholds in the province, a destruction that reinforced the idea of *chupa-sangue*.

Stories about the *chupa-sangues* were still circulating when I returned to fieldwork in Nangaze, in 2017. In that period, there were increased tumults due to the phenomenon. Residents believed that the *chupa-sangues* were connected to health workers who sent the creatures to extract blood from their victims while the victims slept, hence the victims could not defend themselves. In Namadoe, where residents believed the existence of *chupa-sangues* was even more common, residents slept outside of their houses, danced, and clapped their hands at night to keep the creatures away. This rumour of *chupa-sangues* spread to different districts causing a collective fear which led to a destruction and burning of the house of the chief of the local police station, destruction of social infrastructures like local hospitals and the killing of two people in Gilé district (DW Africa 2017a). In Muralelo, Munema district, Nampula province bordering Zambézia province to the north, the police killed one person and injured three people

after a riot that was organized by a mob trying to free forty people in police custody accused of inciting tumults related to *chupa-sangue* (DW África 2017b). The phenomenon of reactions to *chupa-sangue* was not locally bound. It travelled across the border to the neighbouring country, Malawi, specifically in Blantyre. As the Malawian Albert Sharra (2019, 71) attested:

rumours about the 2017 bloodsucking are believed to have originated from neighbouring Mozambique, spreading through the southern border districts of Mulanje, Phalombe, Thyolo, Nsanje, Chiradzulu and some parts of Blantyre, Malawi's commercial city [...]. The rumours started to gain more prominence both in the local media and in the international community following reports that residents in the affected areas were attacking strangers on the suspicion that they had a hand in the occurrence.

In Malawi, rather than the health workers and state officials and institutions, the perpetrators of *chupa-sangues* were framed as the “stranger” or the “outsider”, a trope leading to an identity politics based on us against them, that I discussed briefly in chapter three. Back in Gilé, a district in Zambézia province, a clergyman, André Satchicuata, when interviewed by DW Africa stated that “there must be government people who are capable of dealing with this phenomenon and find out what it is *really* about. It is not about sucking the blood in its true sense. But there is something behind it that no one can explain... Therefore, the authorities should pay attention to what the people are saying” (DW Africa 2017a, section *Sangue terá como destino hospitais locais*, para. 3, my italics [translated from Portuguese]). The clergyman's sobering and cautious intervention resonates with the highly critical commentary by Serra (1996), Hanlon (2017), and Chichava (2009) who linked these incidents to the existence of what Comaroff and Comaroff (1993) called the “malcontents of modernity” who were continuously and systematically being disenfranchised by Frelimo government and political and economic elite. The fact that most of the mob actions were levied against police officers, health workers, local chiefs, local administrators, Frelimo secretaries, police stations and commanders and resulted in the destruction of their properties or stations (Hanlon 2017) were cases that partly validated the argument above-mentioned.

These rumours and the sustained uproar and devastation that they had caused, forced the President of the Republic of Mozambique, Filipe Nyussi, to intervene in a public event in Nampula in 2017 where he qualified the accusations of witchcraft and existence of *chupa-*

sanguês as false, and stated that “up to this moment, no one has come to a health unit as a victim of the phenomenon,” (de Moraes 2017, section *uma nova forma de guerra*, para. 2 [translated from Portuguese]). The President then qualified the events as “a concerted action aiming at creating a new kind of war and *semear* (lit. to plant) disagreement in the midst of the population” (ibid. [translated from Portuguese]). This message resonated with the Frelimo socialist idea of the enemy within or without which the socialist party had mobilized to keep check of and police the dissenting perspectives (Dinnerman 2006) and pointed the finger to an occult concerted action trying to topple over the perceived peace, agreement and stability among the population and Frelimo government. The blame was placed elsewhere and so was the responsibility to deal with the tumults. The President called upon local chiefs to have a more active role in explaining to the people about this phenomenon and clean the mess for the government (de Moraes 2017, section *uma nova forma de guerra*, para. 3 [translated from Portuguese]). What these events above suggest is the undeniable connection between witchcraft accusation and the globalisation of political life in rural Zambézia and Nampula.

Thus far, I have proposed that the proverbial baby needs caring and has a place in contemporary Mozambican political debate, private and public life. However, witchcraft has its “dark side” that needs serious attention. Paolo Israel (2009) on his study on lion attacks in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, neighbouring Tanzania makes a similar connection between witchcraft accusations and politics but also signals the need to consider the gruesome aspect of witchcraft. Israel showed that people in Muidumbe believed that lion attacks were attacks perpetrated by people who transformed into lions, and how these accusations soon assumed a political dimension in which the newly formed Frelimo political and economic elite were accused of manipulating a group of lion-men and engaging in organ trafficking with an international alliance of vampires. In the same study, Israel, inspired by James Siegel’s book *Naming the witch*, critiques current Anthropological scholarship on witchcraft by stating that “on the one hand, one is led to reiterate the Enlightenment’s baptismal naming of sorcery as superstition. On the other, one is easily drawn to downplay the grievousness of occult-related violence (medicine murders, witch-hunts, social death) while indulging in the populist gesture of representing a subaltern (un)consciousness that articulates agency mostly through occult idioms” (Israel 2009, 174). Other studies echoed the alert sounded by Israel and have shown the commoditization of human body parts that are extracted and trafficked for different reasons

in Africa most often related to wealth accumulation, and different forms of violence against the people accused of witchcraft that needs serious attention and immediate intervention (see Harrop 2012; Uromi 2014; Watson 2016).

Israel adds that “[...] as the war of lions accommodates itself almost too eagerly to the ‘millennial occult’ paradigm, its most peculiar, individuating, and disturbing features²⁶ are left unaccounted for, the spell too quickly dissolved and its magic reabsorbed into the diagnostic of a crisis of global dimensions” (Israel 2009, 156). Consequently, I both look at *okwiri* as a “language” through which local inhabitants engage with the effects of modernization and neoliberalism and greedy local authorities, while also acknowledging its “peculiar, individuating and disturbing features” (Israel 2009, 156). I take it a step further to argue that *okwiri* is not just a “weapon of the weak” against the negative effects of millennial capitalism, in Nangaze and Nvava but a (imp)possibility of life that predates the modern states, capitalism and neoliberalism,²⁷ however, increasingly occurring in contemporary Mozambique. I look at *okwiri* as an agentive tool or technology that does things, inspired by Latour’s (1992) work about the missing masses and how technologies influence social interactions. Latour’s opening enables me to look at *okwiri* accusations as technologies that bring to the surface the perceived but hardly knowable (and yet experienced as real) harm that the accusers (rich or poor, dominated or dominator) are dealing with (even if that harm is envy or misinformation) and possible course of actions to remedy such harms.

“They have sold the mountain”: environmentalism, extractivism, *okwiri* and new elite in Nangaze

In May 2017, on one of my trips back to Maputo through Mocuba, I called my motorcycle taxi driver to come and pick me up in Mpemula, a locality of which Nangaze is part. It was a sunny day after some rain. After the taxi showed up, we tied my backpack with a rubber band on the back of the motorcycle, a routine that had gotten relatively easy for me since I had done it many

²⁶ Calisto’s archive also had a booklet about human organs trafficking. During my fieldwork stories of murder for spiritual or wealth accumulation purposes were common.

²⁷ The Yale Historian Professor, Keith Wrightson gives an illuminating description of witchcraft in early Modern England, where Wrightson also shows how witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts predate modern state. For more details, watch his lecture with the title “Witchcraft and Magic” available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rHSu2oDZXE>

times before. We then started our journey towards Mocuba. The taxi driver and I had grown used to each other and we always chatted during our trips. He was an agriculturalist from Tacuane, who then bought a motorcycle and dedicated his life to the taxi business instead of agriculture. On our way, we talked about life in Nangaze, the life where I come from, but one of the topics that also emerged on most occasions was the *turistas* and Calisto. He told me that people in Tacuane believed that Calisto had sold the mountain to white South Africans, without explaining to me why specifically white South Africans. He told me that residents also believed that Calisto and the *turistas* were involved in exhuming human remains, which were then used for witchcraft to accumulate wealth and fortune, a framing that resonates with the Comaroffs' (1999) "occult economy" concept. These accusations also told me that, much like Jason Moore (2015) described, capitalism had made it in the web of life (and death) and nonlife even in areas like Nangaze. The newly created geographies of extraction, conservation, development, and the newly established forms of subjectivities and low-waged relations were stirring up the fabric of sociality in the *povoados*, locality and district and producing confusion and increased suspicions.

Rumours about human remains exhumation, NGOs and scientists extracting resources and Calisto being complicit were not new to me. I had heard some of those rumours in Lugela district. I had heard some of them from Calisto himself. I had read about similar rumours elsewhere in the literature on witchcraft and power (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Harrop 2012; Watson 2016; Lunn 2019). But then, the taxi driver told me that residents from Tacuane also thought I was working with Calisto in extracting resources from the mountain, including human remains, using my big bag to carry such extracted commodities out of Nangaze. This was another instance of what James Siegel (2006) called "naming the witch". I was shocked. I was implicated and brought into the social map of the residents, put in a position in which my presence made sense to them. An adult black strange person coming out of nowhere, first with his white wife, then alone on many different occasions, living in the *povoados* would indeed be suspicious. Mostly if that same person was only seen coming and going through Tacuane on his way to or from Nangaze carrying a big backpack every time, he must be an agent of extraction involved with the "occult economy". It soon struck me that I was even more vulnerable than I had thought. Calisto, in an instance of *passear*, told me some residents did not believe I was a student. In their view, they have never seen a student my age. He told me

that those residents thought I worked for a company, and Calisto did not tell them that because he wanted to keep monetary gains for being with me for himself.

