



Original article

Surplus to extraction: Resettlement as a “make live” intervention in Mozambique

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Resettlement

Mozambique

Surplus populations

Mining

Dependency

ABSTRACT

One of the direct consequences of the growing extractive industry in Mozambique is the displacement of people from their homes and lands. Building on the work of Tania Li (2010), we regard extractive projects as one of the key ways in which “surplus populations” are produced in Mozambique, as people lose access to their lands without being substantially incorporated into the job markets that extractive projects create. In this paper, we critically explore Li’s framework of “make live” interventions and “let die” scenarios for conceptualising the consequences of being made surplus to extraction. We focus on involuntary resettlement processes in Mozambique as make live interventions (in intention). While Li describes make live interventions in terms of a choice made by governing actors, we see resettlement as a messy and conflict-ridden process that is often experienced as a let die scenario. We also reveal the heterogeneity of governing actors (primarily state and company) involved in make live interventions and the claims of dependency of populations affected by resettlement that such interventions produce. We draw from research material gathered during different resettlement processes and phases in extractive contexts in Cabo Delgado and Tete provinces in Mozambique.

1. Introduction

In 2010, Tania Li introduced the Marxist phrase “surplus population” and the Foucauldian notions of “make live/let die” to the debate about the impacts of large-scale land acquisitions on rural people. “Surplus populations”, Li argues, emerge in contexts “in which places (or their resources) are useful, but the people are not, so that dispossession is detached from any prospect of labour absorption” (2010: 69), resulting in a situation in which “people can no longer sustain their own lives through direct access to the means of production, or access to a living wage” (2010: 67). Such conditions have become widespread across the world as large-scale land acquisitions by states and corporations dispossess large numbers of (often rural) people from their land, whereas their labour is hardly incorporated as it is “‘surplus’ to the requirements of capital accumulation” (Li 2010: 67). This echoes observations made by Saskia Sassen (2014: 10) in *Expulsions*, where she argues that we are witnessing “the immiseration and exclusion of growing numbers of people who cease being of value as workers and consumers”. As August Carbonella and Sharryn Kasmir (2015: 51)

summarize, there is “a growing scholarly consensus around the notion that these new enclosures are creating people and communities who are permanently constituted as ‘outside’ of capitalism”. Similarly, James Ferguson (2013: 230) observes a radical break in the capitalist macro-history of the world as shifting “from a people-scarce system to a people-surplus one”. Characteristic of this break is that economic growth coexists with rising unemployment and a status of wage-less life as the new normal (Denning 2008). This fits in a wider debate about outcasts and disconnections from economy and markets (Eriksen and Schober 2017).

Only identifying and describing the phenomenon of surplus populations is not enough and several possible responses have been explored to mitigate the plight of capitalism’s outcasts. Ferguson (2015) identifies universal basic income as a possible response to rising unemployment. In this paper, we focus on the responses to the predicament of those who lose their land. Li (2010) argues that in situations of land dispossession, “make live” interventions become particularly urgent as people can no longer sustain their lives through access to the means of production. She observes that the markets will not take care of the

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2021.101036>

Received 21 July 2021; Received in revised form 19 December 2021; Accepted 20 December 2021

Available online 12 January 2022

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millions of people considered useless to the functioning of capital, so she notes there is a choice being made between make live and let die when it comes to surplus populations. This politics is followed by a pertinent question: “whose responsibility is it to attend to the welfare of surplus populations?” (Li 2010: 87). Li discusses an example of a make live intervention: a “right to food” program in India, but she also notes that all too often such make live interventions do not exist. She observes a disturbing prevalence of “the politics of let die scenarios: why governing authorities would elect not to intervene when they could or select one subset of the population for life enhancement while abandoning another” (Li 2010: 66).

The notion of “surplus population” has gotten quite some traction in debates about dispossession (Carbonella and Kasim, 2015; Lesutis 2019a) and land grabbing (Nyantakyi-Frimpong and Bezner Kerr 2017), yet Li’s elaboration of the politics surrounding the question of whether and how to respond to the predicaments of surplus people has received far less attention. In this paper, we adopt Li’s framework of make live interventions (protection) and let die scenarios (abandonment) yet critically explore its ethnographic usefulness for conceptualizing the consequences of being made surplus. Contrary to Li, we argue that the line between make live and let die is not drawn by a one-off choice made by governing actors. Rather, we show that the implementation of make live interventions unfolds through a messy and conflict-ridden process that is often experienced as a let die scenario. In addition, we reveal the heterogeneity of governing actors involved in make live interventions and the claims of dependency that such interventions produce. In our analysis, we focus on the making of surplus populations and the unfolding of make live interventions and let die scenarios in the context of mining-induced displacement in Mozambique. We note here the harsh sound of describing populations as “surplus”, but using such strong wording is precisely the point, as it draws attention to the challenges and predicaments of people being made surplus.

