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The expansion of capitalist agricultural production and social reproduction of rural labour: contradictions within the logic of capital accumulation in Mozambique

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ABSTRACT

In Mozambique, policy discourses supporting the expansion of large-scale capitalist agriculture have largely focused on its potential to increase agricultural production and productivity. In particular, they have highlighted the potential contribution to rural employment and income, and their impacts on poverty reduction. Yet in focusing narrowly on these dynamics, they have ignored the contradictions of social reproduction of labour often associated with the expansion of capitalist production. This paper explores these contradictions by considering primary and secondary evidence from two contexts of expansion of large-scale capitalist agriculture in Mozambique. It argues that these contradictions have manifested in diverse forms, reflecting the extent to which forms of expansion and (re)organisation of sectors of capitalist agricultural production, and the associated forms of labour exploitation, have affected different spheres of social reproduction of labour in these contexts. Moreover, the paper suggests, they have reproduced more broadly, as the expansion/intensification of the extractive logic of accumulation has compromised 'alternative' spaces of social reproduction.

KEYWORDS

Mozambique; accumulation; capitalist agrarian production; social reproduction; labour

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Moçambique; acumulação; produção capitalista agraria; reprodução social; força de trabalho

A expansão da produção agrícola capitalista e a reprodução social da força de trabalho rural: contradições dentro da lógica de acumulação de capital em Moçambique

RESUMO

Em Moçambique, os discursos políticos a favor da expansão da agricultura capitalista de grande escala têm se focado em grande medida no seu potencial para o aumento da produção e produtividade agrícola. Particular destaque tem sido dado ao potencial de geração de emprego e de renda no meio rural e seus impactos na redução da pobreza. Contudo, o foco limitado sobre estas dinâmicas particulares ignora as contradições de reprodução social da força de trabalho frequentemente associadas com a expansão da produção capitalista. Este artigo explora estas contradições tomando em consideração evidência secundária de contextos de expansão da agricultura capitalista de

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grande escala em Moçambique. O artigo argumenta que estas contradições tem se manifestado de diversas formas, reflectindo a maneira em que formas de expansão e (re)organização de sectores de produção capitalista agrícola, e as respectivas formas de exploração da força de trabalho têm afectado diferentes esferas de reprodução social da forca de trabalho nestes contextos. Além disso, o artigo sugere que estas contradições tem se reproduzido mais amplamente, uma vez que a expansão/intensificação da lógica extractiva de acumulação têm comprometido espaços 'alternativos' de reprodução social.

Introduction

In the past two decades, policy discourses supporting the expansion of large-scale capitalist agriculture in Mozambique have largely focused on its potential to increase agricultural production and productivity (Governo de Moçambique 2011b; 2015). In particular, they have placed emphasis on its potential contribution to rural employment and income generation, and their impacts on poverty reduction (Governo de Moçambique 2011a). Employment and income generation have indeed been central to rural poverty reduction, as recent literature on Mozambican rural labour markets has shown (Cramer, Oya, and Sender 2008). However, a narrow focus on these aspects has led policymakers to ignore the set of contradictions of social reproduction of labour often associated with the dynamics of expansion of capitalist production in particular contexts. Critical political economy has emphasised this as the structural contradiction between capitalist production and social reproduction (Marx 1976 [1867]). This reflects the historical fact that capitalist production can expand while a large proportion of the labouring class struggles continually to secure the basic and necessary conditions for their subsistence/reproduction (Gimenez 2019). This is central in contemporary debates on social reproduction (Ferguson et al. 2016; Bhattacharya 2017; Gimenez 2019; O'Laughlin 2021), including in relation to Mozambique, where different aspects affecting the conditions of social reproduction of labour in the context of capitalist expansion have become central issues of empirical investigation (O'Laughlin 2021; Ali and Stevano 2021).

This paper explores the contradictions of social reproduction of rural labour in the context of the expansion of large-scale capitalist agricultural production in Mozambique. It considers primary and secondary evidence from two cases – a sugar cane plantation and a forestry plantation in southern and northern Mozambique, respectively – and argues that these contradictions have manifested in diverse and complex forms. They reflect the extent to which forms of expansion and (re)organisation of sectors of capitalist agrarian production and the associated mechanisms of labour exploitation have affected different spheres of social reproduction of labour. These include the units of capitalist agricultural production, where labour is engaged in a wage relationship with capital, and the units of family/household and community production, where labour is engaged in production for both consumption and income, that are central for the reproduction of cheap labour. The former includes capital–labour relations, such as labour recruitment forms, contracts and wages, the conditions of work and their impacts on

the physical and mental health of workers. The latter is comprised of the various social relations of production and reproduction at the household and community levels central to the social reproduction of labour, including access to land, water, forestry and other natural resources. The spheres of reproduction of rural labour have been constantly reshaped by the dynamics of expansion of large-scale agricultural and non-agricultural capital: as the expansion of capital compromises 'alternative' spaces of social reproduction of labour, these contradictions reproduce on a large scale.

The following section briefly presents the theoretical framing of the contradictory relationship between production and social reproduction under capitalism, by considering the classical Marxist political economy abstract analysis of the relationship between production and reproduction, focusing on the reproduction of labour in 'social reproduction theory' (SRT) and on the contradiction between capitalist production and social reproduction. The third section revisits the debate on the agrarian question and rural labour in Mozambique, which helps in understanding the logic of accumulation, its historical contradictions and their continuity in contemporary political economy. The fourth section briefly describes contemporary patterns of accumulation in Mozambique, focusing on the past two decades. The fifth section explores the contradictions between the expansion of capitalist agrarian production and the conditions of social reproduction of rural labour in Mozambique identified from the two cases mentioned above. Finally, the sixth section concludes.

