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Between populist rhetoric of market-oriented agricultural development and rural resistance in Mozambique

Boaventura Monjane and Natacha Bruna¹

Abstract

The ProSAVANA program is one of the public policies that clearly expose the tendency of governmental politics towards market-oriented agricultural development in Mozambique. Nevertheless, it configures itself as one of, if not the most contested agrarian public policy in the country since independence in 1975. Going throughout changing of regimes, from colonial, then going through a socialist driven government to adopting a market-oriented approach roughly after only a decade of socialism, we argue that State agricultural policies and vision has always been inimical to the peasantry, although the rhetoric was generally portrayed as in favor of the poorest rural populations. ProSAVANA emerges from the same discourses and is embedded in an authoritarian populist regime operated by FRELIMO, which as we argue in this paper, was built and consolidated since independence. In this paper, we attempt a deep analysis of how, a resistance movement that was built through agency of rural constituencies in alliance with a broader civil society sector, have been confronting Mozambique's populist and authoritarian rural politics through the lens of the ProSAVANA program.

Keywords: ProSAVANA, Mozambique, agency, rural resistance, authoritarian populism.

¹These authors contributed equally to this work.

I. Introduction

The ProSAVANA program is a policy aimed to bust agricultural and rural development with the main objective of increasing agricultural productivity, targeting highly potential area of the country, namely, the Nacala Development Corridor, which includes vast areas of fertile land, endowment of mineral resources, strategic location to external markets and infrastructures. It results from a cooperation agreement between Mozambique, Brazil and Japan, however, as a Government-led program, it follows most of the guidelines recorded in the current main agricultural sector policy, the Plano Estratégico para o Desenvolvimento do Sector Agrário (PEDSA) which set the priorities to improve the performance of the sector. It aims to transform the agricultural sector into a more investment-friendly business environment supported by the principles of green revolution in order to achieve rates of growth of 7% per year and solve the issue of food insecurity in Mozambique.

It was until mid 2013 that ProSAVANA, emerged as a hot topic in Mozambique and brought up discussions among Mozambican society resulting in the emergence of resistance throughout a synergic alliance between the three countries civil society. Up until now, ProSAVANA has been one of the most contested agricultural policies in Mozambique involving not only civil society organizations but peasants themselves as active participants on the movement. Since then, proponents have faced enormous difficulties in implementing this program due to protests and a strong opposition campaign.

In order to understand the basis of the agency of rural inhabitants and how was the authoritarian populism of FRELIMO in rural areas established, an historical approach is needed. It is important to understand how the processes of resistance of the Mozambican peasantry have taken place throughout time and to which extend it relates to an authoritarian populist government. Additionally, to comprehend the various ways in which the rural inhabitants were adapting and struggling towards systematic changes in rural politics since colonial era due to regimes changes and/or external stimulus, complements the understandings of the basis of the political position of different actors towards the current government strategies, in particular, of ProSAVANA.

When Mozambique became independent, a considerable number of rural inhabitants were still organized in colonial settlements (*aldeamentos coloniais*), which were established in 1968 as a mechanism of monitoring and controlling rural population in order to avoid spillovers from the national revolutionary force (Coelho, 1998). Nevertheless, after independence, a similar policy was implemented by Frelimo's socialist regime, the villagization (*aldeias comunais*) in an attempt to collectivize agriculture, allowing colonial continuities in adopting rural policies that neglected the peasantry and an inclusive rural development model.

Although the socialist regime didn't last for long and soon a market-oriented economy supported by the Bretton Woods Institutions was established until nowadays, these set of transformations were transversally shaped by the emergence of an authoritarian populist party that has been shifting ideologies throughout the more than 40 years of independence,

The Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) ruling party shifted its own statutes, from a socialist-driven centralized economic and political power to a capitalist market liberalization approach with colonial continuities. One of the clearest colonial continuities is the set of policies towards market-oriented agricultural development based on the commodification of agriculture and proletarianization of the peasantry. Elite and governmental discourse promoting policies such as ProSAVANA have a considerable social base of support mainly in urban and rural areas and embedded in an authoritarian populist regime. That is in part evidenced by the lack of dialogue and inclusiveness among different stakeholders and, additionally, attempts to oppose these policies got undemocratic, authoritarian and populist responses. It is in this context that ProSAVANA, a "Triangular Co-operation Programme for Agricultural Development of the Tropical Savannah in Mozambique"² - involving Brazil and Japan - was undemocratically imposed in Mozambique.

