



## Original article

## Transnational spaces, hybrid governance and civil society contestation in Mozambique's gas boom



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## ABSTRACT

This article traces a recent disruption of an on-shore gas processing plant planned by US oil and gas company Anadarko in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. This flagship project rests on the resettlement of over 1500 people from the Afungi Peninsula. It has been contested by civil society in a high-profile legal challenge centred on land rights and consultation. The paper explores the role of gas in visions of national development, the complex position of civil society organisations and the significance of this campaign, and the practices used by Anadarko and the Government of Mozambique to produce extractive zones. The paper argues first that ideas about the hyper-modernity of gas and extractives-led national development are central to the debates over the LNG plant. Second, that the rights-based principles invoked in contestation have produced contradictory responses from Anadarko and the state. Third, that although civil society has brought about a change in behaviour by Anadarko and secured significant benefits for communities, in invoking ideas of rights and participation they legitimise the same set of principles that are central to Anadarko's claims to the land. There is currently very little critical literature on Mozambique's extractives boom, an empirical gap this paper helps to fill.

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"To produce a commodity is the work of the translator, the diplomat and the power-crazed magician" (Tsing, 2005: 51–52).

## 1. Introduction

The "new scramble for Africa" (Carmody 2011: 1) is in full swing in Mozambique. The country is a major frontier for capital investment in its burgeoning extractives boom, and over 50% of foreign direct investment into Mozambique between 2000 and 2011 was into mega-projects in extractives, industry and agriculture (African Development Bank Group (ADB), 2011). The extractives sector is becoming highly lucrative for the Government of Mozambique. In 2012 alone, US\$1.3 billion was paid in capital gains tax (CGT) from the extractive industry.<sup>1</sup> The boom is set to reach greater levels of intensity, as Mozambique has discovered globally significant quantities of natural gas in its northern coastal waters. Policy, national and donor sources claim that the investment the gas will bring will boost Mozambique's development (Anderson, 2012; Government of Mozambique, 2013; World

Bank, 2014), but questions have been raised about the lack of structural transformation, clientalism and growing inequality (Kirshner and Power, 2015), along with growing political contestation around the resettlement of local communities and loss of livelihoods associated with the resource boom (Coughlin et al., 2013a; Vines, 2013; Manuel and César, 2014). There has been very little critical literature on Mozambique's mega-projects, an empirical gap which this paper helps to fill.

The paper focusses on political debates around a controversial recent decision to grant land rights to US oil and gas company Anadarko and its partners to construct an onshore operation for natural gas processing in Cabo Delgado in the north of Mozambique. It uses the case to explore national debates around gas extraction, especially how issues of transparency and community rights are being framed and contested, in the course of bringing the gas boom to life. In 2012, Anadarko and Italian company ENI discovered 100 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in Mozambique's coastal waters, reported as "enough fuel to build the world's second-largest LNG plant".<sup>2</sup> While ENI has opted for off shore processing, Anadarko and its partners under the Mozambique Gas Development Project have proposed a 7000

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<sup>1</sup> Mozambique News Agency AIM report 483 (Mozambique News Agency, AIM, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Bloomberg Business June 14, 2013 (Bloomberg, 2013).

acre operation in the Afungi Peninsula, in line with government desires to process onshore for perceived development benefits. However, these plans require the controversial resettlement of multiple communities. This has been the subject of much media and civil society attention. Civil society activism culminated in a direct legal challenge on behalf of local communities in June 2015 over Anadarko's land rights. Although Anadarko's land rights were found to be legitimate, the company has subsequently granted significant concessions to communities. As a result of this public disruption, some organisations have declared a new era of political accountability in Mozambique in which extractive companies will be increasingly called to account over their relationships with local communities and their commitments to transparency.

The case provides an opportunity to critically assess the fast-moving national debates around transparency and accountability in extractives and the changing role of civil society. As Li (2014), Tsing (2005) and Bridge (2011) remind us, resources like land and extractable commodities like gas are inherently social. They are called into being through a range of political, discursive and social practices. These include the production and reproduction of political rationalities which construct the role of resources in national development. I discuss how invoking the national interest is central to establishing the Afungi Peninsula as a space for gas processing rather than habitation. Anadarko and the Mozambican state deploy a range of authoritarian and persuasive tactics to demonstrate that gas is in the national interest, and that the resettlement of communities is legitimate. I also discuss how these claims to legitimacy can be disrupted by activists who also appeal to globalised ideas of liberal governance, community rights and participation. This, however, produces tensions and contradictions.