Mozambique’s economy has taken an “extractive turn” in recent years, due to a surge in mining projects (e.g., coal, heavy sands, graphite, rubies), and the (future) extraction of natural gas. Along with projects in other sectors (e.g., infrastructure, agriculture, conservation), this extractive boom has generated the displacement of about 20,000 families since 2010 through circa 50 resettlement projects.¹ These people can be regarded as surplus populations because they were not significantly incorporated into the labour markets emerging from and around these projects (see also Lesutis 2019a) and they often lost lands they were farming for their subsistence. We argue that the resettlement plans designed to compensate and relocate displaced people to new lands can be seen as make live interventions, but we will also demonstrate that these interventions are often experienced by resettled people as a let die scenario. Consequently, a strict analytical divide between make live or let die does not reflect the experiences of make live interventions. Rather, we see in our case studies that the creation of surplus populations does something else: it produces claims of dependency between the populations affected by resettlement, the extractive companies involved, and government actors. At the same time, we observe that in resettlement policy, dependency is regarded as a situation that is to be strongly avoided. We argue that by acknowledging the inevitable emergence of relationships of dependency from resettlement, there may be opportunities for thinking about a more equal distribution of resources. Hence, this article also provides an intervention in debates about resettlement and displacement induced by land acquisition.

The data presented in this paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out during different phases of mining-induced resettlement in Mozambique. This allows us to detail how resettlement as a make live intervention was announced, planned, negotiated, and experienced. We draw on research material from Balama district, Cabo Delgado province,

gathered in 2018 by Angela Kronenburg García following public consultations in which a new mining project and resettlement plans were announced (a pre-resettlement situation), and on fieldwork carried out in Moatize district, Tete province by Nikkie Wiegink, between 2016 and 2019 where resettlement had already happened (between 2011 and 2014) and which can be characterized as a post-resettlement situation. Both authors participated in the two-day Second National Meeting on Resettlement in Chibuto (Gaza province) in November 2018, organized by the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development (MITADER). Complementary fieldwork in Nampula province (Kronenburg García) as well as interviews carried out in Mozambique’s capital Maputo (Wiegink) with key actors in the extractive sector allows us to present the views of different actors involved and to analyse the different phases of resettlement and their unfolding over time.

The paper is structured as follows: we will first discuss how surplus populations are produced through land acquisition for extractive projects in Mozambique. We then focus on resettlement as a make live intervention and discuss how it is experienced in terms of let die scenarios. Next, we show how claims of dependency are created in the process. We conclude by discussing the importance of seeing resettlement through the conceptual lenses of surplus population and make live and let die and what this can contribute to our understanding of the social and political consequences of land acquisition for resource extraction.

2. Extractive projects and the making of surplus populations in Mozambique

Extractive projects need land to build the infrastructure to extract, process, and transport the resources, and to accommodate staff. To make way for such projects, people living on or using coveted land need to move, a process which is generally referred to as project-induced displacement (Vanclay 2017). The government of Mozambique considers extractive projects to be in the national economic interest (Chiziane et al., 2015), and like development-induced displacement, extraction-related displacement is typically legitimized in the name of (sustainable) development (Otsuki 2019; Wiegink 2020). However, all too often – and Mozambique is no exception – the development and economic progress resulting from such projects is unevenly distributed, as displaced people are largely excluded from the labour markets and business opportunities that are created by extraction projects (Castel-Branco 2014).

One of the first large-scale mining-induced displacements in Mozambique took place in Moatize, Tete province. In 2011, the Brazilian company Vale and the Australian company Riversdale (later bought by Rio Tinto, which sold the concession in 2014 to the Indian consortium ICVL) opened open-pit coal mines for which an estimated 10,000 people had to be displaced (Lesutis 2019b: 116); many more were affected by environmental degradation and pollution because of coal mining. Two resettlement villages were built, forty kilometres outside of Moatize town: Cateme which was where those dislocated by the Vale mine were resettled, and Mualadzi, which was where those dislocated by the Benga mine (the mine opened by Riversdale) were resettled. Resettlement involved financial compensation as well as a new house and new plots of agricultural land. At the time, there was no national legislation on resettlement, so companies followed the land law and international or company guidelines, largely at their own discretion.