Accusations of witchcraft or exhuming bodies was the first step of giving the inexplicable a materiality—a face—in other words, taming the inexplicable and abnormal before local people could then take actions to deal with the abnormality and the anxiety such inexplicable phenomenon had created. The taxi driver then told me that he did not believe in these rumours; he said this resulted from ignorance. People did not know what was going on in the area. The ignorance about the nature of my visits and work was partly true and partly true with the *turistas* coming to the area, but it was also partly true that my work and that of the NGOs and scientists operated in obscurity to many local people who were not included in inner circles where knowledge, (limited) resources, and opportunities were produced and then circulated. These inner circles made local people included in them become in the eyes of the excluded people some sort of new local elite steering the life in the *povoados*. Those (non-included) residents could not quite grasp what our work entailed in the *povoados*. And yet, they saw white people and strangers going to the mountain and leaving, most of the time with Calisto.

This suspicion of extraction of resources was also prevalent when I first arrived in Lugela, in June 2016. Then, I did not know much about the mountain, and I was asking people around Mount Mabo, which in hindsight, I realize must have created even more suspicion about my *true* intentions. I became aware of the circumstances surrounding the mountain, when I first met a former student of mine from Maputo city, working in Lugela district. After I told her that I was interested in learning about the mountain and residents, she advised me to be cautious about how I approached the subject specifically with the local state bureaucrats, because there were “obscure” interests on the mountain for mineral resources extraction. Apart from the mysteriousness and “sacredness” of the mountain, suggesting the existence of a different ontology in which the mountain was more than a mountain as described in the previous chapters, the other most recurring theme in conversations in Lugela were the rumours that the mountain was rich in mineral resources, being extracted secretly, including by the Indians expatriates working for Madal (current, Mozambique Holdings Limited). The narratives about extraction had become so pervasive in the district, and Zambézia province in general, as discussed in chapters two and five.

There was a general idea that one of JA's association members articulated, according to which "Mount Mabo had mineral resources that these tourists came, explored and left without leaving anything behind, and we [residents] did not know anything about" [translated from Portuguese]). When I asked the newly appointed Chief of Locality, Manuel Pacá, about why the mountain was so important for them he replied that:

people say that the mountain is rich in mineral resources. There are also animals. I have never been there, but there are many different snakes, different birds, which some tourists had the opportunity to see. I am planning to go there, myself too. When the tourists come here, they have a specific group that takes them to the mountain. This group of people who accompany the tourists is always composed of the same people (Chief of Limbue Post, Manuel Pacá, Lugela, June 3, 2016) [translated from Portuguese].

I did not find any evidence of this mineral extraction within the forest on Mount Mabo, but in some *povoados*. There were indeed illegal logging companies and individuals that I interacted with that operated with the protection of local state bureaucrats, confirming Mackenzie's (2006) study about deforestation in Zambézia province which she called a "timber mafia". Residents knew about these individuals and companies as well as their connection with local state officials. One government appointed official once told me if I had interests in extracting mineral resources, I should tell him so that he could protect me (I believe from the law and legality). Even though, I didn't find any mineral resource exploration activity carried out by Mozambique Holdings Limited, NGOs or scientists nor activities in exhuming human remains, the fact that residents mentioned it to me illustrates two aspects: firstly, that neo-extractivism as a mode of relating to nature and its creation of a new elite was prevalent in the area; secondly and related to the first, different external actors working in the area were not transparent about their activities: it was the fact that external actors didn't disclose their *true* intentions. Together these aspects had created an ecology of suspicion that became even more intensified after Mount Mabo was put in the conservation map through Google Earth in 2005, in the context of neoliberal and neo-extractive state governance (see also chapter two).

The popularity of the mountain had attracted the media, scientists, NGOs, and tourists Mount Mabo and *povoados* and with them also came the aspirations and expectations of a better life

among residents, in part, resulting from the promises made by conservationists that if residents protected Mount Mabo through what conservationists framed as some sort of a “formal” conservation area there would be jobs, infrastructures and opportunities in their thus far neglected *povoados*. As I mentioned in chapter two, protecting Mount Mabo formally requires the state granting a DUAT; the state which is much more interested in plantations and extraction towards modernizing rural areas (Rogier and van den Brink 2008; FAO 2015; Macuane, Buur and Monjane 2017; Wiegink 2018; Lesutis 2019) and delayed the granting of the DUAT; therefore, the promises made by conservationists were put on hold by the long bureaucratic process marred by what some of the interlocutors of this study articulated as corrupt bureaucrats with extractivist interests. The long wait and inflated expectations of modernity, to use James Ferguson’s (1999) words, created conditions fomenting frustration among residents who were then trapped between what they perceived as an unresponsive and absent state, greedy and secretive local chiefs, while experiencing the rise of a new local elite created by environmentalism, in which Calisto was one of them.

The new local elite bragged about their mobility and personal gains during moments of *passear*. Porters and guides boasted about their earnings and the high status of being around white people when around their peers in instances of *passear* and there was no logical reason as to why certain people got to be chosen as guides and porters and not others. This was not bragging done in the name of just bragging but of positioning oneself at the top of the social hierarchical grid in the *povoado*.

Diane Ciekawy and Peter Geschiere stated that “like the market, witchcraft conjures up the idea of an opening, a leakage through which people or resources are withdrawn from the *povoado* and disappear into the outer world” (Ciekawy and Geschiere 1998, 5). And, since such residents knew that no one could go to the mountain without the blessing of the *mwene* or Calisto being their entry point, residents believed that the *mwene*, his clan and Calisto were the “leaks” that had opened the *povoados* to the unknown global actors like the NGOs and scientists. And, in their view, Calisto’s and the *mwene*’s bond and obligation to reciprocal relations with their *povoado* at large was broken for their selfish gains. Both the *mwene* and Calisto were often named the *akwiri*. Talking about his predicaments, Calisto stated that

in my case, because in fact I know that I am a good person but also in part a bad person, because many people speak; and now they start to be enemies with me because of my job. This job that I am doing. Because people think that I am eating money [earning money], that I am doing that [...], you see, but in terms of living with people, you see, behaviour, people always say good things about me, you see there are people who speak good things about me (Calisto, Nangaze, December 19, 2017) [translated from Portuguese].

Calisto mentioned that there was another man from Limbue who wanted his position as JA!'s point-man. He told me that some people warned him that the same man could bewitch him to claim his position. What this suggests is that the "field of opportunities" to use de L'Estoile's words (2014) or affordances to use James Gibson's (1979) words, have been shrinking in the context of capitalist encroachment, inflated expectations and the long wait resulting from the institutions' failure to provide young people secure transitions to adult life (see Capranzano 1985; Dhillon, Dyer and Yousef 2009; Honwana 2013; Kovacheva, Kabaivanov and Roberts 2017).

Accusations of mineral resource extraction were also used by local state bureaucrats against JA!. JA!'s activists believed that local state bureaucrats accused it of participating in illegal extraction of natural resources on the mountain, which further highlights how extractivism has brought with it novel geographies of power relations, in which the legality or illegality of its practice was framed as a problem rather than the practice of extractivism. These accusations also indicate that there was a tension between the local state bureaucrats in Lugela and JA! who seemed to favour RADEZA, as some of the interlocutors of this thesis stated. Part of these accusations derived from misunderstandings, envy, and contempt since, as JA!'s activists claimed, JA!, unlike RADEZA, didn't pay any money to local state bureaucrats for doing what JA! considered their job which was already paid for by the state.

The danger in the constant accusation of *okwiri* lies in the fact that witchcraft accusations were a form of making sense of otherwise sublime (see Siegel 2006), hence inexplicable, phenomena. In this process, *okwiri* accusations suggest possible solutions which could include social exclusion, loss, displacements, violence, and in some cases, killings, as evidenced by the case of *chupa-sangues* (Serra 1996; Chichava 2009; de Moraes 2017; Hanlon 2017) and

witchcraft accusations elsewhere (Garrett 1977; Ehrenreich 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Auslander 1993; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Ashforth 2005; Siegel 2006; Englund 2007; Hari 2009; Geschiere 2013). Current transformations happening around Mount Mabo bring about novel challenges, aspirations of a better life, and paid jobs from the tourism industry, NGOs. Additionally, the state's rush to extract what they framed as natural resources (re)create tensions within the *povoados* boundaries. It is crucial to bear in mind, as Paolo Israel (2009) rightfully notes that witchcraft is more than a form of resistance by modernity's malcontents. Its existence and substance of work, social hierarchies, and difference, precede capitalism, modernity, modern state, and formal nature protection, but its manifestations and meanings have been re-signified in complex ways by capitalism, modernity, modern state, and nature conservation practices in specific locales.