² <http://www.prosavana.gov.mz/what-is-prosavana/>

The emergence of the resistance was also a result of ideological discrepancy between proponents and opponents, as it promotes medium to large-scale market oriented agribusiness investment, as well as due to lack of transparency and unilateral decision-making process. Being the most contested policy in Mozambique and with the most effective outcome in terms of struggles, ProSavana is still a target of discussion and contestation among civil society actors, peasants and government. Although the Government's authoritarian populist position have been maintained throughout the process, external forces and power relations impose limits to it. Nevertheless, the strength and cohesion of the process of resistance, as we argue in this paper, is seen as a combination of intrinsic and external factors that work in an inter-related way which opened the way to transform the political consciousness and reactions of the peasantry.

II. Historical context: authoritarian and coercive rural policies

From colonial "aldeamentos" to socialist "aldeias comunais"

The undemocratic and authoritarian nature of the agrarian policies and state discourses prevailing in Mozambique today has colonial roots. There are several points and dynamics that could be brought here, but we choose to bring the processes of population groupings in the rural Mozambican (*aldeamentos and aldeias comunais*) to demonstrate those colonialities - and its populist rhetoric features.

When Mozambique became independent in 1975, a considerable number of rural communities lived in colonial settlements, established between 1968 and 1974, in an effort to control rural populations and avoid contact between them and the guerrilla forces of national liberation (Coelho, 1998). With national independence, the Government of the then People's Republic of Mozambique also implemented the collectivization policy, altering the territorial distribution of the rural population and creating concentrated settlements. This is how *villagization (aldeias comunais)* was developed, with the aim of collectivizing agricultural production, but also to reduce the risk of contact between rural populations and the guerrilla forces of the National Resistance of Mozambique (RENAMO) (Coelho, 1998).

The strategy of control and subordination of peasant communities in rural Mozambique dates back to the colonial era, having continued during the post-independence "socialist" period. In the current juncture, state agrarian policies have adopted a neoliberal approach, but continued to be inimical to the peasantry. Some scholars suggest that colonial and post-independence agrarian policies were systematically "against the peasantry" in Mozambique (Bowen, 2000).

Colonial rural settlements (*aldeamentos*) constituted an act of grouping rural populations by the Portuguese colonial regime between 1968 and 1974 in the rural areas of several Mozambican provinces. The settlements consisted of

in an attempt to correct the dispersion of populations [which led] the [colonial] authorities to initiate an extensive campaign of socio-economic promotion and of Psychological Action, based on a preventive philosophy, seeking to bring people together in villages that would enable social progress and, at the same time, avoid contact with subversion, so that they would not be "contaminated" (Garcia, 2001, p. 130).

In addition to this, colonial regime promoted violent and repressive forced labour, which fueled the process of (forced) proletarianization of the peasantry. The dynamics of forced labour and commodification of agriculture during colonial period were described and documented with great details by many scholars (Harris, 1959; Bowen, 2000; O'Laughlin, 2002; Allina, 2013; etc.).

The villagization process was a socialization strategy of the countryside through the concentrated settlement of the rural populations³, thus altering the territorial distribution of the population. This strategy was adopted by the FRELIMO government as “an economic, social and cultural policy ... [changing the old forms of space management] to a new one that would produce the formation of the new man in a new society (...), producer of a communist man” (Matos & Madeiros, 2015, p. 43).

There is a consensus among different scholars on the idea that implementation of communal village policy was precisely inspired by the colonial rural settlements (Coelho, 1998; Garcia, 2011; Lourenço, 2010, etc.). A huge number of communal villages were practically a conversion of the colonial rural settlements. In Mandlakazi (Gaza), as Vitor Lourenço (2010) demonstrates, Portuguese settlements along the main road to Panda were renamed and, with few organizational modifications, converted into communal villages (2010, p. 178).

Although official narratives behind communal villages, also echoed in some academic studies, promote the idea that this form of socialization of the countryside was intended to better reorganize the residential space and thus better plan agricultural production and improve the economy and the living conditions of the populations (Matos & Madeiros, 2015), both Portuguese rural settlements and communal villages were hostile to rural populations, especially peasants, which justified the permanent "escape" of people to the old lands in search of freedom or food, with military accompaniment:

... the ancient land constituted as a space for harvesting, socialization, worship, houses, corrals, trees and animals was replaced by a cartesian space divided by chopsticks, surrounded by wire and surrounded by land mines. Add to that the lack of security since the insufficient food, forced the residents to go to the old machambas, under military escort, which represented a great risk of attack (Fernanda Gallo, 2015, p. 8).