In Moatize, resettled people (*reassentados*) were not substantially integrated into the workforce of the mining company (Lesutis 2019b: 118; Wiegink 2018). Despite some failed attempts by Vale to introduce poultry production in the resettlement areas with the objective of providing catering to the mine, *reassentados* have not benefited from the job opportunities created by the mining projects. More widely, opportunities for local content and linkages with local entrepreneurs have turned out to be rather limited (Buur and Monjane 2017). The resettled people in Moatize perceived the emerging job market as out of their

¹ These numbers were reported by the National Director of Spatial Planning and Resettlement during the Second National Resettlement Meeting in 2018.

reach and as offering mainly opportunities to higher educated Mozambicans and foreigners. The exclusion of resettled people also extended to low wage jobs. As one resident of Mualadzi said: “I can hold a broom and clean, don't you think?! But they will not hire me”.

Similar issues were at play in Balama, Cabo Delgado province. Graphite mining in Balama was pioneered by Australian company Syrah Resources, who started drilling activities in 2012 and first achieved production in 2017. In 2016, a new company appeared on the scene, which already operated a graphite mine in the neighbouring district of Montepuez. After favourable drilling results in Balama, it started to plan for a new mine and in 2018 organized a series of public consultations to inform the local population about the project. The new mine would directly affect five villages, one of which would need to be relocated completely (“physical resettlement”), while all would lose agricultural land (“economic resettlement”). The new graphite mine would be in close vicinity to Syrah Resources’ already established mine, hence local residents were familiar with the (limited) job opportunities of new mining projects and somewhat informed about the consequences of mining-induced displacement.

The incorporation of local workers in the new project was a hot topic in the Balama public consultation meetings. These meetings brought together residents, mining company representatives, government representatives from the district and provincial level, and representatives from the consultancy company that carried out the scoping study for the mining company. The power of the recruiting agent became painfully clear during one of these meetings, as several villagers reported the disturbing practice of having had to *bribe* the recruiting agent of the first company in Balama to get a job. “Where are we going to get that money from to buy a job, when it is *there* [the agricultural field] where we make money by selling peas, selling maize!?” exclaimed one woman as she warned the new company to not do the same. “You are taking our fields away”, she continued, “which is how we get money, if you continue with that attitude of bringing in people from outside, we will also deny you our fields, because *they* are not the ones who had their fields removed, *we* are the ones who lose agricultural land, who lose everything”. In Moatize, similar stories circulated of vacancies being “sold” by people already inside the company, a system that was perceived as mainly benefitting people from the southern provinces of Mozambique.

Another barrier to accessing jobs expressed during the Balama consultations was the issue of official documentation. Companies require an ID card or a valid birth certificate to employ somebody, but applying for these documents costs money, and for most village residents this is a disproportionately high expense and therefore most lack this documentation. This administrative requirement excludes the local poor from any prospect of a living wage. Thus, in the end, those that most need jobs, risk losing out as they lack the financial means to bribe the recruiting agent or pay for official documentation. In both cases, this is believed to benefit outsiders, adding to the sense of exclusion and marginalisation by those displaced by mining projects.

Some of the labour issues we observed are inherent to labour market dynamics in the mining sector in general. Industrial mining is a highly technical and mechanized practice and therefore needs workers with specific skills, which often do not match the labour skills of displaced people, except in the construction phase. Labour market segmentation and inequalities also derive, as Benjamin Rubbers (2020) shows, from mining companies’ recruitment practices, associated social networks, and the great gatekeeping power of recruiting agents, all of which do not favour local residents.

Combined, our case studies illustrate how the land of residents in Moatize and Balama was needed, but their labour was not. We thus demonstrate that those targeted for resettlement for these mining projects can be regarded as “surplus”.

Gediminas Lesutis (2019a: 46) has argued that the populations targeted for resettlement are often considered as disposable in the eyes of the government or international mining corporations *a priori* a specific mining project. This may shed light on to why some areas become

concessional to mining operations and others do not, as such decisions are often also informed by politics (Côte and Korf 2018). The production of surplus populations is thus a process that needs to be considered in the wider social, economic, and political context. Taking this into account, we consider in what follows how resettlements as make live interventions are planned and how these unfold.

3. Resettlement as a make live intervention in intention

Resettlement can be defined as a “planned process of relocation” (Vanclay 2017). In Mozambique, this process is considered involuntary, as people cannot refuse to be resettled if a certain project is singled out as being of national interest. Resettlement legislation in Mozambique developed after criticism of civil society organisations on the resettlement processes induced by coal mining projects in Moatize (Human Rights Watch 2013; Lesutis, 2019b; Lillywhite et al., 2015; Mosca and Selemane, 2011). This resulted in the development of regulations for the resettlement resulting from economic activities which are now largely governed by the recent mining law (Mining Law no. 20/2014 of 18 August) and the resettlement regulations (Decree 31/2012). Depending on the investors of the project in place, social performance standards of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group are also relevant in determining the parameters of the resettlement process. These national regulations and international standards detail the different stages of the resettlement process, the formulation of a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) – which is part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, and the compensation and assistance for restoring livelihoods that affected households should receive.² They also contain provisions to ensure that the standard of living and livelihoods of the affected communities are maintained, and preferably improved, after resettlement. In case of private investment projects, the company takes responsibility for the resettlement process (writing the RAP, implementing the relocation and financing it) and the government is considered a facilitator (i.e., provides replacement land) and an arbiter (i.e., approves plans).