Modernity, difference, and authority: *okwiri*, *matoa*, *amwene* and state power in Nangaze

As explained above, after Mount Mabo was "discovered" by scientists, novel geographies, temporalities, subjectivities, and relationships started emerging in Nangaze and old and unresolved conflicts started gaining different configurations and intensity. Residents believed that the *mwene* and his clan group wanted to acquire all positions of power in Nangaze, positions such as the leaders of churches, presidents of associations, local judges and the *secretário* post. As mentioned in chapter three, the figure of *secretário* emerged during socialism in Mozambique to replace local chiefs whom the socialist state had framed as enemies of the nation and accomplices of colonialism. After the fall of Frelimo's socialist regime, the *mwene* were still there but also the figures of *secretários* who became all clustered under the label of local authorities within the new decree on community leaders enacted in 2000. The decree finally officially recognized traditional authorities in postcolonial Mozambique without necessarily dealing with the ambiguous relationship between the two figures: *secretário* and *mwene*, and between these two figures and the state (*cf.* Decree 15/2000; Virtanen 2004; Buur and Kyed 2007; Meneses and de Sousa Santos 2009).



*Figure 13. This photo shows the *secretário*'s house made of modern building materials.*

When I visited the *secretário*, Joaquim Malubanha, at his homestead on December 22, 2017, his wife offered me a chair and meal. We sat at the veranda of his house made of bricks and covered with *chapas* (corrugated galvanised iron sheets) and we had a *passear*. For residents including the local state bureaucrats as seen in the District Profile documents, the use of bricks, cement and *chapas* as building materials was a sign of prosperity since most residents usually built their houses with local construction materials like wood, sticks, and they covered the walls with clay and the roof with reed and plastic. Only those few successful agriculturalists managed to buy these modern building materials after selling their agricultural produce. Some of residents who were relocated by Mozambique Holdings (see chapter five) in 2011 and given compensation used their money to build houses with bricks and corrugated galvanized iron sheets. Calisto's house was also made of modern building materials.



Figure 124. This photograph that I took in 2017 in Nvava shows Mwene Mpida's new house being constructed with the help of one of his nephews using local forest materials.

Mwene Mpida Tacalanavo and the young *mwene*, Geraldo, who in their own views, held the highest social status in Nangaze, yet their houses were made of local building materials. Moreover, most of the conservationists' work did not include them in their environmental projects. This created a sense of mismatch in *mwene* Mpida and Geraldo between their perceived high social status and the material conditions in which they enacted their statuses. When I went to Nangaze in June 2016, *mwene* Mpida's house was on the brink of collapse. His wife, the queen, had died. She had been sick. Since according to the norms of the *mwene* kinship when the queen dies, until they can determine the proper time to carry out a secretive burial and collective mourning, the *mwene* and residents pretended that the queen was sick and lying in bed. It could be the case that the queen had died and been buried for a while secretly, and the *mwene* placed a pounding stick on the reed mat and covered it with blankets to pretend the queen was just sleeping, until they could find the right time for collective mourning. When that time came all activities in Nangaze were halted. These practices required secrecy, the kind of secrecy that is done behind closed doors. However, the *mwene*'s house had no walls, and

anyone around or walking by could easily see the queen's body, covered with a blanket, lying on the reed mat. He had no privacy.

When gale-force winds came to Nangaze in 2017, his house was one of the many that had been destroyed.²⁸ He talked to Calisto to ask JA! for help in rebuilding his house and helping other residents. In a conversation, the old *mwene* told me that such help never came. Then, the old *mwene* moved to a new homestead right in front of Calisto's where he started building his new house with the help of a nephew. His roof was covered with reed, but the walls were not covered yet. He would have an open fire at night to get through the year around cold nights of Nangaze. The old *mwene* Nangaze, blamed his deteriorating conditions to "*mocracia*" [democracy], which started with the socialist Mozambique. He said that his life was much better even during the colonial period, because then he was respected. His observation was consistent with the literature discussing the distancing between local chiefs and the state in postcolonial Mozambique (e.g., Meneses et al. 2006; Meneses and de Sousa Santos 2009; Orre 2009). With the rise of the interest from tourists, scientists, and activists after the alleged discovery of Mount Mabo by the RBG Kew scientists (see also chapter two), *mwene* Mpida and his relatives felt it was time for their living conditions to improve: for their high social status and living conditions to finally match at the top. And, to achieve this, they believed that they needed to control all positions of power (see chapter three), in other words, they needed to control the channels of resources and opportunities circulation in the context of shrinking "affordances" (Gibson 1979) or "fields of opportunities" (de L'estoile 2014).

One of those positions receiving resources through subsidies was that of the *secretário*, which was occupied by Joaquim. Joaquim used to be a Frelimo freedom fighter, and because of that, he received a pension that allowed him to buy a house in Nangaze for 12000mtn. In the Mozambican Public Administration, the *subsídio* (lit.sing. subsidy or benefit) of the *secretário* follows the rank of the *mwene* of the same *povoado*, meaning that in the eyes of the state both the *mwene* and *secretário* held similar positions and meaning, alongside religious leaders, opinion leaders and other sorts of local leadership (decree 15/2000). In other words, there was no formal distinction between the different kinds of local authorities. In Nangaze because the

²⁸ I learned that in the end of October 2020, a gale-force wind had collapsed 37 houses in Namadoe, 7 houses in Limbue and 2 houses in Nangaze, again in December 2020 another gale-force wind hit the area and brought devastation, meaning that their occurrence and damages are recurring.

old *mwene* was of the second rank, Joaquim was receiving around 250mtn a month. Joaquim was able to find his way into earning a pension, which was around 350mtn even though he was still earning money as a *secretário*.

During my visit to Joaquim at his homestead, he told me that he was slowly recovering from his mysterious disease and accused the young *mwene*, Geraldo, and his *raça*—clan group—of trying to kill him through spiritual power. He said that the old and young *mwene* wanted him to give up his official insignias and uniform so that they could claim his position. But instead, he said: “I will not just leave, I will inform the local government [Mwabanama Post] and tell them I am stepping out because these people are trying to kill me, because here, you see, their problem is when they tell you that you’d better watch it, it is true, if you don’t step out you will die; you will die” (Joaquim, Nangaze, December 22, 2017 [translated from Portuguese]). Considering this perceived life threat, Joaquim was planning to leave Nangaze for Namadoe. In his own words, he was “not going to die over 250mtn” (Joaquim, Nangaze, December 22, 2017 [translated from Portuguese]), which was the money the state paid *mwene* Mpida and *secretário* for their duties. He was planning to sell his house which he had priced at around 11,000mtn and leave for Namadoe, to join other people who have relocated from Nangaze because of the new authoritarian leadership. There, Joaquim could be a *secretário* of those Nangaze dissidents, he said.

The Mozambican state attributes to *secretários* and the *mwene* uniforms and insignias which work as symbols of state power. Only the state could allocate these uniforms and insignias or take them away. Joaquim, fearing for his life, told me that he gave his uniform and insignia away to *mwene* Mpida in the hope that he would then turn them to the Mwabanama Administrative Post, where the *chefe do posto* (lit.sing. chief of post)—a state figure—would enquire about the reasons why *mwene* Mpida had Joaquim’s uniform. The *mwene* then would have to explain the reasons why he ended up with Joaquim’s insignia and uniforms. In Joaquim’s view, this was a set up. Joaquim expected the authority of the *mwene* to be questioned by the authority of the state, which in his eyes, and according to the Constitution, was the utmost authority in the country. *Mwene* Mpida instead took the uniform and passed it to his nephew, Geraldo, and the chief of post didn’t intervene on this matter, hence placing the inhabitants’ and Joaquim’s fate in the hands of the local chiefs, much like the President had done with the case of the *chupa-sangues*, discussed earlier. What this means is that the

relatively weak state presence made it so that the *mwene*'s power in the *povoados* was even more intensified, and Nangaze emerged as a kind of locale controlled mostly through local institutions.

When I returned to Nangaze in 2018, I was informed that Joaquim had left Nangaze for Namadoe, leaving his wife behind. We never met again. But, before Joaquim had left, I asked him, was it not his role to work for the people as a representative of the state and protect them from such kinds of abuse that he was reporting to me? Why was he not channelling those issues to the government, instead? He told me that he was sick and could not walk. It was indeed his duty to work for residents and safeguard their livelihoods but as a *manoda* he had no actual power or say in Nangaze (see also chapter three).

When I asked *mwene* Mpida about the accusations against him, according to which he and his relatives were forcefully moving Joaquim and other people out of Nangaze, he defended himself saying that people thought that he was the one trying to kill Joaquim through *okwiri*. Instead, *mwene* Mpida said that Joaquim's wife was the one who was trying to kill him through *okwiri* because of the pension money the *secretário* had received as an *antigo combatente*. The money that the *secretário* received, *mwene* Mpida told me, his wife did not see all of it when the *secretário* came back home. This made the *secretário*'s wife suspicious about her husband. She thought *secretário* had given part of the money to another woman. *Mwene* Mpida, thus, shifted the locus of the disputes to the domestic domain, in which he had no responsibility. A stance that reminds me of the President's stance on *chupa-sangues*, discussed earlier. Calisto later told me that when Joaquim was applying for the pension money local authorities suggested that they would make the bureaucratic process easier and quicker for Joaquim, but when the money came, Joaquim should give them some money in exchange for their "facilitation". Calisto believed this was a network that linked local authorities to district authorities. Hence, when Joaquim received his pension and paid the bureaucrats for their "facilitation" service, the amount that Joaquim received had reduced significantly.