Framing the contradiction between capitalist production and social reproduction

In Marx's analysis, the relationship between capitalist production and social reproduction is a contradictory one (Marx 1976 [1867]). Marx's historical materialist conception of the development of human society places production at the centre of the enquiry, because production is the condition for the existence of human society and the point of departure for the analysis of any society, particularly its mode of production. Production is concerned with how society produces the material conditions of its existence (reproduction) as well as the processes and the social relations through which it is organised – the 'social relations of production' (Bernstein 2010, 13). It presupposes the creation of use values, useful things (e.g. good and services) necessary to the continuing existence of society, independently of type and mode of production (Fine and Saad-Filho 2016). This process occurs within a set of processes and complex social relations that are historically determined and in constant transformation. Related to production is the process of reproduction which presupposes that what is produced has to be reproduced, so that the process of production can continue. As Marx argues about 'simple reproduction':

> Whatever the social form of the production processes, it has to be continuous, it must periodically repeat the same phases. A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and in the constant flux of its incessant renewal, every social process of production is at the same time a process of reproduction. (Marx 1976 [1867], 711)

Reproduction is, therefore, the condition for production and vice versa. It is at this abstract level of analysis that lie the basic foundations for the analysis of the relationship

between production and social reproduction. For the purpose of understanding the contradictions between capitalist production and social reproduction, we now turn to briefly describing what social reproduction becomes under capitalism.

Social reproduction under capitalism

Theories of social reproduction have been the subject of intense debates, as the terrains of social reproduction under capitalism are profoundly transformed with the development of the forces of production and the emergence of novel sites of capital accumulation at the level of the global economy (Vogel 2000; Ferguson et al. 2016; Bhattacharya 2017; Cousins et al. 2018; Gimenez 2019). Broadly associated with a 'renewed emphasis on understanding social reproduction' promoted by Marxist and feminist scholars since the 1960s–1970s (Cousins et al. 2018, 1062; see also Vogel 2000; O'Laughlin 2021), the main object of SRT is the reproduction of labour power and the understanding of its complex terrain (Bhattacharya 2017; Gimenez 2019). A particular area in this renewed emphasis is the role of domestic labour, especially women's unpaid labour, in the reproduction of labour power (Vogel 2000). As Gimenez (2019, 332) points out, 'the analysis of domestic labor and other social processes and institutions from the standpoint of social reproduction calls attention to their relevance to the reproduction of labor power, and to the ongoing functioning of capitalism.' SRT interrogates the complex arrays of activities, social processes and mechanisms that affect the conditions of the reproduction of labour power, on a 'daily and intergenerational basis' (Ferguson et al. 2016, 27). Built upon Marx's analysis and methods of the capitalist process of commodity production, its fundamental premise is that human labour is at the centre of the creation and reproduction of society, and of its relations (Bhattacharya 2017). SRT is, then, against the notion that productive labour carried out in the terrain of market relations is the only legitimate form of work. This notion disregards the complex arrays of processes of work, both paid and unpaid, occurring in the household and community domains that sustain and reproduce the worker, more specifically his/her labour power, while SRT perceives the relation between labour engaged in commodity production and labour engaged to reproduce people as part of the systemic totality of capitalism.

Contradiction between capitalist production and social reproduction

In her work on the contradictory relationship between production and social reproduction in capitalism, Gimenez (2019) proposed a capitalist social reproduction theory (capitalist SRT), which goes beyond the SRT presented above. Capitalist SRT is built on the historical materialist conception of reproduction. As capitalism is the dominant mode of production, Gimenez argues that contemporary social reproduction 'is capitalist social reproduction, inherently contradictory, as successful struggles for the reproduction of the working classes, for example, do not necessarily challenge capitalism' (Gimenez 2019, 321). Capitalist SRT is inferred from the elements of Marx's analysis of the development of capitalism (Marx 1976 [1867]). It is contrasted with the 'general' SRT in the sense that, while also building on Marx, the main object of its analysis is the reproduction of labour power, especially in its domestic domain, with emphasis on the role of women and gender relations more generally.

Capitalist SRT differs from SRT in at least four important domains. Capitalist SRT emphasises the determinant role of capital accumulation and the state of the class struggle and sees the reproduction of labour power as inseparable from the reproduction of social classes. This theory recognises the role of women's domestic labour in daily and generational reproduction, but also men's participation in reproduction and the negative effects of capitalist reproduction upon male workers, particularly the urban poor, agricultural workers and those located in the lower strata of the working class. Finally, it looks at the contradictions of capitalism that constantly alter the terrain where workers engage in struggles for economic survival, within and outside the workplace, and the inherent contradiction between capitalism and its overall conditions of reproduction. Here lies the contradiction between capitalist production and social reproduction, which is historically contingent and reflects capital's indifference to the social and physical reproduction of labour. As capital accumulation expands while a large proportion of the working population struggles to access the means for their reproduction, new tensions emerge that can compromise the reproduction of capital along the same logic of labour exploitation. This contradiction can thus be expressed as the contradiction between capital and labour to secure their reproduction and can intensify, especially when the development of productive forces in different sectors of capitalist production leads to discarding the existing skills of a number of workers (Gimenez 2019). This notion is relevant to the analysis of the contradictions between accumulation and social reproduction of rural labour as the extractive dynamics of accumulation in Mozambique expand and intensify.