Resettlement legislation articulates with Mozambique’s land legislation, which has important implications for compensation. The Mozambican constitution states that the land belongs to the state and cannot be sold. However, the land law (Land Law, no. 19/97 of 1 October) does recognize land use rights called DUATs (*Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra*). Mozambicans already occupying land automatically have a permanent DUAT without need for registration (Tanner 2010), while companies must apply for a registered DUAT, which essentially represents a permission from the state to use the land (Hanlon 2011).³ Community consultations are built in this land acquisition process, which is separate from, but often runs in parallel with, the resettlement process and its public consultations. Thus, while private land ownership is not recognized and land as such cannot be compensated for, the *use* of land can, or more precisely, what is *on* the land (e.g., houses, crops), and lost farmland should be replaced with new agricultural fields.

The ambitious principles in Mozambique’s legal framework reflect a wider tendency to increasingly frame resettlement as an opportunity for development. This is well illustrated by our observations at the National Resettlement Meeting that took place in Mozambique in 2018. During this meeting, a broad set of actors such as different government institutions, extractive companies, consultancy companies, the World Bank, and civil society organisations discussed what resettlement is and

² https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/Topics_Ext_Content/IFC_External_Corporate_Site/Sustainability-At-IFC/Policies-Standards/Performance-Standards, accessed 15 October 2019.

³ See also Amnesty International report, “*Our lives mean nothing*”: The human cost of Chinese mining in Nagonha, Mozambique” <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1047056/download>, accessed 15 December 2021.

should be, and how it should be legislated and implemented in Mozambique. One of the prominent tropes we heard during this meeting was the framing of resettlement as an opportunity for sustainable development, which is an idea that also circles internationally amongst practitioners and policymakers (Vanclay 2017; Witter and Satterfield 2019). At the meeting, resettlement was talked about in terms of development in a double sense. On the one hand, extractive projects were depicted as opportunities for national economic development (for all Mozambicans), and resettlement as a sacrifice for this. On the other hand, resettlement itself was considered as an opportunity for development for *reassentados*, as it was envisioned to involve improved housing, access to the electricity grid, tap water, job creation, access to schools, health centres and so forth. Resettlement was considered as more than compensation, or in Li's (2010) language, more than a make live intervention, as it was considered a potential improvement of people's lives.

The National Resettlement Meeting was part of ongoing discussions about resettlement policy that largely revolved around the issues of assessing fair compensation and improving legislation. In these kinds of meetings, the intentions for make live interventions take shape and are formulated. These intentions are further elaborated in the RAPs, through concrete make live plans and make live projects, and the setting up of make live institutions. At the same time, the process of developing and improving resettlement policies remains highly political as it also works to legitimize extractive projects and co-opt criticism (Wiegink 2020). In fact, we observed during the National Meeting that questions about the success and failure of resettlement projects were largely avoided. Ideally, as explained during the meeting, livelihood restoration is to be achieved between three to five years after the relocation, after which resettlement programs should stop to avoid getting trapped in a cycle of dependency. The thorny question of what happens if after five years livelihoods are not restored and dependency persists, was not discussed in the meeting. This silence might be linked to other thorny issues, namely the questions of how long after the resettlement the company or government is considered responsible for the *reassentados*, and at what moment resettlement can be considered as completed. We will address the implications of such questions further on in this paper.

Reassentados first encounter legal frameworks and development discourses during public consultations. Since 2012, when the national resettlement regulations came into force, these are the arenas where RAPs and compensation schemes are discussed and agreed upon with project-affected communities. Companies are legally obliged to organise a minimum of four consultation meetings when they want to initiate a new or extend an existing mining operation. It is during such public consultations that resettlement is presented as an opportunity for development and economic growth (through jobs) and that expectations of make live are created.