The new “moral” values imposed on communal villages have trampled traditional forms of life, and, of course, not everyone welcomed the policy. Among the dissatisfied, there was a series of acts of resistance and confrontation;

traditional leadership was abolished; lobola (bride wealth) was outlawed; polygamous men were denied entry into the party; ceremonies were banned; religious organisations and institutions were viewed with suspicion; practitioners of ‘sorcery’ could be sent to re-education camps; and efforts were made to move the peasantry from their former scattered hamlets to centralised communal villages, which would become ‘cities in the bush’. (Sumich & Honwana, 2007, p. 10).

There is no doubt that the ideological and economic motivations behind grouping populations in communal villages was to facilitate revolutionary indoctrination and enable increased agricultural production. State farms (which were part of the communal village package) were inefficient in their functioning, cooperative production was negligible, and peasant production declined during that period (Bowen, 2000, pp. 45, 46). It is no less certain, however, that with the strategy of communal villages the party state sought to establish better control over the population and thus to exercise with relative ease its power, whose legitimacy was often questioned.

Like all coercive and undemocratic processes and policies, colonial settlements and communal villages were susceptible to failure - economically and politically. The internal and external conjunctural factors pressured the implementation of reforms that end up benefiting neoliberalism. The

³ In the third year of independence (1978) there were already 857 communal villages in Mozambique, housing 12% of the rural population. Nearly 70% of the communal villages were centered on the province of Cabo Delgado, followed by Nampula and Gaza. See (Matos & Madeiros, 2015).

communal villages had to be left behind to allow interventions by global financial institutions and international NGOs.

The search for legitimacy of emerged neoliberal State power over rural populations goes hand in hand with the discourses of development, social justice, well-being, security, efficiency (distributive, allocative and technical).

The rise and ascendancy of authoritarian populism in Mozambique

The discussion about authoritarian populism emerged from Poulantzas' "authoritarian statism" which meant the increase of state control regarding every aspect of economic life accompanied by a decrease in democracy (Hall, 1980). Nevertheless, Stewart Hall takes it one step further when adding to the debate "the set of operations designed to bind or construct a popular consent into these new forms of statist authoritarianism" (Hall, 1980: 161) naming the phenomenon "authoritarian populism".

To move to a further understanding of the roots of authoritarian populism in Mozambique it is relevant to understand that the roots of the concept itself emerged from a reflexion on "the ways in which popular consent can be so constructed, by a historical bloc seeking hegemony, as to harness to its support some popular discontents, neutralize the opposing forces, disaggregate the opposition and really incorporate some strategic elements of popular opinion into its own hegemonic project" as stated by Hall (1985: 118).

The historical path of the rural society in Mozambique offer grounds to explore the basis of construction of authoritarian populism. Frelimo's authoritarian populism is not a current tendency, it has been built and sustained throughout the party's shifting regimes and strategies of agrarian strategies. O'Laughlin (1996:5) periodised post-independence strategies of agrarian transition in three phases:

The first phase, from 1975 to 1980, was defined by broad-ranging political consensus around the need for a rapid socialisation of production and residence through the expansion of state-farms, co-operatives, and communal villages. The second highly contradictory phase, from 1980 to 1983, was defined by Frelimo's shift to a bureaucratic and hierarchical model of rapid socialist accumulation based almost exclusively in state farms. Goods starvation in rural areas, the stagnation of state farm production, and widening support for the Renamo opposition movement from South Africa (amongst others) led to a rapid expansion of both the war and parallel markets in rural areas. Frelimo's strategy in the third phase, beginning with the Fourth Frelimo Party Congress in 1983, was initially defined as market socialism, but moved rapidly towards increased support for private commercial farming, and the distribution of some state farm land to multinational enterprises, Mozambican commercial farmers and some peasant households. O'Laughlin (1996:5)

The first phase referred by O'Laughlin (1996) is parallel to Frelimo's rise as the protagonist of the national liberation from colonial rule, as the name itself portrays ("Frente de Libertacao Nacional" - National Liberation Front), it showed itself as the symbol of national resistance, revolutionary and saviour of the people which won back the control of the country to the Mozambican people. Frelimo was represented in national anthem as "the guide of Mozambican people" and portrayed in the 1975 constitution as the "the leading force of the State and the Society", unipartidary at the time. Additionally, the presence of a charismatic and visionary leader with socialist principles and strong discourses around social change and justice was determinant to building a positive and popular image of Frelimo, not only amongst rural areas but as well amongst urban areas. Scoones et al (2017) point out that authoritarian populism is based in depicting politics as a struggle between the people and "others", which in this case would be Frelimo against colonialism. This was the basis of the construction of the authoritarian populism that is verified today and for the past decades.