Revisiting the agrarian question: agrarian production, rural labour and social reproduction in Mozambique

This section revisits the debate on the agrarian question in Mozambique, highlighting its insights into the logic of (agrarian) accumulation and its contradictions. At the core of this debate lies the critique of the logic of accumulation in colonial and post-colonial (socialist) periods. The dynamics of different sectors of production, especially agrarian production and rural labour, their relevance for social reproduction and the contradictions within the logic of accumulation have been critically examined (Wuyts 1978, 1985, 1981; Castel-Branco 1994; O'Laughlin 1981). Under this examination, the analysis of the function of rural labour in social reproduction has been central. This function, historically contingent to the development of capitalist production, reflects the various forms, direct and indirect, through which capital has sought to exploit different sectors of rural labour to ensure its profitability.

The agrarian question and the colonial logic of accumulation

In the colonial context, the function of rural labour in guaranteeing social reproduction is explained through the functions of the peasantry within the logic of colonial capital accumulation (O'Laughlin 1981; Castel-Branco 1994). Castel-Branco (1994) argued that the peasantry fulfilled different functions that sustained capital accumulation. It produced cheap raw materials for export and for domestic industry, allowing the accumulation of colonial industrial and commercial capitals and the profitability of the industries and companies involved in commercialisation. It also produced cheap food

to feed the wage workers in labour-intensive activities (plantations, small and medium agricultural enterprises, constructions, ports and railways, and industry). The peasantry provided cheap labour to capitalist companies and, crucially, reduced the costs of labour reproduction through household production for own consumption and cheap food production.

The dependence of the colonial capitalist sector on the exploitation of the peasantry was its central feature and it had been materially embedded within the structure of capitalist production more generally (O'Laughlin 1981). This material embeddedness of the peasantry was regionally differentiated, reflecting what Bernstein, citing Samir Amin, referred to as the three 'macro regions' that colonialism has produced in sub-Saharan Africa since the nineteenth century: 'the trade economy', 'labour reserves' and 'concessionary companies' (Bernstein 2010, 50–51). In the context of Mozambique, this macro divide has been reflected in the regional differentiation and organisation of agrarian production and the markets as shaped by the colonial state. As of the early 1970s, the structure of the colonial rural economy was mainly described by the following dominant aspects and regional differentiation patterns (see Table 1). Northern Mozambique was dominated by cash crop production by the peasantry, with about 26% of output marketed and 60% for own consumption, while the centre was dominated by plantations, representing about 28% of the total national agricultural output. The south was organised as a migrant labour reserve for the South African mining industry – 20–30% of male adults had a mining job lasting between 12 and 18 months – and to settler farms producing food for urban areas (Wuyts 1985, 2001). Some elements of this regional differentiation and divide persisted post-independence and are still evident in contemporary political economy, although at a different intensity.

Central to this regional differentiation of the colonial agrarian structure was the major role played by the peasantry in agricultural commodity production. This reveals an important aspect associated with the fact that, strategically, in most of Africa, colonialism has not entirely dispossessed the peasantry, but forced them 'to enter the monetary

Table 1. The structure of colonial rural economy, 1970.

			Peasantry			
Region	Plantations (%)	Settler farms (%)	Marketed output (%)	Sale of labour	Own consumption (%)	Dominant aspects of regional rural economy
North	2	12	26	Seasonal labour to plantations and settler farms	60	Cash crop production by the peasantry
Centre	28	11	9	Seasonal labour to plantations and settler farms	52	Plantation economy in the Zambezi Valley, relying on seasonal labour
South	2	39	10	20–30% of male adults worked in South African mines for contract periods of 1-1/2 years; seasonal labour on settler farms and plantations	49	Labour reserve for South African mining and settler farm based granary to feed the towns
Total	15%	15%	15%		55%	-

Source: Wuyts (1978, 10; 1985, 183).

economy as producers of agricultural commodities and/or labour power', by keeping them linked to land (Bernstein 2010, 51). Access to land for subsistence production and for monetary income has always been central to social reproduction of labour. The dependence of the majority of the peasant households for their livelihoods on a variety of forms of wage labour, including migrant, seasonal and casual labour, combined with household production for consumption and for sale, has also been a distinctive and dominant aspect of the colonial economy. Wage work, mostly casual and migrant, has historically been central to the provision of cheap labour to capitalist enterprises (Wuyts 2001). Yet the neglect of the deeply proletarianised peasantry who largely depended on various forms of wage labour for social reproduction was a major 'failure' of the post-independent Mozambique in relation to the agrarian question.

Post-independence agrarian question and the logic of accumulation

We have established that the colonial logic of accumulation was essentially based on the exploitation of the peasantry, especially their labour, reproduced through various forms of paid and unpaid work, including household food production for consumption and for sale. Post-independence political economy failed to grasp the nature of the agrarian question and to transform in a progressive way the agrarian structure inherited from colonialism (O'Laughlin 1981, 1996; Wuyts 2001). A dualist conception of the economy explains such a failure. It characterised the economy as constituted by two independent sectors, one modern, commercial, and linked to the market for product and money, and the other traditional, with linkages to, but independent from, the former. This means the peasantry was seen as largely independent from the circuits of money and that their subsistence could only depend on their production for consumption (Wuyts 2001). This erroneous conception of the peasantry ignored its centrality in commodity production and social reproduction (O'Laughlin 1981, 1996; Wuyts 2001). The key role of the peasantry was evident in the four phases reflecting the 'shifts in Frelimo's strategy of agrarian transition' after independence (O'Laughlin 1996, 3), as all the phases seemed to have ignored the 'deeply rooted' proletarianisation of the peasantry (O'Laughlin 2002). This has somehow continued in contemporary political economy, as recent literature on rural labour markets in Mozambique has shown (Cramer, Oya, and Sender 2008; Sender, Oya, and Cramer 2006). In contrast to a mainstream neoclassical political economy, this literature has presented evidence of a range of varied labour market opportunities, with different contractual arrangements and working conditions, playing a significant part in the social reproduction of rural people.