4. Expectations of make live, experiences of let die

The coal mining investments in Moatize raised grand expectations amongst the *reassentados* who hoped to somehow benefit from the extractive projects (Wiegink 2018). Even though the resettlement process involved the taking away of their land, dwellings, and means of livelihood, for the people living in the concession area it was also seen as a rare opportunity for a better life. The residents of the resettlement areas recalled how they were initially mesmerized by their new houses, delighted by the new furniture, and enjoyed the flow of cash that they had received. As one female resident in Mualadzi put it: "At first I thought that resettlement would bring me good things", she said, "but now I know that it is a disgrace". She continued: "Now I see that resettlement did not bring me good things, rather, it is as if we are put into a mass grave". These ominous words reflect the sentiments of many people in Moatize and illustrates how people's initial high hopes were soon squashed.

People's stories, as well as other evidence (e.g., Lesutis 2019a,

2019b; Lillywhite et al. 2013), indicate that *reassentados* in Mualadzi are worse off than before: they are demoralized by unmet expectations and promises (such as regular transportation from the village to Moatize and asphalted the main road) and, importantly, resettlement has resulted in the loss of livelihood means (Human Rights Watch 2013; Lesutis 2019a, 2019b; Lillywhite et al., 2015; Siteo and Queface 2015). Resettlement affected people differently across gender, age, socio-economic status, and so on. Despite this variety, most people in Mualadzi recalled better lives in their previous dwellings, even though most of them had lived rather informally in worse housing conditions and with no registered DUAT. Lesutis (2019b: 122) has called the resettlement areas in Moatize "spaces of suffering", describing people who are "doing nothing" and who feel as if they are considered "nothing". We observe that these let die experiences were coupled with certain claims and expectations. Residents of Mualadzi talked about their village as belonging to the company ("the village of ICVL"), and as themselves as "being in the hands of the company". Through the community resource management committee, residents continued to pressurize the government and the companies to deliver on their make live promises. They hoped that the company would implement projects (such as small-scale chicken farming and a timber business) and that the state would provide for public services, such as electricity and water.

In Balama, people's expectations of resettlement were more moderate and mixed. This difference may be explained by the fact that they were aware of the realities of mining-induced resettlement through the experiences of neighbouring communities with the first mining company in Balama, while in Moatize resettlement was something relatively new and untested. The plans for the new graphite mine in Balama district with corresponding resettlement were not received by all as an opportunity for development and improvement. While some strongly hoped for job opportunities, for others the upcoming extractive project was a source of great worry. The first reaction of affected people during the public consultations was to lament the impending loss of their agricultural fields (more than the loss of their houses), i.e. the "ripping off" (*arrancar*) of their fields, as they phrased it, as if a part was being torn off from their bodies. Farmers expressed sadness and pain at losing their source of livelihood, losing the land where they had grown up, that was worked on for generations and which was meant to be for their children. People worried about how to sustain their families without land to farm and this was often articulated in terms of dying. One woman explained: "look at today, today I am just waiting to die, I am waiting to see my son die of hunger, I am waiting to see my grandchildren die of hunger". In a way, this woman was anticipating a let die scenario.

Future *reassentados* in Balama also expressed claims of dependency vis-a-vis the government and the company, and used these as a ground to make these governing actors accountable for their wellbeing. Some community members spoke about the government as the "father" and the company as the "mother" to emphasize that it was their responsibility to take care of them. At times during the consultation meetings, innovative make live interventions were proposed by affected people that bespeak of a strong claim to dependency. An old man, for example, started his speech by explaining how his agricultural field had been opened by his great-grandfather, and then worked by his uncle. As a compensation for the loss of his farmland, he did not want a job, since he was too old to work, and neither did he want a one-off sum of money. His demand was to be given a monthly allowance by the company, until his death, just like old people get pensions until they die. And because this land had been passed on from generation upon generation and was destined for his children, they, and even his grandchildren, he claimed, should also get a monthly allowance from the company. By bringing in this temporal dimension of land loss and its significance for coming generations, this man had factored in future livelihood needs in his demand for compensation. The proposition to implement a pension scheme was not taken seriously during the consultation meeting, on the grounds that such arrangements would create dependency, which, as we

have seen, is something that government and companies try to avoid. Thus, also in Balama, we see a combination of dread and anticipation at being abandoned and let to die, as well as claims of dependency on governing actors.

Resettled populations largely depend — at least initially — on make live interventions for their livelihoods and, at the same time, they also become aware of their right to be compensated. This creates certain expectations as well as possibilities for laying claims on the company involved as well as the government. Thus, being made surplus puts the resettled populations in a particular position of dependency and allows resettled populations to lay new (moral) claims on governing actors. This offers new perspectives on resettlement processes in Mozambique, in which dependency is generally seen as something to be avoided. We argue that dependency is inherent in the process of creating surplus populations, and thus inherent in project-induced resettlement processes as they have been undertaken in many parts of Mozambique. The experience of resettlement changes people's relationship with the state and other governing actors, such as companies. The experience of loss due to investment projects and the incorporation into resettlement processes, creates a form of citizenship that is shaped by dependency and claim making. This pushes Tania Li's conceptualization of surplus populations further, as it allows for an understanding of surplus populations not merely as passive actors subjected to the whims of governing actors that decide on their fate, but also as actively involved in negotiations over and contestation of make live interventions.