As a response to unipartidarism and anti-communist policies, Renamo⁴ emerges as a movement with growing support, especially on the second phase of agrarian transition referred by O’Laughlin. Frelimo’s strategies to organize communal villages is also understood as a way of isolating and controlling rural villages of emerging opposite movements and maintain its hegemony among rural societies which is a clear feature of authoritarian populist regimes in which reducing the power to resist or crushing critical thinking (Arendt, 1951 in Scoones et al, 2017). After 16 years of war and the peace agreement in 1992, Mozambique was engaged in a multiparty regime and Frelimo was already engaged in a social democrat party. Nevertheless, the typical adoption of divisive narratives such as “us against them” (Scoones et al, 2017) is still persisting in Frelimo’s discourses, in which the “Other” changed faces from colonialism to “Renamo”.

The third phase was characterized by a massive privatization process in the name of economic rehabilitation supported by the Bretton Woods Institutions. It was the emergence of the market economy in Mozambique in the so called “democratic” society. Nevertheless, the historical acceptance of Frelimo as the nation’s rescuer and the stigmatization of being “against” the rescuer maintained Frelimo’s populism both in rural and urban areas. Although it has been the ruling party since the independence, Renamo has been systematically contesting and questioning elections’ outcomes, proving in some cases irregularities on those processes. Nevertheless, the legitimization of Frelimo’s dominance through the discourse of democracy still endures, a clear feature of authoritarian populism (Hall, 1985; Scoones et al, 2017).

The stigmatization that was generated during the socialist period, intensified by the communal villages and maintained during the war period, persist until recent times and it is reflected in social relations, either in rural or urban areas. In rural areas, the stigmatization may be even greater than in urban areas, for instance, being a traditional chief means being a Frelimo’s party member, which directly reflects they way land and other resources are to be managed. Holding a Frelimo’s membership card would a secure way to get employed, especially in public institutions. While people supporting Renamo are understood to be on the opposite side of the “struggle”, as many call them “the opposition”, which is against all the principle of a true patriotism. These facts represent the set of operations in which Frelimo construct consent into authoritarianism.

III. Market liberalization: governmental politics towards market-oriented agricultural development

A glance on agrarian politics in Mozambique: commodification as a key driver of rural development

The previous section indicates that the only constant in the agrarian and rural policy in post-colonial Mozambique is the presence of an authoritarian populist party that have been shifting ideologies throughout the more than 40 years of independence. Frelimo as the ruling party shifted regimes, from a socialist-driven centralized economic and political power to a capitalist market liberalization starting with the adoption of readjustment economic programs financed by the Bretton Woods Institutions in 1987. The readjustment programs meant a big wave of privatization of public property and a tendency to adopt colonial economy continuities. One of the clearest colonial continuities is the set of policies towards market-oriented agricultural development based on the commodification of the peasantry.

Currently, the main policy designed and approved by the Mozambican Government regarding the agricultural sector is the Plano Estratégico para o Desenvolvimento do Sector Agrário (PEDSA) which set the priorities to improve the performance of the sector. Clearly stated, the main objective of this policy is to transform the agricultural sector into a more investment-friendly business environment supported by the principles of green revolution in order to achieve rates of growth of 7% per year and solve the issue of food insecurity in Mozambique (RM, 2011). These strategies account for the 70% of

⁴ <http://www.renamo.org.mz/index.php/o-partido>

total population, where the majority engages in rural employment and are characterized as smallholders (cultivates one to three hectares).

The plan/policy considers the outgrowing model to be a key driver of rural development based on the discourse that it contributes to leverage the income of the households involved. The production of cotton, currently one of the most produced and exported outgrowers-based crops in Mozambique, was introduced more than 45 years before the independence as an obligatory crop mainly in Centre and Northern region of Mozambique. After the decline of the socialist approach and later with the liberalization of the market and the civil war, the textile industry collapsed, and currently external investment dominates the concession areas of cotton production, and it is now exported mainly to Asian markets as cotton fiber. Additionally, the relations of power among the peasantry and the investors is determined by an unfair monopsony commercial relation which is highly influenced by the investors rate of profit which in turn is determined by the volatility of international prices and exchange rate Metical/USD. Although agro-industry and industrial development is often mentioned in PEDSA, this has not been materialized, as most of the investment is done upstream on the agro value chains resulting in primary commodity exports and reducing the supply off-farm employment for the rural population.