Calisto was still in Nangaze, but still wished to leave. *Mwene* Mpida was trying to persuade him to stay. Calisto and his family were the ones who took care of the *mwene*. *Mwene* Mpida's clan group seemed to have neglected him. Calisto and his wife gave *mwene* Mpida food and took care of him when he was sick since everyone else had abandoned him. In turn, *mwene*

Mpida told me that he used his spiritual power to protect Calisto from the people that wanted to kill Calisto through *okwiri*. *Mwene* Mpida told me that while Calisto was in Nangaze no one could harm him or his family, but he could not guarantee his safety if Calisto relocated. This assertion could be interpreted as *mwene* Mpida's attempt to coerce Calisto into staying in Nangaze so that the *mwene* could survive. During a *passear*, with Calisto, *mwene* Mpida and I, the *mwene* asked me to help him persuade Calisto to stay in Nangaze. Calisto smirked after hearing *mwene* Mpida's request. Calisto seemed to have already made his mind.²⁹

These disputes over access to and control of the shrinking “affordances” (Gibson 1979) or “fields of opportunity” (de L'Estoile 2014) seemed to have increased due to neo-extractivism and capitalist encroachment epitomized by the idea that some residents have “sold” the mountain. This encroachment was also carried out by NGOs and scientists as they struggled to protect Mount Mabo. Such disputes suggest a messy entanglement of public and private, local chiefs and local state bureaucrats, global and local actors, living and nonliving, human and nonhuman which are haunted by colonial and socialist legacies still shaping the actual lives of actual people living in an actual place in the present. The disputes and accusations also suggest how *okwiri*, a local logic of dealing with conflict, became the means to deal with the power imbalances between the *mwene*, the socialist produced figure of the *secretário* in Nangaze and their precarious relations with the state in context of growing capitalist and extractivism encroachment. In other words, this was a proxy fight between the state and local authority (also discussed in chapters two and three) resulting from ambiguous relations between the state and local chiefs and its colonial legacies and its ongoing entanglements with neoliberalism and extractivism (see West and Jenson-Kloeck 1999; Decree 15/2000; Virtanen 2004; Buur and Kyed 2007; Meneses and de Sousa Santos 2009) currently interfering with personal conflicts and lives and (re)creating new boundaries between people and social hierarchies in Nangaze.

Balami, counter-power and social control: an outline of a self-proclaimed *mukwiri* and socio-spatial boundaries

Geschiere (1997, 2) while carrying out his fieldwork in Cameroon found that “[...] whenever I wanted to talk about local politics with the communities [...] my spokespersons invariably

²⁹ Later after I had finished writing this chapter, in a phone call Calisto told me that he was living in Namadoe now with his family. He left the house in Nangaze for his daughter and son-in-law to live in.

began to refer to the power of the *djembe*, which was translated in French to *sorcellerie*,” and more recently, Kleibl and Munck (2017, 209) focusing on the shortcomings of civil society prevalent in Mozambique, stated that “when carrying out research in Inhassunge district, spirits and religious ceremonies were ever-present in local discourses, particularly in reference to problem-solving, but the dominant civil society actors, namely legalized NGOs, were rarely mentioned as relevant actors.” This meant that for both Geschiere and Kleibl and Munck politics and witchcraft were closely connected.

In Nangaze, the *mwene* and *acumbaissa* were the people who were mentioned as possessing spiritual power to heal or kill through their spiritual power. Looking at the section above one could falsely assume that the power of the *mwene* in the face of state absence was absolute. The power of the *mwene* was indeed resisted, at times through strategies that could be described as the “weapons of the weak” to borrow James Scott’s (1987) phrase. These strategies included gossip, complaints among close groups of friends, and as described above through relocation. But there was one person in Nangaze who confronted the *mwene* on many occasions, like no one else did: that person was Balami.

Balami was born in 1984, the same year in which, according to local accounts, the civil war had started in the district³⁰. Residents were forced to leave their houses in the *povoados* and take refuge on Mount Mabo. Balami and his mother fled to Mount Mabo in Nvava where they lived from 1986 to 1992. His older brother had migrated to Malawi and his father abandoned them since they were young. Balami’s initiation rites, primary education, and childhood like those of other children in that time, occurred on the mountain. When the civil war ended in 1992, Balami and his mother returned to Nangaze. The *povoado*’s lands were then abandoned. In 1997, people came to the current place in Nangaze due to the proximity to the main road that leads to Lugela, then Mocuba. After returning to Nangaze, Balami continued school until grade 6, in 1997. He migrated to Malawi from 1997-2007, where he was visiting his family and working on a farm. His uncle who was living in Malawi since the civil war brought him to Malawi. Balami taught himself and could speak Chewa and Shona. He asked me to buy him a ci-Cangana and Portuguese bible because he wanted to learn my mother tongue, ci-Cangana,

³⁰ Accounts say that at first Renamo soldiers did not attack residents, it was later when the fights between Renamo and Frelimo government started in the region that the search of allies and spies intensified and with then the devastation and killings from both sides.

which is spoken in Maputo, Gaza, and some parts of Inhambane provinces in southern Mozambique.

When Balami returned to Nangaze, he started a *muda* of sugar cane, bananas, and maize. His mother grew maize and cassava. Balami and his mother are considered a family of *akwiri*, and interlopers and they never received help from any of their neighbours. Balami got married in Milange, a district neighbouring Malawi. He and his wife had three children, who are now living in Milange with their mother. Balami later separated from his wife, and since 1997 he has lived in different *povoados*. In 2000, he was in Mukhua and in 2006, he was expelled from Mukhua as he was accused of *okwiri*. Balami then moved back to Nangaze with his mother. Everybody in Nangaze considered Balami a *mukwiri* (lit.sing. witch). Balami himself while drunk, which was often, would yell loud and clear for everyone to hear that he was the strongest of all witches in Nangaze, stronger even than the *mwene* Mpida. Balami would claim that he is the leader of the *akwiri*. From my tent at Calisto's homestead, I could hear him yelling from the top of his lungs things like "*they say that cota* (colloq. old man) *Balami is feiticeiro* (lit.sing. witch). *They say cota Balami will die. But they will die first. I am the king of the witches*". Whenever Balami was sober again, he would deny he was a *mukwiri*. One day I asked him why people thought he was a *mukwiri*. He then told me that he had had a *droga* to protect himself against *akwiri* because people were trying to kill him or make him go to jail; they always failed because he had a strong protection from that *droga*. So, in Balami's own perception this protection made people angry and therefore he was accused of *okwiri*.

Balami's case could wrongly be dismissed as negative responses of residents to alcoholism and the bad behaviour related to Balami's drinking habits. Residents rather interpreted Balami's drinking problem as a result of *okwiri*. Calisto told me that when people prepared *drogas* to harm other people, the victims could then go to a *cumbaissa* and ask the *cumbaissa* to revert the spell and make the person confess their wrongdoings in public or even start stripping their clothes like mad people. Calisto believed this was the case with Balami. In Calisto's view, Balami's drunk moments where he professed to be a *mukwiri*, even stronger than the *mwene*, were a result of these countermeasures against Balami's *okwiri*. Balami used to encounter physical violence from other residents since he was a child. He still does. People have physically assaulted him on many occasions. For example, Calisto told me that someone accused Balami of having a leopard that ate their chicken, and then hit him with a machete and

ran away to avoid being imprisoned. Balami still carries the scar of this incident. I also heard the rumour about Balami being a *mukwiri* from *mwene* Mpida himself. A close reading of these events suggests that residents accused Balami of being a *mukwiri* as a form of social control. It was society trying to dominate and ‘tame’ Balami, who society saw as an anomaly. In the conversations I had with Balami, *okwiri* seemed to take on many and different meanings, *okwiri* both acknowledged such attempts at social domination and was also mobilised to deny such possibility, showing the constant renegotiation of the *povoados*’ boundaries and *okwiri* as intimately linked to this negotiation.

Balami used accusations and confessions of *akwiri* to his advantage in that he would be feared and respected in a situation where he had been displaced and violated from an early age. Balami and I started talking and being with each other quite often. He liked to come and teach Julia, my wife, and I Manhaua and he wanted to learn English from Julia and ci-Cangana from me. He was a curious person and loved hearing about the places where we came from or had been. These frequent encounters between us and Balami did not please the *mwene* and Calisto who constantly warned me to watch out. Balami could be hard to deal with when drunk but quiet and reserved when sober. The *mwene* would say that Balami had *abuso*, and he was not respectful. Balami did not have his own house. He had a stall where he sold *cachaço*. Most of the time he would drink all his stock with friends, and these gatherings would most often end up in a fight. He would sometimes sleep at the *mwene*’s house or anywhere else in the *povoado*. He was marginal. This marginality allowed him to be the only person in the Nangaze whom I have seen and heard having an open argument with the *mwene* without fearing any kind of repercussion. He was the only one who openly confronted the *mwene* about their tendency to keep all the positions of power in Nangaze and to displace people whom they called *manoda* (see also chapter three).