5. The production of let die scenarios

Tania Li understands let die scenarios in terms of a politics: as a result of decisions made by governing actors not to intervene in the lives of surplus populations. However, we have shown that despite the numerous actors at work to address the predicament of surplus populations, and laws and policies in place with the aim to restore – and even enhance – livelihoods, people's experiences in both Moatize and Balama were of a let die scenario. Resettlement in these places, and in Mozambique at large, fails to deliver on its promises and remains a make live intervention “in intention”. In this section, we analyse how scenarios of letting die emerged in the resettlement processes in Moatize and Balama. We locate this dynamic in the negotiations and conflicts over resources and responsibility between government agencies, corporate actors, and resettled populations. We discuss three moments where let die scenarios creep in: the first shows how failure is potentially built in from the beginning when resettlement is announced; the second shows how let die scenarios are produced during resettlement when the provision of new fields falters, and the third illustrates how let die scenarios are produced after resettlement when the implementation of a make live intervention is abandoned. Each of these examples points to the reluctance of assuming responsibility for, or recognizing the underlying weakness of, the make live interventions as an important issue.

The first example illustrates how negotiations about compensation for lost farmland are limited from the start due to the (legal) status of land and crops, potentially triggering a let die scenario. According to Mozambique's legal framework on land and resettlement, land belongs to the state and cannot be bought and sold, and therefore has no (official) value. Therefore, land cannot be compensated for, even though rural people may consider themselves the owners of the land and endow it with value. Instead, what is compensated for are the houses and the crops at a certain moment in time (decided by the company), while lost agricultural fields should be replaced with new fields. Crops are compensated following a list made by government authorities in each province that details how much a farmer should get for any standing crop. Yet these provincial lists are not regularly updated so that crop values often do not reflect the going market prices. Such a compensation scheme based on standing crops also usually excludes what farmers would consider fallow and reserve land (and the government “bush”) from the negotiation process about compensation (whether financial

compensation or through replacement) even though they are integral and important parts of the means of livelihood of shifting cultivators. In the Balama consultations, this and other similar issues were raised on several occasions by village residents, who called for fair and direct negotiations with the company without interference from the state, its rules and lists for crop compensation. Yet in their response, the company representative insisted that “unfortunately” it had to follow the national law and regulations for compensation, and the government representative warned that if everyone would negotiate their own price for land and crops, the company would leave and with it any opportunity for development would be lost, not only for the future *reassentados* but for the whole district. He concluded: “each one of us has to put [this] into their minds, that this is how the government works and this is how each one of us enters into this economic process”, effectively closing any space for negotiation on fair compensation for lost resources.

The second example is the failure of providing quality replacement land for the resettled populations in Moatize. Resettlement regulations, including the IFC standards and the national regulation of Mozambique, stress the importance of finding replacement land that is of similar or better quality than the land that is lost, so that this would allow people to resume their land-based livelihood activities. In the case of the resettlements in Moatize, people were provided land that was arid and poor, and difficult to cultivate (Human Rights Watch 2013; Lesutis, 2019b; Lillywhite et al., 2015). In addition, the land (both residential and for farming), was located far away from the main road so that they also lost opportunities for petty trade, such as brickmaking, selling charcoal, sand, and stones. The availability of high-quality replacement land, or any land at all, was already a looming issue in the public consultations observed in Balama. A man from one of the villages who was set to lose farmland, articulated this clearly: “we have nowhere to move to, we have nowhere to go to make new fields, because from here [i.e. the village] to the river [where land is potentially available] it is too far”. In fact, the scoping study confirmed that finding replacement land of similar productivity and comparable accessibility as the land taken would be difficult.

These problems are not specific to Balama or Moatize but seem to be a much wider issue. Elsewhere in Mozambique, people have been moved to land that does not provide the same livelihood resources, forcing for instance fishing communities to become farmers (Salomão 2020), or moving people to already occupied lands resulting in conflicts with host communities (Milgroom et al., 2014). Thus, even though the size of the new land might be the same, and it might thus seem that access to the land-based means of livelihood is guaranteed, other factors often compromise this access (e.g., quality, distance) and jeopardize the ability of people to restore their livelihoods as they knew them.