Besides the outgrowing model, hosting large scale land-based investments have been part of the liberalization policies of the last decades. One of the largest investments in the agricultural sector, both financially and land occupation wise, is the Portuguese forest plantation company Portucel Moçambique which has earned the right of occupying approximately 350.000 hectares in two highly populated central provinces of Mozambique. Proceeding as an authoritarian regime, the Ministers Council approved his occupation as a strategic level decision with no proper consultation of the rural inhabitants who are watching their land being substituted by an emerging eucalyptus monoculture landscape.

Added to large scale land-based external investments, a distinctive market mechanism arose from the liberalization process in the local level in which the commodification of the peasantry was induced by external middlemen stimulus of demand that resulted in a set of emerging exportation-oriented cash crops as sesame and pigeon peas among the peasantry at the cost of reducing the cultivated area of food crops per household. As the means of production remain constant, a reduction of internal market supply of food is verified. A more recent case of this would be the rise of pigeon pea production in the Center and Northern region of Mozambique as a response of deficits of the Indian market demand which triplicated the cultivated area within the period of 10 years and more than doubled the amount produced yearly. The value chain of pigeon pea is dominated by external actors including intermediaries, wholesalers and the final consumers in India.

The costs of this external stimulus-based development of value chains/networks within the context of market liberalization are particularly enhanced to the smallholders as they suffer with international price variability plus an intensively volatile Metical/USD exchange rate. Besides the economic conjuncture stimulus, external regulation changes, in this case increase of Indian tax imports regarding pigeon peas, causes a huge drop in the crop demand by the middlemen and the smallholders end up with their production rot, no commercialization, no income and less food crop production.

Overall, three major clusters are verified when analyzing the dynamics of rural and agricultural sector in Mozambique. The first would be the existence of a failed neoliberal policy of rural and agricultural development with outcomes far from the expected when it is implemented in a text bookish way as there is the collapse of agro-industry and lower levels of rural employment as well as stagnation of the levels of efficiency and competitiveness on the sector. In this way, the peasantry, as stated by Mosca (forthcoming) is “perversely integrated” in market relations which only allow external accumulation of capital.

These set of developmental agricultural political options, with little/no regards or even wrong assumptions about their impact on rural livelihoods, are apparently within a discourse of a “social

democratic” regime, however, they are actually materialized through an authoritarian regime sustained by its populist character, urban or rural wise, portraying the second major cluster. The legitimation of authoritarian populist institutions dominance, centralized power and limitation of dissent using democratic institutions (Scoones et al 2017: 3) allows the ruling party to consolidate the patriarchal relation towards the people built by the image of a revolutionary and liberation force of the country from colonialist power.

Looking at the formation of the first “popular” organizations in Mozambique, women, youth, workers and teachers were organized from within FRELIMO. The discourses and the way other forms of organizing outside the control of the ruling party were denied the right self-organized. Like the Christian Council of Mozambique, the National Peasants' Union was one of the few organizations that developed without the strict control of FRELIMO (Negrão, 2003, Monjane, 2016).

The third cluster, the one that drives the previously discussed ones, is the external forces and stimulus originating from the Bretton Woods institutions, capitalism, humanitarian organizations and other actors of the international community. Since the adoption of the rehabilitation program after the decline of the socialist regime, Mozambique has been operating under the neoclassic/new institutional guidelines of the IMF and the World Bank opening the economy to external investment exploitation of comparative advantages. Throughout the years, Mozambique entered in an extractivist scheme of supplying primary goods (agro and mineral commodities) in order to fuel the competitiveness of Asian and South African industrialization disregarding internal necessities and national priorities (Bruna, 2017; Castel-Branco, 2015).

The interaction of these three major clusters highly shaped rural dynamics, including the features and agency of the peasantry and the political and economic power possession within social classes. It pushes the peasantry to either integrate themselves either in an outgrowing model of monocrop production or to redefine their production structure in order to commercialize it to middlemen answering to stimulus of external market demand. These first two strategies intensify peasants' income dependence on external variables (international markets stimulus and exchange rate volatility) and deepens the need of production of food to supply rural societies. Less choices are left to the ones that face land grabbing in the name of development through the accommodation of agrarian external investment with absent industrialization to absorb rural surplus population. The process of redistribution of land sustained by the neoclassical/new institutional approach of development is likely to benefit the big landowners among the peasantry and/or the ones that are hired as labor force of those investors, which is clearly the minority mainly local leaders and other rural elites.