At one time a fight between the *mwene* Mpida and Balami occurred, and it was the first time I heard the *mwene* raise his voice and lose his otherwise calm temper. In all situations I had seen the *mwene* before this, even in stressful situations, he had always stayed collected. This time Balami, the *mwene* and I were at Calisto’s homestead while *passerar*. As the conversation went on, Balami and the *mwene* started yelling at each other. The *mwene* stood up angry and pointed at Balami with his walking stick threatening to beat him with it. Balami laughed at the *mwene*’s threat. I was oblivious as to why they had started fighting, so on a different occasion, I asked

Calisto to explain to me what had happened, and this episode further opened my eyes to how Balami was indeed a troublemaker but in a good way. Calisto (Nangaze, December 22, 2017) explained to me that:

Balami was talking to the old man, and he asked, *papá* (colloq. meaning father), do you remember that day when we were solving a problem about people accusing me of kicking them out of Nangaze? The *mwene* said yes. Balami asked the *mwene* didn't you say that I was destroying Nangaze, because I was kicking people out of here? The *mwene* said yes. Balami asked do you remember that I apologised to you, and you forgave me? Didn't the problem stop? The *mwene* said yes. So, have you by any chance heard that since that day that I kicked people out of Nangaze? The *mwene* said no. Balami then said, then what is this thing that is happening now with you, who are the *donos* (lit.plur. owners) of this area? You are kicking people out. I don't understand why you guys are doing that. That's the second point. The third point is that I don't understand...maybe you don't know because you are old, but there is one thing I can tell you. The thing I wanted to tell you is that in the world there is parliament, and in the parliament, there are 240 members of the parliament, who are not just from one political party. There are from that party, this party and that party [diverse parties], and altogether they total 240 members of the parliament. And everybody discusses one thing only. Do you see? The point that a member of the parliament has is different from the other one, but they negotiate, discuss, and find a solution. That's a parliament. But I don't understand what's happening here. Everybody who is a *viente*, who is not from your *raça* is forced to leave. I don't understand that. So, if we look at the parliament, if people said that the only people who could stay there are only people who belong to Frelimo because they are in power, that wouldn't be a parliament [translated from Portuguese].

Balami was making a case for a more democratic and deliberative decision-making process and co-existence using the metaphor of the modern institution of the parliament to criticize the perceived fear-based rule of the old *mwene* and his lineage. This did not sit well with the *mwene*. The fight between Balami and the old *mwene* escalated from verbal altercations to threats of killing each other via *okwiri*. Calisto, and the other residents of all ages and I sat and watched the argument escalating without knowing what to do. Calisto then told me that those two knew each other. "They knew what they trusted and if we, the *normal people*, got involved in their

fight we would be the ones suffering the consequences later” (Calisto, Nangaze, December 22, 2017, my italics [translated from Portuguese]). With that statement, Calisto was suggesting that Balami and the *mwene* had spiritual power that authorized their behaviour, and for those people who did not have such power, the best thing to do was to stay away from Balami’s and *mwene*’s constant fights. The *mwene* and Balami’s fights, in the eyes of local people, were not fights between two ordinary human beings: they were fights between two *akwiri*. In local understanding, only people with spiritual power could openly counter the power of the *mwene*. While others contested the rulings of the *mwene* indirectly, by either moving to another *povoado* or complaining in private circles of friends, or by tricking the *mwene* into doing something in their favour, Balami instead confronted him. Therefore, the *mwene* and his clan in Nangaze wanted Balami to leave the *povoado*, a situation he was used to, and could use as a leverage. One day, during *passerar*, Balami told me that “they say they will send me to jail. But I don’t mind. I have nothing the police would want from me. So, I know they will let me go after some time” (Calisto, Nangaze, December 22, 2017 [translated from Portuguese]).

Balami’s situation and the discussion around him suggests that being a *mukwiri* gives power to the accused or self-acclaimed *mukwiri* to question the *mwene* and be respected by residents, saying *aquele ali é forte* (lit. that one is strong) (Calisto, Nangaze, December 22, 2017). *Okwiri* accusations towards Balami were also in the residents’ minds connected to his alcoholism, anti-social behaviour, dysfunctional family, and nomadic lifestyle. *Okwiri* accusations therefore also work as a form of social control that sought to discourage such “antisocial” or out of the norm behaviour that were seen to disrupt the community of life. In other words, these *okwiri* accusations served to manage difference. Balami, in his turn, used his marginality in the *povoado* as an enabler to make him question social norms, the rule of the *mwene*, and protect himself against attacks from other local people. *Okwiri* levelled the playing field for Balami and others. In other words, Balami as a concept was quite sobering and showed local dynamics of power contestation in Nangaze.

Because Balami called himself the strongest *mukwiri* in the area—a position that was limited to the *mwene* as the ultimate defender of the *povoado*—residents feared him. This deterred residents from physically abusing him, as had happened in his youth because he was considered an outsider and as disruptive. *Okwiri* for Balami emerged as a strategy he used to build respect from residents. But, because Balami was also what one could consider a “troublemaker”, those

who had had enough of him, would tell him that they would beat him, and then tell their families that if anything happened to them it would be Balami's doing, and the family members would kill Balami. This negotiation created a kind of a meta-space in which spiritual and material realms are dialectic through which social regulation and creation of specific order that is not the old order, but a new kind of order emerges. When People without spiritual power tell Balami that they would act violently against him and then tell their relatives to kill him if Balami retaliated, they created a meta-space of power contestation without denying Balami's *okwiri* power or themselves resorting to *okwiri*. But the same approach didn't work with the *mwene*, since most residents considered him the ultimate authority in the *povoado*, and still elicited fear and respect.

Conclusion

Okwiri is an elusive social process that has gained new meanings in the local modes of making sense of contemporary social life, where, as Cavanagh and Holmes (2016, 206) pointed out are experiencing new “constellations of marketization, privatization, commoditization, financialization and decentralization”, including also hierarchization and exploitation (see Tsing 2012). Mount Mabo and the relations that enabled community building or conviviality are increasingly becoming trapped into capitalism in its ever-growing process of impregnating the web of life (and nonlife), to use Moore's (2015) words. *Mwene* Mpida and his clan group because of their spiritual attachment to Mount Mabo, Mount Muriba and the River Muge emerged as the ones who legitimately controlled access to land, affordances, and opportunities in the *povoados*. Due to *mwene* Mpida's and his clan group's growing greed which is exacerbated by the fact that most transformations occurring in the *povoados* initiated by NGOs and neo-extractivism have marginalized the *mwene* and his clan, *mwene* Mpida and his clan started seizing all positions of authority in the *povoado* as a way of controlling access to opportunities and redistributing resources that foreign agents were bringing into the area. These actions have led residents to start leaving Nangaze for other *povoados* like Namadoe and Limbue. These findings confirm Mamdani's (1996) idea that the institution of tribes, and in my case, local authority is not homogenous but in fact contradicting because local chiefs have the power to build and maintain solidarity networks, but they also have the power to undermine them.

The findings in this chapter suggested that the power of the *mwene* or of other entities is not absolute, much like the ideas of *ubuntu* or partial connections, as Marilyn Strathern (2004) would put it. Residents, in their ontologies have inbuilt institutions to control the power of the *mwene*, including rumours of ‘bad’ *okwiri*, counter *okwiri*, leaving the *povoado*, or mobilizing the state power. Much can be said about the efficiency of such mechanisms to constrain the *mwene*’s power, but neglecting such mechanisms is denying agency and subjectivity to residents. Theoretically speaking, it means denying social sciences access to other languages of power contestation that do not fit into the existing critical theories (left or right). Balami and what he represents to me is a good example here. *Mwene* Mpida’s and his relative’s attitude has also led the rogue character Balami to contest their actions and to build authority mobilizing the very *okwiri* accusations that have previously plagued his life. Balami does so while at the same time using the metaphor of the modern institution of the parliament to argue for inclusiveness. In doing so, Balami forces the *mwene* and his relatives to amend their contradicting and destructive actions that ultimately erodes the *povoado*. In this case *okwiri* and modern institutions both become metaphors for democratic deliberation.

The language of witchcraft enabled us to look at power differentials across ontologies and epistemes and look at the institution as both modern and traditional (Nyamnjoh 2015). Most residents that are not directly involved with the NGOs’ and scientists’ work. They tend to feel that the scientists and NGOs (also myself) are in collusion with the local leaders and the few residents with whom they work are involved in extracting natural resources or exhuming human remains for their own wealth creation. Such rumours and accusations can escalate into violent actions against the accused. I have explained how behind these accusations and rumours lies old and currently unresolved problems stemming from social, political, economic and ontological asymmetries. These asymmetries have intensified with colonial and capitalist domination as well the socialist struggles against such forms of oppression and continue in messy ways in the current neoliberal and neo-extractivist state agenda which result in figuratively sucking the blood of the poor people and claiming their lives.

In a phone call with Calisto, in July 2019, I learned that the *secretário*, Joaquim, had died in Namadoe, and that *mwene* Mpida had died in May 2019 and that Calisto himself had left Nangaze. It is safe to state that the disputes over power and control in Nangaze in the context of shrinking fields of opportunities did not die with them, in the same way that they didn’t start

with them. The conflict and the grammar of origin preceded and outlived both the old *mwene* and the *secretário*. The conflict could be seen as a proxy war between modernity and local authority. In that conflict battle strategies connect relational ontologies to modern state apparatus, animals, spirits, land, and humans as allies or enemies. Here is what people's reaction to Balami³¹ being a troublemaker taught me: it is not about denying the other (perceived as the enemy) or becoming the other—Modernist ontology adherents trying to baptize and exorcise residents or residents trying to traditionalize Modernist ontology adherents. Instead, it is rather about creating a meta-space of engagement, a place that is yet to be, beyond the current one world-dominated order: a creative and transformative work much like Bruno Latour (2004a) or Green (2020) suggested. That possibility or potentiality of a convivial world yet to be, to use Giorgio Agamben's (1999) word, must be taken care of.

³¹ I learned this year from Calisto that Balami had turned into a recorded musician in a local studio in Nangaze where he is still living. His mother passed away this year.