In the first phase of the planned economy (1975–1980), Frelimo defined a strategy of rapid socialisation of production and housing, focusing on the expansion of state farms, co-operatives and communal villages. In the agricultural sector, peasant production, which played a fundamental role in social reproduction, was marginalised in favour of the expansion of large state farms. State farms were modelled on the social organisation of production of the colonial plantations: large monocultures, based on the recruitment of seasonal and casual labour for short periods of time, mostly for harvesting, and paid at relatively low wages. State farms thus replicated the contradictions between production/accumulation and social reproduction inherited from colonialism, and often failed to recruit the quantity of labour they needed for the harvest period. In fact, state farms

performed a long way below planned as illustrated in the areas of land exploited (West and Myers 1996) and farms' productivity in rice production and cotton (Munslow 1984; Pitcher 1996). Co-operatives, which constituted the second axis of the socialisation strategy alongside state farms and family farming, were marginalised largely because state farms absorbed all available investment, technical and managerial resources. A dualistic view of the agrarian question prevailed, implying that peasants could retreat from market, money and the wage labour economy to their traditional subsistence agriculture. The post-independence agrarian strategy stressed the need for fast development of the productive forces in large state farms at the expense of the transformation of the relations of production. However, having abolished the system of forced labour – one of the key demands of the struggle for liberation – but not having significantly changed the social organisation of production and reproduction that was supported by it, the strategy failed (O'Laughlin 1981, 1996, 2002; Wuyts 1981, 2001).

In the second phase of socialist planning (1980–1983), Frelimo shifted to a model of rapid socialist accumulation based almost exclusively on state farms (West and Myers 1996). In terms of planning, it meant 'the organisation of the expansion of the state sector', and a continuing marginalisation of 'the wider transformation of peasants' production' (Wuyts 1985, 180). This was evident as during this phase Wuyts observed that about '90 per cent of total agricultural investment was allocated to the state sector, two per cent to cooperatives and almost none to the small-scale household farming sector' (Wuyts 2001, 4). The third phase began with Frelimo's Fourth Congress in 1983 and was characterised by a pragmatic shift in agricultural policy and a general restructuring of the state agriculture sector. Defined as 'market socialism', this agrarian strategy moved rapidly towards supporting private commercial farmers, including the distribution of state land to multinational companies, indigenous commercial farmers and some peasant households (O'Laughlin 1996, 3). War had by then massively dislocated rural populations and production, disrupting access to land and to wage labour, with major implications for social reproduction. The fourth phase began with the structural adjustment programme. The socialist agrarian strategy was abandoned and state farmland privatised, while agricultural markets were liberalised and foreign capital allowed to access large-scale land concessions. This shift had implications for subsequent agrarian strategies and was central to what the agricultural sector is today. There is a historical continuity with the colonial and socialist period when it comes to large-scale land concessions to foreign capital, in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. These are fundamentally shaping the ongoing contradictions of accumulation and social reproduction in contemporary Mozambique.

Contemporary political economy and dominant patterns of accumulation

Let us now look at the dominant dynamics of capital accumulation that have characterised Mozambique over the past two decades. Mozambique's economy grew rapidly at an annual average of 7% during the first decade and a half of the 2000–2019 period. Growth has decelerated over the past five years, having registered an average of about 3%. This slowdown has reflected the vulnerability of the pattern of growth, characterised by its dependence on foreign capital inflows in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI) and commercial loans in the international financial system. Associated with these

Table 2. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, 2000–2019 (US$, billions).

	2000–04*	2005–09	2010–14	2015–19	2000–19
FDI	1.34	2.1	21.3	14,104	38,888
Annual average	0.26	422	4.2	2.8	1.9
Share (%)	3.4	5.4	54.9	36.3	100

Source: *Castel-Branco (2017); Banco de Moçambique (2021).

inflows is the concentration of production in a narrow range of megaprojects focused on the production of primary commodities for export, such as minerals, gas, energy, and agricultural commodities, forming the so-called 'extractive core of the economy' (Castel-Branco 2010, 2014, 2015, 2017). Table 2 shows that from 2000 to 2019, Mozambique attracted about US$39 billion of external private investment in the form of FDI and commercial loans. From about US$1.3 billion in the first decade of the period, FDI has increased to more than US$21 billion. It has decreased over the past five years to about US$14 billion, as a result of the crisis of commodity markets, which was exacerbated by the discovery of the so-called hidden debts in 2016, amounting to about US$2 billion contracted secretly and illegally between 2013 and 2014. More than 90% of total FDI inflows during this period were recorded in the past decade (2010–2019), reflecting the considerable growth of the mineral extractive sector (gas, coal, heavy sands and other minerals). In the same period, particularly in 2002 and 2016, 77% of FDI was distributed between the extractive core of the economy (67%) and related infrastructures and services (10%) (Langa 2017).