Providing good replacement land is thus a key element for making resettlement a successful make live intervention as access to suitable land determines life and death in rural contexts. At the same time, it is often one of the hardest challenges in the resettlement process as it requires investment and political will from governing actors (Reddy et al., 2015). The problem of finding replacement land is a well-known problem amongst planners and resettlement professionals, as fertile land and good living locations are often already taken. It is “uncomfortable knowledge” (Rayner 2012) that would fundamentally invalidate resettlement as a viable make live solution for displaced people yet remains ignored and unaddressed. In Mozambique, the allocation of land for resettlement purposes is decided upon by the government. One of the recurring frustrations expressed by company resettlement officers was the quality of land allocated for resettlement. This was a recurring theme in explaining the challenges or failures of livelihood restoration schemes and placing the responsibility for the quality of the replacement land with the government. A consultant that had been hired to develop the RAP for a new mine, explained how he would duly report on the problem of finding suitable replacement land to the company, but that the report would go on to the central government anyway, who would still approve the EIA without considering or dealing with the problem.

A third example to illustrate the unfolding of let die scenarios in resettlement areas relates to the responsibility of maintaining the resettlement infrastructures. The village infrastructure of Mualadzi included quite a sophisticated water distribution system. Generally, the state company FIPAG supplies water and water points across Mozambique, but in Mualadzi, Rio Tinto provided a South African water system. This also meant that spare parts needed to come from South Africa, and that special knowledge was needed for maintenance. The system worked for several years, but when several water points broke down, maintenance and repair became an unsolvable issue. The government did not feel responsible to take care of this system and the company ICVL (that took over from Rio Tinto) did not seem to assume responsibility either. At the time of fieldwork in May 2017 the water system had not been functioning for a year (see also Wiegink 2018). It was disquieting to note that government officials as well as company staff interviewed seemed equally in the dark as to the division of responsibilities. The *reassentados* held the mining companies and the government responsible for their dire post-resettlement situation. (Sometimes they held specific individuals responsible such as former president Guebuza.) However, it was generally unclear who was responsible for what. When the *reassentados* asked “when will they take care of us?” they also did not know who was supposed to take care of what (Wiegink 2018). In other words, they did not know where the company’s responsibilities began and where and when these ended, and (possibly) those of the government began.

The issue of responsibility was a central agenda point during the 2018 National Resettlement Meeting but equally remained unresolved. A community relation officer of a mining company asked for clarification on when the responsibilities of the company for people’s livelihoods end. Officially, according to the IFC standards, companies are acquitted from responsibilities for resettlement when a completion audit has been conducted (see IFC standard 5 2012).⁴ However, as far as we know in none of the resettlement cases we have studied such a completion audit has taken place. This complicates Li’s framework, which identifies government agencies as the main decision-making actor over the fate of surplus populations, whereas our cases show a governance landscape that is more diverse and, consequently it seems, responsibility for make live interventions is more diffuse.

The responsibility for the water management and maintenance of Mualadzi shows another aspect of responsibility in the context of extractive projects, namely the volatile role mining companies play as governing actors. As the Benga mine was sold by Rio Tinto to ICVL, the company policy concerning resettlement changed. The new owners of the mine “are not interested in resettlement”, one of the community relation officers said. At the same time, in 2013, low coal prices made the companies slow or pause their coal production. ICVL’s production came to a full stop and the funding for community relation activities, including resettlement and maintenance, dried up. In 2017, the coal price picked up again and ICVL resumed production and planned for the expansion of the mine, which will probably include further funding for the resettlement areas. Recent fieldwork indicated that engagement of the company with the affected populations has recommenced. However, in view of their previous experiences, people have little faith in the company’s intentions. This thus shows that the involvement of governing actors in make live interventions may oscillate and be dependant on factors beyond their control such as global commodity prices.

Combined, these examples show how failures and difficulties emerge in the process of planning and implementing make live interventions in Mozambique. These examples also show how these problems must be situated in the wider governance landscape of Mozambique, the struggles and misperceptions amongst governing actors over responsibility,

and the possible ways to deflect this. This is certainly not an exhaustive analysis. Although we have shown how let die scenarios may relate to a wider economic context (global commodity markets), additional work can be done by teasing out how they relate to other contextual factors such as Mozambique’s long dependency on foreign donors and foreign investments, partisan politics, and long-lasting processes of (regional) exclusion, to name just a few. We regard our contribution on the complexity of addressing the welfare of surplus populations as the beginning of such an endeavour.