Conclusion: “Google Forest”, the “Secret Mount Mabo” and “Extraction Landscapes” at the Contact Zone: Past Struggles and (Present) Visions of the Futures

Care, caring, carer. Burdened words contested words. And yet so common in everyday life, as if care was evident, beyond particular expertise or knowledge. Most of us need care, feel care, are cared for, or encounter care, in one way or another. Care is omnipresent, even through the effects of its absence. Like a longing emanating from the troubles of neglect, it passes within, across, throughout things. Its lack undoes, allows unravelling. To care can feel good; it can also feel awful. It can do good; it can oppress. Its essential character to humans and countless living beings makes it all the most susceptible to convey control (María Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 1).

Maybe it is the species as a whole and each one of us individually that is split in two, the alien and the indigenous living side by side in the same body: suppose a small shift in sensibility has suddenly made that self-colonization visible to us. We would thus all be indigenous, that is, Terrans, invaded by Europeans, that is, humans; all of us, of course, including Europeans, who were after all the first Terrans to be invaded (Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 2018, 194).

When I started this thesis, I set out to give the reader a window into the world of residents through stories: a connection—however, to a world that was not isolated. Throughout the thesis I shared different stories suggesting that distinct worlds, or versions of Mount Mabo, personhood and time have intersected in this historical moment: one version is what I have called the “Google Forest” that emerges among actors that I analytically called conservationists, whereby Mount Mabo is a natural massif that houses a forest with species unknown to science which made the conservationists frame it as “wilderness”. This version is born from a modernist and techno-scientific view. It renders Mount Mabo as a passive nature where human activities unfold (or not). The human in this world emerges as a master who

controls the fate of nature and human life through techno-scientific tools. The other version of the mountain I called the “Secret Mount Mabo” (with o and not with u) refers to Mount Mabo as a relational subject. Mount Mabo emerges a moral entity involved in kinship relations with his second-born sister the River Múgue and his last-born sibling Mount Muriba—giving rise to the foundation of a relational ecology and what I called “sibling landscapes”. Moreover, I for the local chiefs Mount Mabo emerged as a person that endowed them and their clans with legitimate authority to rule and maintain control over the area and the people. I have described the experiential and relational world of the hunters and local agriculturalists and their modes of relating to the landscape, which highlighted Mount Mabo’s relationality and power to shape human life and demand both fear and respect (lit. *ori’a*). Lastly, I described the emergence of the “Neo-Extractive” version of the landscape and Mount Mabo. This neo-extractive version has and resuscitates colonial legacies and creates damaging effects on residents and landscapes. That neo-extractive version is currently being promoted by the Frelimo-led Mozambican state as the solution to induce development and alleviate poverty in the country. News about killings and increased disenfranchisement and poverty in Northern Mozambique due to terrorism despite the fact of massive investments on mineral resources continue to mount, evidencing that natural resources extraction does not translate directly into poverty alleviation. In this neo-extractive world, much like “Google Earth” nature emerges as a natural resource and humans also masters who can own or control nature, and that relation is mediated through land use rights certificates (DUATs) granted only by the state for a determined number of years. These worlds together could be described collectively as “Mount Mabo multiple” following the work of Annemarie Mol (2002).

After Mount Mabo was “discovered” in 2005 by the Kew Gardens’ scientists who, alongside JA! and RADEZA, tried to convince the state to protect what they considered to be the “untouched Mabo wilderness” from “rapid development”, illegal logging, mining, REDD+, and other extractive activities, those three worlds were brought together. In that process, novel geographies, subjectivities, temporalities, and forms of relations emerged. One of those transformations was the inscription of new geographies by the NGOs and scientists based on the idea of “zones”. The resulting geography now comprised a planned “wilderness zone”, what the scientists called the “Core Zone” and what JA! called “*Área Pretendida*”. The “wilderness zone” was to be protected at any cost, meanwhile the effected “community lands” were to be (re-)organized through a land use right certificate—DUAT—and related techno-

scientific designs and legislation to ensure that residents stayed in their externally constructed side of the nature-culture divide. Another transformation was the NGOs' production of novel 'subjectivities', in the form of local environmental protection groups both to effect, police and maintain the nature-culture divide. I have argued here that this inscription of novel forms of subjectivities was premised on a modernist ontology and framings of environmental justice positing that humans should be the masters of nature, a framing that is modelled around the generalized and rationalized "Human". In that process the NGOs denied the personhood and agency of Mount Mabo and his siblings and the ontology of being person in the local area that did not abide by the nature-culture divide nor the neoliberal notions of life and nonlife. Though the intention of the NGOs was to ensure local participation and benefit sharing, their creation also ensured that residents would be self-policing the "zones" that NGOs and scientists had designed, but as unpaid or volunteer labour. The policing was also a measure directed towards the unruly residents, scientists and *turistas* coming to the area as the interlocutors of this study stated. What I found within the environmental groups created in the *povoados* is that most members managed their participation according to the availability of time in relation to agricultural production and expected that labour with the NGOs to pay off and generate income, which during my fieldwork only often male porters and guides were earning. This exclusion of other non-male and non-experienced hunters, or people attached to the associations and local committees created an intense climate of suspicion and increased accusations of witchcraft and extraction.

The binding of the "Google Forest" to the "Neo-extractive state" was created because to enact such novel geographies of nature conservation and consecutive zonings, the conservationists were required to have a DUAT which *only* the state could grant or cancel, in the name of "public interest" as defined by those in power. The state in the name of the same "public interest" had already granted the rubber plantation in Lugela a DUAT and the corporation started operating in 2011. Thirsty for development, the district, provincial and national government was instead opening doors for the regional and international markets to invest and explore natural resources in Mozambique, including in the district. As an example, one of the top state officials in the administration invited me to apply for a land use right to invest on and help attract investment to turn the many buildings destroyed between the Renamo and Frelimo-state troops into active businesses to boost the economic development of the district.

Meanwhile, the scientists acquired the state's promise to turn the mountain into a protected area in 2009, and in 2016, JA! applied for a DUAT still pending approval as of April 2021. What this suggests is the tension between development and nature conservation that still needs to be critically addressed.

In the process of protecting the previously far from state's reach Mount Mabo, conservationists figuratively speaking handed the lives and fate of residents and Mount Mabo to the state through their DUAT application. Through the DUAT process and linked cartography, the state rendered legible and governable the complex landscapes and people. Due to their ontological bias, the DUATs and other techno-scientific governance tools and modes of nature valuing, are equally unable to recognise mutual belonging to landscapes through kinship and respect. Instead, the state, much like conservationists, framed nature as a "natural resource" with an economic value to enable development and poverty alleviation in the country, and the part of nature that wasn't being exploited, as determined by the land use registries, the state framed as a "reserve". These narratives inform us about what could be called a "banking" rationale to dealing with nature, that is widespread, mostly in the "Neo-Extractive" version of landscapes.

Meanwhile, a decade after the government had promised to protect Mount Mabo from human activities, scientists and NGOs' plans could be framed as having "failed". Mount Mabo remains protected through local practices and institutions. However, "failure", as James Ferguson (1994) and Tina Li's (2007; 2017) described, tells only one side of the story, a story that does not account for the kinds of transformations that I have described throughout this thesis. In 2020, RADEZA won the BioFUND bid totaling 1,503,000Euros to carry out development projects around Mount Mabo, meaning that "Google Earth" and the conservationists and their nature protection machine has created roots for other kinds of interventions to blossom. I was informed about other NGOs that started operating in the area with the aim of community development or nature protection. JA! had started agro-ecological interventions. It was also building local seed banks, honey production, poultry, etc., and planned to apply for funding to implement more activities.

Faced with shrinking "fields of opportunities" (de L'Estoile 2014) and "affordances" (Gibson 1979), residents viewed and welcomed the conservationists and neo-extractive projects as opportunities to make ends meet, to complement the increasingly challenging and uncertain agricultural production. The bio-geo-graphical entanglements of this engagement were

summarised in the introduction of this thesis, by one of the residents who was also part of JA!’s organization. His expectation was that he would become someone in life with the conservation work being carried out. The hardships of doing agricultural work, including the desire of easy and quick money that both nature protection and neo-extractivism promised, pulled residents into those worlds. Both conservationists and the neo-extractive corporation in their *consultas comunitárias* ostensibly had built consensus with residents to implement their projects. During those *consultas*, they also promised jobs, construction of infrastructures—development. Oral accounts show that extractive projects have resulted in rather contradicting results. The Mozambique Holdings extraction project had absorbed unskilled labour power, but such employment was not secure and properly paid. The extraction project had also encroached lands that were crucial for the social reproduction of residents and forming of kinship ties.

Related to conservationists, their work had built expectations among residents who had volunteered to work for the NGOs and scientists to protect Mount Mabo. The many men and women who became part of those environmental groups expected to expand their fields of opportunities in the area. Based on what both conservationists and extractive projects had promised, it is safe to state that thus far neither of them has fulfilled their promises. Rather the “expectations of modernity”, to use James Ferguson (1999) phrase, that they had created have instead become sites of frustration. Frustration has also led to increased accusations, mostly in the language of *okwiro* levied against those residents directly attached to conservation or neo-extractive projects, against the project proponents themselves, the state and against me.