A second feature of the dominant pattern of growth is the concentration of production and trade in a narrow range of primary products related to the minerals–energy complex and agricultural primary commodities for export (Castel-Branco 2010). Between 2000 and 2016, about 64% of exports of goods were on average concentrated in the minerals–energy complex and 15% in agricultural commodities and agro-industry. Over the past 10 years, megaprojects represented more than two-thirds of total exports (Table 3). Interestingly, despite the deceleration of the economy in the 2015–2019 period, exports from megaprojects increased compared to the 2011–2015 period, from US$10 billion to US$13 billion, about three-quarters of the total exports of the period (Table 4). This increase in exports has been explained essentially by the significant recovery of coal exports, precipitated by rising coal prices after 2016. Mozambique imports large amounts of consumer goods, including grains, fuels, services and materials for the functioning of the economy and for industrial production. Data from the Central Bank suggest that total imports of goods had an ascending trend over the period, having increased from over US$3 billion in 2010 to US$8 billion in 2013 (over US$2

Table 3. Average share of exports of goods by product and category, 2000–2016 (%).

Minerals–energy complex	64	Agroindustry	15	Others	21
Aluminium	40	Tobacco	6		
Coal	6	Cotton	2		
Gas	6	Wood	2		
Heavy sands	3	Cashew	1		
Electricity	9	Sugar	3		
		Banana	1		

Source: Langa (2017).

Table 4. Exports from and excluding megaprojects, 2011–2019 (US$, billions).

	2011–2015	2016–2019	2011–2019
Exports from megaprojects	10.8	13.2	24.1
Exports excluding megaprojects	7.5	4.6	12.2
Total	18.4	17.9	36.3
Megaprojects as a proportion of total exports	59%	74%	66%

Source: Banco de Moçambique (2021).

Table 5. Average share of imports of goods for and excluding megaprojects, 2000–2019 (%).

	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2014	2015–2019	2000–2019
Imports of goods for megaprojects	16	21	26	17	20
Imports of goods excluding those for megaprojects	84	79	74	83	80

Source: Banco de Moçambique (2021).

billion and US$6 billion, respectively, excluding megaprojects) (Langa 2017), which accounted for 25% of total imports of goods (Table 5).

Despite being dominated by capital-intensive extractive forms of accumulation in the sectors of energy, mining and other resource extraction, the contemporary political economy of Mozambique shares important aspects of the logic of accumulation in the colonial period, and the failures of the immediate post-colonial period, especially in relation to the agrarian question. The logic of accumulation of large-scale plantations has continued to rely on the exploitation of the peasantry through their labour power, meaning that the nexus between wage labour in capitalist production and household production is still relevant for the availability of cheap labour power. However, the conditions of the reproduction of that cheap labour power have been constrained by the forms of expansion and extraction of surplus value from labour – hence the importance of understanding the underlying contradictions between the expansion of this sector of capitalist production and the reproduction of labour within the wider dynamics of accumulation that dominate contemporary political economy.

The expansion of sugar cane production and forestry plantations and the contradictions of social reproduction of rural labour

In this section, we zoom in on two cases of expansion of plantation agriculture – sugar cane plantations in the southern region and forestry plantations in the northern region – where the contradictions between plantation agriculture and social reproduction have manifested in diverse and complex forms. Sugar cane plantations are analysed on the basis of secondary evidence, while forestry plantations are analysed through primary and secondary evidence. Primary evidence was collected through fieldwork interviews and observation in the province of Niassa in 2014, particularly in the districts of Lichinga, Chimbonila and Sanga, where major forestry plantation companies had just been established. Interviews were carried out with different stakeholders in the sector, including about 96 semi-structured interviews with forestry plantation workers and their households, 12 interviews with local leaders, with 12 company representatives, including administrative and technical staff, and 24 interviews with representatives of government

and civil society organisations at provincial and local levels, including eight members of trade unions. No sampling frame was used and the objective was to obtain as much information as possible for each category of informant.

In Mozambique, both sugar production and forestry plantations date back to the colonial period. However, it is in recent decades that the expansion of these sectors has become central in debates over the impacts of large-scale agricultural investments. Sugar cane production has been one of the most rapidly growing agricultural subsectors since the end of the civil war. Between 1992 and 2012, the harvested area more than tripled, from 15,000 to 46,000 ha; cane production expanded from 159,000 to nearly 3.4 million tonnes; and production per hectare increased from 10.6 to nearly 74 tonnes (Dubb, Scoones and Woodhouse 2017). After being interrupted for some decades after independence, forestry plantations regained momentum in the mid 2000s, with large-scale investments in the sector targeting the relatively land-abundant regions of central and northern Mozambique (FIAN 2012). Its expansion was then justified by the increased world demand for wood products (mainly for the paper pulp industry), and by global concerns over climate change (Almeida and Delgado 2019), especially the Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forestry Degradation (REDD+) initiative. REDD+ has influenced the expansion of forestry plantations as it emerges as an opportunity for accumulation by forestry companies, which can earn carbon credits and trade them in the market (Nhantumbo 2011). Forestry companies operating in Mozambique have already been involved in this initiative (Nhantumbo 2011; Bruna, this issue). The government has supported these initiatives, arguing that Mozambique had available land and suitable agroecological conditions for these projects, which would additionally generate massive employment for rural people. About half of the plantations were located in Niassa province, where the expansion of this sector has proved to be short-lived, with further implications for the livelihoods of the few who had been employed in plantations.