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have analysed the unfolding of a make live intervention (resettlement) designed to deal with populations displaced for extractive projects who are surplus to the extractive industry’s labour market in Mozambique. As Li (2010) argues, by taking away land, houses, and livelihood means, surplus populations are created because they are not incorporated into the labour market. Regarding displaced people as surplus to extraction thus supposes a certain responsibility for implementing make live interventions. In Mozambique, such interventions take the shape of involuntary resettlement processes. Resettlement is, in intention, thus a make live intervention and a process geared towards restoring and even improving people’s quality of life. However, in the process of negotiating and implementing resettlement, the outcomes in different parts of Mozambique have been more akin to let die scenarios, to use Li’s terminology. The reasons for the failure of make live interventions are legion and should be situated in their particular social, political and economic context. Besides an emphasis on understanding the making of surplus population in context, our analysis of resettlement as a make live intervention (in intention) has also three theoretical implications, two directly intervening in Li’s framework and a third that speaks to matters related to (mining-induced) resettlement policies in Mozambique and elsewhere.

First, our analysis shows that the line between make live and let die is not drawn by the choice of intervening or not (which is what Li suggests). Rather, this is a far messier and contested negotiation process shaped by a tension between make live interventions in intention (geared at making resettlement areas independent) and the let die scenarios unfolding on the ground. (Rebecca Witter and Terre Satterfield (2019), inspired by Rob Nixon (2011), capture let die experiences by regarding resettlement as a form of “slow violence”.) This messiness becomes especially apparent when following resettlement processes through their different stages, which reveals the fuzziness as to who should take responsibility for resettlement, especially in the long run. In other words, let die scenarios are not (only) the consequence of conscious decisions for non-intervention, but they result from a series of processes and dynamics that are in part shaped by contextual factors such as commodity prices and the trade of concessions between companies.

This brings us to the second implication: make live interventions and negotiations over these are not a matter that is only dealt with by governments. Our analysis of the resettlement arena uncovers a heterogeneous field of governing actors that also includes transnational companies, NGOs and consultancy companies. It follows that a let die scenario may not be so much a political decision not to intervene taken by a government, as Li (2010) suggests. Rather, such scenarios unfold in a complex process in which politics, interests and strategies of many actors become entangled and change over time. In our analysis of resettlement processes in Mozambique we see that such let die scenarios are a consequence of increased connections and dependencies, as much as they are a consequence of governing actors’ unwillingness or inability to intervene.

The third implication is about policy changes in relation to resettlement. Proposals for betterment of resettlement processes are sought predominantly in the legal sphere, by revising the resettlement regulations and the land law, by looking for best practices, and by reviewing

⁴ https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/75de96d4-ed36-4bdb-8050-400b-e02bf2d9/PS5_English_2012.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=jqex59b, accessed 15 October 2019.

what went wrong elsewhere to learn from this for future resettlement processes (Wiegink 2020). However, shifting the gaze from legal frameworks and compensation schemes to the production of surplus population reveals some of the long-term consequences of (mining-induced) resettlement that are often overlooked in policy debates on resettlement and in academic analysis. By framing resettlement-affected populations as surplus populations their particular claims of dependency become visible (i.e., the need for make live interventions) as becomes the legitimacy of their claims. The language of surplus populations draws our attention to the claims of dependency that are produced in the process of resettlement. In fact, resettlement may offer opportunities for dependency-based development. The negative connotation of dependency is a common feature of (international) development cooperation thinking which also resonates in resettlement policies. However, as has been recently stressed by Ferguson (2015) amongst others, there might be much to gain from acknowledging these dependencies as a pathway towards the distribution of national wealth, for instance through pensions as the old man in Balama suggested. This would lead to a fundamentally different approach to resettlement. In addition, a focus on dependency and claim-making pushes Li's conceptualization of surplus populations further, as it allows for understanding surplus populations as actors with agency, actively involved in the negotiation over make live interventions.

To conclude, approaching resettlement processes through the lens of the production of surplus populations offers a new vocabulary to complement discussions about resettlement in terms of livelihood restoration and legal revisions. Thereby, this article does not only contribute to an ethnographic application of Li's framework of make live and let die politics, but also provides an intervention in debates about resettlement. Debates about dispossession, land, and extractive industry often seem to focus either on land enclosure as a necessary price of development and progress, or on the likening of dispossession to plunder and violence against peasant communities (see Noy 2019). By focusing on how resettlement is discussed and negotiated, we stress the relationships and claims that are produced in the process of making surplus populations. More radically, taking the dependency of surplus population seriously may offer new vantage points for the distribution of wealth deriving from extraction.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Patrick Meyfroidt and two anonymous reviewers for their useful suggestions. In addition, they want to acknowledge the following funding sources. The research of Nikkie Wiegink was supported by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research's (NWO) Veni scheme (016.165.234, 2015). Angela Kronenburg García wishes to acknowledge the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. 677140 MIDLAND) for supporting her research. She also received support for writing this article from PRIN of the Italian Ministry of University and Research (Grant agreement No. 2017B4JBWN).

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