From an ontological standpoint, the conservationists’ narratives resuscitated the colonial ghosts framing residents as “threats” to “wilderness” who needed to be trained about the importance of Mount Mabo that residents were not aware of. This rhetoric has operated around a similar kind of “command-and-control” relations as in what Lesley Green called an “environmental mission” which is common mostly among white conservation managers, state authorities and environmental scientists in South Africa. The environmental mission, according to Green, extended to “former colonial countries where the assumptions of what it means to be an environmentalist exclude the voices of those who struggle for an ecological relation with the earth that was broken generations before” (Green 2020, 206)—*i.e.*, through colonialism. The word “mission” is used by Green as a historical reference and in a double meaning: saving the world with Jesus or with GIS (Geographical Information Systems). As Green explains

“whether “technological or spiritual, when the narrative of saviours becomes a performative script, one represents one’s work as transcendent neutral and universal” (ibid.). The result is a model of nature caring based on the external saviour’s stories which continues deleting residents’ stories and ontologies.

The NGOs did privilege working directly with residents through consultations and forming local environmental organizations and committees to protect Mount Mabo. In our conversations, the NGOs expressed their concerns over the future of Mount Mabo. They cared about their version of nature—“Google Forest”—as a response to and to face the effects of the growing neo-extractivism in Mozambique, in which Zambézia province and other central and northern provinces of the country were the hotspots. Their care framed in techno-scientific terms was at odds with residents’ ontologies and livelihoods. The NGOs and scientists’ techno-scientific and modernist approaches, while useful in lending landscapes and property relations legible and creating trans-local alliances, also made a whole set of relations, as they are known locally, become invisible: the spirits of ancestors and their work of guiding humans become invisible (see chapter three); the ethics that guide hunters’ relations with the nonhumans also become invisible (see chapter four); the sharing economies circulating seeds and soils, and local agriculturalists struggles to secure their yields and livelihoods disappear (chapter five); Mount Mabo as the provider of fertility through relations with his second-born sister, the River Múgue, and young brother, Mount Muriba, and the relational ecology and local networks of solidarity also become invisible (see chapters three, four, five and six). Those relations become all re-signified as “threats” to “wilderness”.

The conservationists’ framing of residents as “threats” leaves existing neo-extractive explorations, including plantations with which the RBG Kew scientists are implicated and their alleged dehumanizing actions, unchecked and unchallenged. Moreover, conservationists do not acknowledge their own involvement in perpetuating dominant values: they “retreat into the secure position of an enlightened outsider who knows better” (de la Bellacasa 2012, 197). As a result, the pedagogy that emerges is one that leads to residents having to choose or navigate between their own modes of living and the new environmental awareness with contradicting effects (see chapter two, three and five).

The transformations described above are akin to the ones described by Paul Nadasdy (2003, 1-2) in his book *Hunters and bureaucrats: power, knowledge, and Aboriginal-state relations in the Southwest Yukon* where he describes how the work of the state to include First Nations in the process of managing and protecting their lands had mixed results. Because First Nations had to work closely with state bureaucrats, scientists and other external actors they were forced to accept the Euro-American legal language of property law and that of the natural resources management. Most detrimentally, they had to restructure their societies and model it around the expectations of external actors. Nadasdy advocates the intrusion of new forms of governance—a different form of social compact—much like the ones described by James Scott (1998) in *Seeing like a state*. In those places, techno-scientific simplifications to render landscapes and people legible were imposed.

Case studies around existing conservation areas in Mozambique and southern Africa in general have shown a troubled relationship between park managers who seek to protect nature and residents who see their access and relations to nature blocked. Such studies have situated conservation in the era of neo-extractivism, neoliberalism, one-world-worlding (*cf.* Law 2011; Tsing 2012), and as such conservation as it is conceptualised currently, is part of the larger web of globalisation (*cf.* Zimmerer 2006). The story unfolding on Mount Mabo is an all too familiar storyline, we (Terrans) have seen it before many times. The storyline, as Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005, 601) summarise relate to how “colonial powers are shape shifters”. Quoting Manel’s and Posluns’ Fourth World Treatise, Alfred and Corntassel stated that “[t]he colonial system is always a way of gaining control over people [and nature] for the sake of what the colonial power has determined to be the common good” (2005, 601). That “common good” becomes whatever it is defined by the shape-shifting colonial elite” (*ibid.*) Following and expanding Alfred and Corntassel’s thought, I argue that both nature conservation and neo-extractivism in the situations described in this thesis have emerged as shifting shapes of “colonial powers” or where conservationists, the state, and corporations were what Stengers and Pignarre would call its “minions” (Stengers and Pignarre 2011, 31). They were colonial minions in terms of defining nature protection or development as “common goods” to be achieved through an imposition of techno-scientific designs which they framed as objective and neutral. Following political ontology and decolonial scholars, I contend there is a need to address the coloniality masked in that neutrality, objectivity, universality, hence the necessity

of such techno-scientific and economic designs. Coloniality, like residents' notion of *okwiri*, is illusive and complex, making it hard to distinguish between heroes and villains, friends, or foes.

There is an ongoing war, warned Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Deborah Danowski (2018), between what they called “Humans” and “Terrans”. For Viveiros de Castro and Danowski, the lines separating such opposing enemies are rather blurred, since in their understanding, we are both “Terrans” and “Humans”, “colonizers and the colonized”, so much that the notions of purity and uncompromised stances becomes a dangerous falsification. A result of that realization is that conservationists themselves are as vulnerable to capture. Non-profit NGOs like RADEZA and JA! depend on foreign funding to exist, work, and prevail. Scientists also depend on funding to carry out their research and faced with shortage of steady funding and high competition, scientific research is becoming increasingly encroached and instrumentalized by capitalism (see Zucker et al. 2002; Lane 2009; Palmer and Schibeci 2012; Ideland 2018). In the process, the NGOs and scientists lose their flexibility, scope of action and freedom to explore transformative questions and maintain their critical and constant questioning nature. Science instead is tasked to produce facts that enable specific forms of governance (*cf.* Green 2020). The situation is ever more severe among Mozambique's science institutions like IIAM, where aspects like shortage of trained staff, lack of public funding and resulting poor science infrastructures were mentioned during interviews. Several studies exist describing those dynamics that impacts the kind of dialogic scholarship that I am proposing. That debate, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

What this means is that much like residents, their ontologies and nature, the whole institutions of science and nature protection also need salvage from capitalist capture. It is from this realization that following scholars like Paulo Freire (2005) Latour (2013), Viveiros de Castro and Déborah Danowski (2018), Green (2013; 2020), I propose that conservationists need to engage in more and deeper collaborative work with residents. The kind of collaboration that does not reproduce the master-slave (Green 2020), horse-rider (Mavunga 2014), centres and peripheries (wa Thiong'o 1993) dynamics behind the current “command-and-control” approaches. That “yet to be” kind of collaborative work can help yield the wellbeing of residents' and of Mount Mabo, and open room for novel research questions, transdisciplinary and “trans-ontological” work to flourish.

In order to inhabit that place yet to be or what the Italian Philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1999) would call “potentialities”, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Déborah Danowski paraphrasing Latour remind us that “the path to a desired future universal peace can only be walked, as Latour sees it, if we start by a multiple and combined refusal of the present cosmopolitical assemblage (demos-theos-nomos) instituted by the moderns” (Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 2018, 178). Following Viveiros de Castro’s and Danowski’s ideas, I contend that the kind of co-building required to break loose from such capture by the moderns and capitalism can only be possible once all actors involved understand that they are not unbiased “mediators” or “arbiters” but stakeholders in a burning and unequal *terra*. As such their ontologies and claims to truth are but partial and partially connected, to use Strathern’s (2004) phrase, much like the idea of *passéar* proposed by Mabo residents. This is the case with the scientists, NGOs, and state bureaucrats as it is with residents who, as I described in chapters two, three, four and six, have inbuilt systems of social differentiation, oppression, exclusions mostly against women, *anoda* (newcomers), and local forms of extraction that intersect in messy ways with global environmental and neo-extractive processes. Those too need to be addressed carefully. In doing that, conservationists should not position themselves as being the exclusive holders of legitimate knowledge—knowledge that they then patronisingly proffer to residents.

The dialogue necessary is one that, according to Paulo Freire’s (2005) take on education, is based on love for life [and nonlife] but not for what Freire calls “oppression—overwhelming control—[which] is necrophilic [ontologicidal]”³² [and] nourished by love of death, not life” (Freire 2005, 77). As I stated in previous chapters, three worlds with their various versions of nature, personhood and time are currently at the crossroads requiring novel forms of engagement beyond the familiar story of what could be considered “domination” that I have thus far described. In that novel engagement, or pedagogy as Freire (2005, 80) states, “the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach, beyond the current *status quo*.”

As the Mount Mabo residents’ adage goes “*oeda abili orambanana*” (lit. to walk with someone is trust) and my own maTchangana people would say, *amabulu ikuyakana* (lit. to have a

³² For more details on the concept see Lloyd Amoah (2012).

conversation is to build one and another). The trust and vulnerability the two adages elicit constitute the “spirit” of my project which is the understanding that the only certain thing on *Terra* is uncertainty and incompleteness even more so with the climate crisis, hence the need for opening room for dialogue where feelings like respect, humility, trust, and care can flourish, beyond the current ecology of suspicion and separations.