From a public policy perspective, the expansion of these sectors has represented an opportunity for increasing agricultural production and productivity, and, more particularly, an opportunity for jobs and income generation, which are crucial to rural poverty reduction. The narrow focus on these particular elements has hidden the diverse and complex contradictions that have often emerged in relation to the reproduction of rural labour, both within and outside the sphere of capitalist agricultural enterprises. Outside this, these contradictions are manifested in the changing conditions and social relations of production and reproduction at both family and community levels, as shaped by the expansion and intensification of capitalist agricultural production. These include, more specifically, the large-scale land acquisitions and (direct and indirect) dispossessions that this expansion often entails and their implications for the loss of livelihoods and income diversification sources. These are important as access to and control over land is central for social reproduction in rural areas. Within this sphere, these are manifested through the complex dynamics of employment, the labour processes and work dynamics associated with the organisation of agricultural production in plantations and how these affect particular aspects of the social reproduction of rural labour. These include the different employment and contract arrangements, the (ir)regularity of work and wages, working conditions, and their effects on the organisation of different activities of social reproduction, carried on outside the sphere of agricultural capitalist

enterprises but nonetheless shaped by the availability of sufficient income to access goods and services, and means of production for household production for subsistence and for sale. It is around these two main areas that the contradictions of social reproduction of labour are explored in the context of these cases.

Land acquisitions, peasant dispossessions and loss of livelihood diversification sources

Despite clear differences between sugar cane production and forestry plantations, these sectors share some similarities in terms of land acquisitions and their impacts on rural livelihoods. Both sugar and forestry companies have been granted large-scale land concessions on a long-term basis, amounting to dozens and hundreds of thousands of hectares, respectively. These land holdings have been consolidated through further acquisitions, involving different arrangements and processes, including land leases from local peasants and 'complex' negotiations with 'local communities'. In the sugar sector, for instance, the private company Açucareira de Xinavane (AdX) has taken over former state farmland and consolidated its land holdings by compensating 'interspersed smallholders' to abandon their irrigable plots or by forming locally based small-scale outgrowers' associations (O'Laughlin 2017, 631). This is illustrated by the expansion of cultivated area from 6000 to 17,000 ha between 2005 and 2013 (Lazzarini 2017). In the forestry plantation sector, reports suggest that hundreds of thousands of hectares have been granted to forestry plantation companies in central and northern Mozambique (FIAN 2012; Lexterra 2016), out of 1 million ha planned by 2030 (Almeida and Delgado 2019). In Niassa province, where at the time of the fieldwork in November–December 2014 at least three companies were operating, the exact scale of land concessions remains unknown. A report published by Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN) claims that the largest forestry company operating in Niassa since 2005, Chikwety Forest of Niassa – later acquired by a different company named Green Resources – leased about 140,000 ha from the government for a 50-year period, with about 68,000 ha already planted with pine and eucalyptus (FIAN 2012). Contrary to these figures, in 2013 government data suggested that forestry companies in Niassa had been allocated about 155,000 ha in total, of which about 20% had been planted (MINAG 2015). These contradictions often arise as in some cases companies are allocated land while not owning a valid land-use right (DUAT) for the total area allocated. In other cases, companies have occupied land illegally (FIAN 2012; Lexterra 2016). Local authorities often did not know the exact scale of the land claimed by the companies and were often only 'consulted' when decisions to lease land to companies were being made at the central government levels. Nevertheless, large-scale land concessions had been confirmed during fieldwork interviews in 2014 with different stakeholders in the sector, including forestry companies, local government officials and civil society organisations. The lack of political control over the process at the local level is concerning, because secure land rights and land access play a central role in the social reproduction of rural people, who depend greatly on access to land for their livelihoods.

Given the large-scale land acquisitions involved in the expansion of sugar cane production and forestry plantations, these have occupied a central place in debates on 'land grabbing' in Mozambique (FIAN 2010; Hanlon 2011; Borras, Fig, and Suárez

2011). At the edge of these debates, which are not confined to large-scale agricultural investments but extend also to mining and other 'extractive' sectors, are narratives of massive displacements of people, increasing inequalities, conflicts, social injustice and an overall deterioration of rural livelihoods (Bruna 2019). These narratives have touched upon important and conflictual aspects associated with capitalist penetration, including those of the overall contradictions of social reproduction of labour in rural contexts (Cousins et al. 2018). Central in relation to land acquisitions is the effect on the availability and access to land for local smallholders, who depend on this, along with other income-generating activities, for a significant part of their social reproduction. In the sugar cane sector, even though the expansion of production did not involve massive peasant displacements from their cultivation land and residence, the conversion of most of the irrigable land to sugar cane production has implied a 'trade-off between increased income and reduced access to irrigable land for rural livelihoods' (O'Laughlin and Ibraímo 2013, 2). For instance, between 2008 and 2012, of the 3500 ha allocated for the expansion of sugar cane, smallholders have devoted only 3% to food production (Leite, Leal, and Langa 2016, 4). This has had direct implications for rural households in two important dimensions: (i) the increased vulnerability to price changes in international commodity markets for sugar and staple foods and (ii) the loss of a range of alternative income-generating activities for smallholders who depended on a range of farm and off-farm activities for their social reproduction (O'Laughlin and Ibraímo 2013). In the forestry plantation case in Niassa, massive land dispossession has occurred, with significant impacts on the organisation of rural livelihoods. Communities in Niassa have claimed that forestry companies, supposed to plant in marginal, idle lands, invaded smallholders' productive agricultural lands used for food production. In some cases, people had to resettle in other places as plantations have been situated close to their farms and homes. A local leader interviewed during the fieldwork in 2014 in Licole, Chimbonila District, said:

> The government met with the local leaders (*régulos*) and gave a map with the limits of the land to be occupied. The government had said that the forestry company would occupy unproductive land, where no *machambas* existed or where no farming activities were taking place because of the infertility of land. (Licole interview, 15 December 2014)

Another local leader, in Naicuanga Sede, a former colonial settlement, put it this way (Naicuanga Sede interview, 9 December 2014):

> People used to have their *machambas* around the settlement, but the expansion of tree plantations had limited access to cultivation land and to forestry land usually used to collect firewood and produce charcoal and other natural resources for their livelihoods. Some people have moved to Muembe, a distant location from their place of residence, to access land for cultivation and residence.

This shows how the expansion of capitalist production in agriculture and the consequent commoditisation of rural livelihoods can change priorities for different spaces and activities of social reproduction and affect the well-being of communities. For instance, without establishing a direct correlation with the dynamics of plantations in the north, the fourth poverty assessment in Mozambique, based on the results of the 2014–2015 household budget survey, shows that the incidence of poverty in northern Mozambique increased from 45.1% in 2008–2009 to 55.1% in 2014–2015. Interestingly, in Niassa

province, where the incidence of poverty increased from 33% to 60.6% (Ministério da Economia e Finanças 2016), the period of analysis coincided with the period of expansion of forestry plantations.

Employment, the labour process and the conditions of work

Job creation has been central to the promotion of large-scale capitalist agricultural plantations. In the forestry plantation sectors, estimates have suggested that about 250,000 jobs would be created by 2030 (Almeida and Delgado 2019). In both the sugar cane and forestry plantation sectors, promises of jobs, increased incomes and poverty reduction were made. However, employment has been a contentious issue in both sectors. In the sugar cane sector, the expansion of production has created a considerable number of jobs – about 10,000 workers in 2012 (O'Laughlin and Ibraímo 2013; Lazzarini 2017). In the forestry plantation case, employment became the most contentious issue in the relationship between companies and local communities, as few jobs had been created, especially in the plantation sector, since the companies started operating. This was exacerbated when, in 2013 and 2014, three of the six companies operating in Niassa stopped their operations. This tension was understandable as multiple communities had been persuaded to allocate their land to forestry companies with promises of jobs. In this particular case, the lack of income opportunities and access to land for food production both for consumption and income generation led to complaints, resulting in some cases in serious conflicts. Members of the communities, including the few plantation workers hired seasonally, have claimed that the companies did not fulfil their promises amid community consultations. Two local leaders in Licole (Licole interview, 15 December 2014) explained:

> We had hope that people's life here would change for the better, as there were promises of jobs and construction of hospitals and schools by the companies, and the government had stated that with the arrival of the companies there would be wood for our houses and paper for exercise books and it would also be good for the development of Mozambique.

They added,

> We were informed that there would be employment for a period of 50 years and that even the children would have opportunities when they grow up, as the companies would remain for 50 years. We were promised that there would be employment in the plantation and processing phases, but we were not informed that there would be job interruption and seasonal jobs.

Employment, including the system of labour recruitment, and the organisation of the labour process, has become a central element of the contradictions between the expansion of these sectors with social reproduction of labour. Most agricultural workers, especially in the plantations, are temporarily or casually employed, receiving incomes below the minimum wage (see Table 6), which in many cases does not cover basic subsistence needs. This can be illustrated, for instance, from an analysis of the 2012 payroll provided by one of the forestry companies we visited during the fieldwork in 2014. According to this, 21% of permanent workers and 79% of seasonal/casual workers earned below the minimum wage stipulated for agriculture (Ali 2017).

Table 6. Minimum wage in the agricultural sector, selected years.

Currency	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
MT	1024	1314	1692	2300	3010
US$	40.2	54.27	52.4	85.19	99
US$ per day	1.34	1.81	1.75	2.84	3.3

Source: Hanlon (2018).

In this case, to guarantee their subsistence, they must rely on household production for consumption and sale and on other off-farm work. This raises at least two contradictions. One is that household production for consumption and for sale depends on wages from capitalist production, which are in turn used to buy means of production, such as agricultural implements, and means of consumption like basic goods and services. The other is that the range of livelihood alternative income-generating activities necessary for social reproduction of labour has already been compromised. The loss of access to land for food production through direct expropriation/dispossession and lease by capital is a major blow to social reproduction, as is the loss of other alternative sources of income. These situations combined raise a third contradiction. If, for their subsistence, workers need to complement their low wages with household production, the difficult conditions of production they face threaten their reproduction and the reproduction of capital, which depends on the availability of cheap labour. This has created tensions between capital and labour for their reproduction. These tensions have been manifested in the changing organisation of production through technological change, as partial or complete mechanisation of the production process of sugar cane rendered some specialised workers' skills obsolete, making the workers redundant (O'Laughlin and Ibraímo 2013). In the forestry plantation sector, this tension was partly 'resolved' by outsourcing, which did not resolve the problem of precarity of work in plantations (Ali and Stevano 2021). Even though a considerable number of jobs have been created and income generated, the improvement of the material and social well-being of the workers is not as straightforward as official discourses may suggest.