The case also provides insights into the spatiality of gas extraction and processing. Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez (2015) argue that energy mega-projects are part of a wider "re-spacing" (Engel and Nugent, 2010: 1) of Africa characterised by dynamic new regimes of de and re-territorialisation and connectivity which are often contested and complex. The complex will be plugged into global networks of transport and capital accumulation, typical of the ways in which extraction in Mozambique dispossess local and regional economies and benefits regional and national elites and international corporations (Kirshner and Power, 2015). However, significant development hopes are also attached to this plant, although communities may not necessarily benefit from the development in the ways that their own boom-time imaginaries might lead them to expect. This contested space and contradictory imaginaries are created and maintained using a variety of tactics, including authoritarian interventions alongside collaborative and participatory governance.

The paper will use this case to develop three arguments. First, I explore how particular ideas about gas and national development are central to the debates over the LNG plant. Second, I examine how processes of land enclosure have been contested by civil society and Afungi communities by invoking legal and rights-based principles. This has produced contradictory and complex responses from Anadarko and the Mozambican state, characteristic of "hybrid security governance" (Hönke, 2013: 21), a blend of participatory and authoritarian approaches by state and non-state actors. Third, I reflect on the complex and dynamic position of civil society organisations. Their activities have brought about an apparent change in behaviour by Anadarko, and secured significant tangible benefits for communities. However, I suggest that by invoking ideas of rights and participation they also legitimise the same set of principles that are central to Anadarko's claims to use the land. The paper begins by exploring the literature on spatiality, governance and civil society contestation related to extraction in Africa and then moves to discuss community rights in Mozambique in more detail. I then outline my methodology

before moving to detail the recent history of Anadarko in Cabo Delgado. The case is then discussed in line with the three critical themes outlined above. The paper concludes by exploring the tensions in contemporary ideas of global liberal governance of spaces of extraction, and the political consequences and opportunities for affected communities.

## 2. Theorising extraction and community relations in Africa

### 2.1. Extractive spaces and extractive states

It is commonly argued that natural resources can curse economies. There is a great deal of literature on this subject, ranging from accounts which posit an economic "resources curse" (Auty, 2002: 1; Collier, 2008), accounts which emphasise the role of poor democracy and weak, unaccountable institutions in producing poor outcomes in resource-rich states (Collier and Hoeffler, 2005), and accounts prioritise context-led explanations of extractive states (Basedau, 2005; Power, 2001). James Ferguson's discussion of the oil enclave is often a starting point for contemporary political-geographic work on extraction in Africa, and provides a focus for this paper. Ferguson posits that oil extraction produces self-contained spaces which are highly connected to international capital, but are physically, socially and economically separate from the societies in which they operate. This raises questions about the spatiality of extractive zones, and the wider social outcomes that enclave extraction produces.

Turning first to the issue of spatiality, Ferguson posits a regime of "spatially differentiated forms of political order" (2005: 381), that is, a clear differentiation between the space within an extractive zone, which is connected to globalised capital and governed by transnational companies, and the space without. He argues that enclaves are "typically tightly integrated with the head offices of multinational operations and metropolitan centres", while being "frequently walled off from their own national societies (often literally, with bricks and razor wire)" (Ferguson, 2006: 203). This is often reflected in empirical cases. For example, Spiegel (2014) notes how private companies prevent regional government access to gold mines in Cambodia, in a case where authorised agents of the state are prevented from accessing national sovereign territory due to extractive activities, and the space within is securely delineated from the space without. However, Kirshner and Power (2015: 10) describe how extractive spaces can be understood as complex zones of plural and variegated sovereignty, encompassing a "variety of fractures and subjects and boundary practices involving articulations of citizens and subjects and places and spaces of accumulation, exclusion and inclusion". Their recent account described coal extraction in Tete Province in central Mozambique as a "proliferation of enclaved mineral-rich patches, privatised regional transport corridors/networks and urban spaces of enclosure" (2015: 29). This produces an increasingly uneven geography, driven by selective inclusion into systems of multi-scale capital accumulation alongside the abandonment of certain spaces and people that are not useful to capitalist expansion. This adds nuance to Ferguson's broad-based account of extractive zones that are starkly differentiated from national state territory.

Oil is often viewed as the archetypal resource of enclave extraction. Bridge (2010: 826) notes the "socially thin character of oil" in Angola. Similarly, Ferguson (2005: 378) argues that "the clearest case of extractive enclaving (and no doubt the most attractive for the foreign investor) is provided by offshore oil extraction, as in Angola, where neither the oil nor most of the money it brings in ever touches Angolan soil". Oil is valuable, internationally sought and its material properties tend towards

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