The health condition of Mount Mabo shows that not all is [or equally] damaged on the planet (see Tsing 2014). If one makes a quick visit to Nangaze and Nvava, the visit will reveal the breath-taking views; the relatively quiet and tranquil landscapes; the sounds of insects and birds buzzing. These sounds are sometimes accompanied by the voices of residents as they chat or walk to their *mida* or by the rhythmic sound of pounding and singing as women pound maize throughout the day. When the sky is clear, one can see Mount Mabo standing tall and proud wearing a green cloth that extends continuously across the horizon. A deeper incursion in the forest will reveal a fresh and humid air, a forest buzzing with life, and the soundscape dominated by the river Múgue and Mabo vigorously flowing downwards towards the lower areas in the *povoados*, then the district, then the city and finally reaching the Indian ocean, where the river-ocean assemblages tell stories that are beyond the scope of this thesis. When the rainy days arrive the sounds of these rivers are heard from the *povoados* like a continuous explosion, exhibiting their vitality. I remember my first impression as I stepped into the forest and witnessed the beauty and grandeur of the area was wonderment, and like with the scientists and NGOs, then a sense of concern.

As Elaine Gan et al (2017) would state “every landscape is haunted by past ways of life” which also means that what we (Terrans) do today will be the past haunting the future present actions. That made me wish that in 100 years from that day people would still be able to enjoy that beauty, glory, and grandeur the same way I did, the same way that people before me did, but also, I also hoped that by then prosperity would have reached also to most residents, who since the beginning of colonial encounters only have had promises of such prosperity. These promises turned into thin air as the white settlers, subsequently the colonial liberators Frelimo’s party elite alongside local elite reaped and still reap most of the benefits and accumulated wealth off the area leaving destruction on their paths, much like in the moulds of the accumulation by dispossession as described by Harvey (2003).

As this thesis comes to an end, I would like to highlight the fact that the literature on indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), political ontology, African thought, decolonial theory, and nature conservation discussed throughout this thesis has insisted on the need for embracing local people and their knowledge in project planning, design and implementation while being open to be affected by such encounters. This in turn, I believe, could open room for alternatives *to* nature conservation to expand Arturo Escobar's (1995, 82) "alternative to development" phrase, alternatives that are not bounded to the modernist ontology, marketization, commoditization, financialization (Holmes and Cavanagh 2016,), (and I add) hierarchization and extraction. Judging by the ongoing climate crisis, mass extinctions, land-grabs, and global inequalities, wars, sweeping environmental disasters, post-truth era, and the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, it becomes clear that such a move needs to be done sooner rather than later. The kind of radical transformation that I alongside many other scholars, artists, writers, residents, and activists past and present are proposing might sound "unrealistic" to most. A century ago, the fact that "Man" could be considered a force capable of forcing the course of *Terra* into the "Anthropocene" was also unrealistic.

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Appendixes

Box 3. On the goodbyes

When I was about to say my goodbyes and leave Nangaze in April 2018, I asked Calisto to prepare lunch. I paid for the beers, *cachaço*, chickens, bush meat, and Calisto's wife, Marta, and daughters prepared the food and the *massa*. We sat under a mango tree at Calisto's house: the same tree where I had *passear* with different residents, including the *mwene*. I had listened to so many stories and engaged in many conversations under that mango tree. Calisto and I were sitting on a bench and the other participants were sitting on a mat made of reed, where the food and beverages were placed by Calisto's wife, and the daughters. Everything looked so delicious, except for the smoked bushmeat that I was never capable of eating. It had a "rotten" flavour that made it popular among residents.

I asked Calisto to invite those people whom he felt should come and I also invited people I have met who were impactful during my stay. He invited the secretary of the party, the president of RADEZA association, Binala; the president of JA association, Pre Velasco, the local secretary of the Frelimo party; the new *mwene*, Adele Correia; the old *mwene*, *mwene* Mpida and his siblings and father and a few more residents whom I did not know. After the food was laid on the mat and Marta told us we could eat. Marta had put food on the mat where residents eat from, and my food was on the table. Instead, I suggested that I wanted to sit closer to them. We all started eating and drinking. After a while, *mwene* Mpida paused and said in Manhaua that it was time we talked about why we were all there before we got drunk and lost track of things.

My heart started pounding harder as I stood up and thanked from the bottom of my heart, residents for receiving my wife and me into their lives and homes. I told them we felt welcomed and that I learned a lot from them and hope that when I write my thesis, I will do justice to the wealth of experiences I had had there. I also told them that I could see the different residents, occupying different positions in the *povoado*, belonging to different churches, sitting together, and having a great time. This was a wonderful lesson for me, which

I wanted to make explicit in my thesis, as well. That despite difference, the idea is not to build walls separating such differences but instead communicate and grow from such differences.

Afterwards, the *mwene* thanked me for living with them, being with them. He said that he had never seen anything like that before. No-one has ever taken an interest in their lives. He said that I participated in the community of life, I visited people when they were sick, I participated in funerals. I drank with them in the moments of *passear* and even went to the church (despite my shaky relations to Christianity). He asked me never to forget them and that they would never forget me. This was heart-warming for me, but I know that maybe I had done all that because of my anthropological interest - or maybe because anthropology is a practice of being with the others. The *mwene* then asked people to say what they have in their hearts, as the food waited for us to eat.

Ernesto, Calisto's brother, said that he thanked me for being there and that they learned a lot from me because it was not that I just went there and asked questions, they also asked me questions, learned from me and grew from the exchanges. Then, Binala asked me if there were any problems or issues I had while I was in Nangaze, because at first, I came with my wife, then I went by myself. Was there any problem? I sensed that his question was a reference to an incident that happened when my wife felt that Balami was indecently looking at her, she told me, and I had to ask Balami to stop doing that. Balami and I talked about this and he apologized to my wife, and we all moved on. So, I told them there was no problem and any conflicts that had happened I am not taking with me in my heart. It is life. It comes with it if we all talk about it and come to terms with it. He said thank you.

After that, we all resumed eating and drinking. I was offered a young chicken by the new *mwene*. The taxi driver that first introduced me to the ethics on these *povoados*, might have been right. He told me that if I treated people right when I left, they would give me chickens. If I did not treat people right, I could die. I was alive, happy, and rather sad and receiving gifts. I got eggs from Calisto's father. But most importantly, I got the gift of their time, their knowledge, and their hospitality, even when they knew beforehand that they would not get

anything back in return. And this is something I hold dear up to this day.

The same day I talked to the new *mwene* and asked him what his plans were now that he had become *mwene*. He told me that he would work hard to get all the Nangaze's residents who left Nangaze to return and make sure the ones who stayed remained there. He continued saying that there was no Nangaze without the people. He told me that he asked Calisto to work closely with him for there are things that Calisto knows, and he does not. If he does something wrong Calisto and other people should sit down with him and talk. In Nangaze, as I showed throughout this thesis, people can also grow by being with other people and *passear*.

Fieldnotes April 30, 2018

Box 4. Calisto: a timeline biography showing the entanglement of capitalism, nature conservation and personal histories.

1969 – Calisto is born in Matequenha, in Mpemula *povoado*, in Tacuane, Lugela

1974 – Starts pre-education in a Catholic missionary school

1978 – Finishes grade 3, and then is forced to leave school because there was no grade 4 school in the locality and Lugela. During the Colonial period education system was organized in 1 grade 1 grade advanced, 2 grade – second grade advanced, etc. He had finished grade 3 advanced and failed twice due to illnesses. Primary education was compulsory from five years onward. He starts going to Catholic church.

1982 – The civil war breaks in Lugela. At the beginning Renamo men were friendly to local communities and would sit and talk with the communities. But things changed in 1984. That's the year a Catholic priest, Padre Chavier, was killed by Renamo. That killing represented the turning point after which Renamo became more violent in the region.

1986 – He and other people are captured by Renamo men to carry things from Matequenha to Afazema which is located between Milange and Murrumbala. He was 17 years old. Then they are freed.

1987: He gets married to his first wife. At this period, he was responsible for the Catholic church, and worked as a local agriculturalist and hunter during wartime. Meat here was used as a trade coin to buy clothes and salt during the war time from Malawi.

1992: There is a peace agreement in Mozambique and in 1994 the first general elections.

1996: He starts working for Madal, a former colonial tea plantation in Lugela, stopping fire and cleaning houses. He was not a full-time worker but part-time – *ganho ganho*.

2003: Starts working for Madal full-time

2005: He is promoted to *encarregado* da Empresa (lit. Responsible for the company) in Madal. In the same year he meets and works with Dr. Julian Bayliss. Dr. Julian Bayliss persuades him to work with protecting Mount Mabo.

2007: He is sacked from Madal.

2008: Starts working in Malawi first as a security guard in a house and later at TEM - Transport Equipment Manufacture as a Stock Manager and Health and Safety Official.

2009: He returns home. At the same year Dr. Julian Bayliss returns for his second fieldwork coming with the BBC crew to make photoshoots. He finds the team already here and is introduced to Daniel Ribeiro, a biologist from JA!.

2013: The registration of JA!'s created associations starts. In the same year he travels to Maputo.

2015: He travels to Mulanje, Malawi with JA, government and local community members to meet the work carried out by Dr. Julian Bayliss in Mulanje. In the same year he travels to Maputo (JA).

2016: He participated in a Workshop in Maputo on REDD+ in which high profile individuals like Nnimmo Bassey as well as scientists and grassroots activists from Latin America and Africa participated saying No REDD+.

2017: Still working as the coordinator of the four associations protecting Mount Mabo, and JA is still waiting for the DUAT

2020: Still waiting for a DUAT and for the EU funded NGOs to start their work with the residents.

Source: Interviews, April 4, 2016