These plantations rely on task-based systems of wage work that are central to the workers earning below minimum wage. Workers in both the sugar and forestry sectors are requested to complete a daily task in exchange for a corresponding daily payment, usually calculated on the basis of the agricultural sector's monthly minimum wage – about US$99 per month, or US$3.30 per day in 2014. Daily minimum wage rates are calculated by dividing the monthly wage by 30, and there is no specific wage rate for each task, despite these requiring different efforts and abilities from the workers. This issue is contentious as it affects two important aspects of the reproduction of labour: workers' wages and workers' health, on which their capacity to work depends. Earning the minimum wage and having the capacity to buy means of subsistence and production for both consumption and for sale is central for the social reproduction of labour. All of this depends on the ability to complete the daily task, which is often impossible because the effort required by the task is not realistic vis-à-vis the ability of the worker. Some tasks are much harder than others and efforts to fulfil them on certain days can affect the capacity for their fulfilment the following days. This has been central in Marx's analysis of the production of absolute surplus value, where, he

says, with 'its insatiable appetite for surplus labour, capital oversteps the moral and even the physical limits of the working day', usurping workers' 'time for growth, development and healthy maintenance of the body' (Marx 1976 [1867], 375). This issue was common in both the sugar and forestry plantation sectors as workers' ability to fulfil the daily tasks has been constrained many times, not only by the activities within the agricultural enterprise, but also by the wider organisation of a worker's life, which was affected by the organisation of production in plantations. In the latter, for instance, preparing the field for planting requires workers to cut down trees and shrubs within a given area, measured in square metres. As a plantation worker in Niassa explains, each worker was allocated an area of 10×10 m to be cleared when cutting down trees, which became larger (40×60 m) when cutting down shrubs. These tasks were not mechanised and relied on hard manual work and physical effort, which compromised the quality of the work and affected both the quality of the output and the workers' physical conditions. One of these workers recalled through these words the experience of not fulfilling the daily task, arguing that he no longer had the physical ability (Niassa interview, 2 December 2014):

> The task-based system of work was hard, making it difficult to wake up healthy from the 1st to the 30th of each month. The work requires huge effort. It is not possible to continue with the task which was not finished the day before and doing the task of the following day because the task that the employer stipulates does not fit with what the human body is capable of.

This worker was supposed to earn US$83 – the minimum wage for agriculture in 2013 – but usually earned about half of this, US$42, at the end of each month. His experience extended to other activities, for instance the maintenance of the forestry, where workers are required to prune trees and clean the plantation area. For pruning trees, the task was 445 trees, which, according to a forestry company's engineer, could be finished within four to eight hours, depending on the ability or efficiency of different workers (Mussa interview, 4 December 2014). Yet some workers could not fulfil the daily task and consequently could not earn the equivalent of the minimum wage. According to workers, not fulfilling the daily task meant not getting paid for that day's work.

This evidence adds to the argument that an exclusive focus on the quantity of jobs and wages overlooks the low quality of these jobs, where bad working conditions affect the physical and mental health of workers, compromising their reproduction as human beings (O'Laughlin 2021). On these plantations, sabotage and absenteeism are widespread and constitute the main form of protest and resistance to the working conditions, with further implications for the development of the plantations and for capital accumulation. In Niassa, plantation managers explained widespread protests and resistance as a consequence of the absence of a strong work ethic in the rural community, refusing to acknowledge that plantation work created conflicts with the organisation of production and reproduction within and outside the forestry plantation. In particular, absenteeism was caused by the overlap between plantation work and work on own farming as it coincided with the rainy season when most people work their land.

Addressing the deterioration of the conditions of the reproduction of rural labour amid the expansion of plantations is crucial, because the expansion of plantations and the organisation of production has constantly affected the ways in which labour power

is reproduced. This suggests rethinking social policy in relation to addressing the nexus between expanding sectors of capitalist production and the creation of decent work for the reproduction of labour in Mozambique.

Conclusions

The foundations of the contradictions between production and reproduction under capitalism help us to reflect on the real contradictions between the expansion of particular sectors of capitalist production and social reproduction. This paper has explored some of the contradictions of social reproduction of rural labour in the context of the expansion of large-scale capitalist agricultural production in Mozambique. It has shown how different spaces of social reproduction of labour have been continually affected by the actions of agrarian capital in very particular sectors of capitalist agrarian production. Using primary and secondary material on sugar cane and forestry plantations, it has shown how the expansion of large-scale capitalist plantation agriculture has affected different dimensions of social reproduction of labour, including the conditions of access to the means of subsistence, natural resources, health and livelihood diversification strategies, and forms of household production and income. These contradictions are not specific to these contexts, as similar dynamics can be found in other contexts of expansion of large-scale agricultural (and non-agricultural) production. In the context of Mozambique, these have to be placed within the wider and dominant extractive dynamics of accumulation that characterise contemporary political economy. These dynamics of accumulation benefit an emerging domestic capitalist class which, in alliance with multinational capital, expropriates the country's natural resources, including agricultural land and other resources, exacerbating the contradictions between accumulation and social reproduction. These contradictions dispute general claims, particularly from mainstream policy circles, that the expansion of large-scale capitalist agriculture massively contributes to poverty reduction, through employment and income-generation opportunities. In reality, as the extractive dynamics that dominate the logic of accumulation expand and intensify, alternative spaces of social reproduction of labour are compromised, reproducing these contradictions on a larger scale.

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