In other words, the inter-relation of the three clusters either support and promote the commodification of the peasantry and/or results in an increasing number of landless peasants. One clear example of the the inter-relation of the three clusters would be the program called ProSAVANA because it was constructed and financed by external stimulus, based in a neoliberal principle of high (external) investment and monocrop to fuel internal or external markets, and finally it was at the beginning approached as a top down policy with no regards about the peasants or rural inhabitants say, so, in an authoritarian way of operating.

It is in this context that ProSAVANA is located. This program – about which we will deal with in details in the next section – is a broader policy that expresses what is already happening in Nacala Development Corridor: a rush for commodity crops, such as soybeans and maize. Three big companies are leading the process, namely, Mozaco in Malema district (Nampula), Agromoz and Hoyo-Hoyo in Gurué district (Zambézia). Their investments are reported to be in controversial land conflicts with local communities.

Prosavana: a path-way to commodification of agriculture, proletarianization of the peasantry and boosting of extractivism

PEDSA and ProSAVANA⁵

The ProSAVANA program is a policy aimed to bust agricultural and rural development targeting highly potential area of the country (approximately 13% of the country and 17% of total population), the so called Nacala Development Corridor, including fertile land, endowment of mineral resources and strategic location and infrastructures to access Asian markets. This Government-led program follows most of the guidelines recorded in PEDSA targeting 19 specific districts of Nampula, Zambézia and Niassa provinces. However, its Master Plan was designed by the triangular cooperation between Mozambique, Brazil and Japan, with the main objective of increasing agricultural productivity.

Believed to be a replica of one of the biggest land grabbing programs of Brazil's cerrado (Prodecer), social movements have been resisting its implementation since a leaked first version of its Master Plan went public. In addition to the potential transfer of negatives impacts from the Brazilian model such as invasion of monocrops, displacement of peasants, deforestation and other environmental hazards (Funada, 2013; Clements e Fernandes, 2013), the fact that the program was not conceived together with local inhabitants and no interest in meeting local needs, instead it was achieving Brazil and Japan's goals in the new global political/economic structures (Funada, 2013) also raised a lot of criticism and contestation among/by agrarian social movements and other civil society actors.

The concerns of social movements are not just regarding the idea of the program itself as ProSAVANA and the Nacala Corridor are high connected with broader plans including the development of extractive industry, as the Master Plan itself predicts higher levels of growth and production to that specific sector. In the context of development corridors, Smalley (2017) identifies three major influences around them in particular for the eastern seaboard of Africa: (1) as tools of development policy; (2) new thinking among donors regarding infrastructures, agriculture and the role of private sector; and (3) support of globalised supply chains.

The Nacala corridor plans are clearly aligned with the interests of Brazilian and Japanese investors and cooperation involving an integrated scheme of extractivism through agribusiness development (export monocultures, forest plantations, among others), minerals (coal, heavy sands, energy and others) and infrastructures (in particular communication routes for the exportation of agricultural and mineral primary commodities). This scheme smoothes the functionality of extractivists objectives, as it enhances the efficiency (costs and time) in which the commodities are launched to the global market through Nacala port. The production and trade of these set of agro or mineral commodities are to fuel particularly China and India's industrialization process, fulfilling in this way, interests other than the national ones. Overall, the Nacala corridor support of private sector activities can be seen as an instrument of facilitating external accumulation integrating both mineral and agricultural sector.

"Progressive" Land Law as lubricant of market neoliberalism and land concentration

Although the program predicts the inflow of investments it doesn't exhibit a mechanism through which it will be certified that the local inhabitants will not lose their land in the name of "rural and agricultural development" stated in PEDSA and ProSAVANA and end up importing the land grabbing model of operation from the Brazilian experience. The main argument around this issue is that Mozambican Land Law follows the social democratic principles and respect customary rights, however, many experiences in Mozambique show that relying only on the "just for display" progressive Land Law and its complementary regulations.

The fact that the Land Law states that the land is owned by the state, it increases the control of resources by an authoritarian and capitalist state that nevertheless once adopted a "socialist"-based

⁵ Detailed analysis of ProSAVANA's discourses, objectives and Master Plan Zero can be explored in the following papers: Funada (2013), Clements & Fernandes (2013) and Mosca & Bruna (2015).

ideology, is now transformed into a neoliberal business-oriented government. Bruna (2017b) argues that throughout the implementation of Mega-Projects, the most common type of land-based external investments in extractive industry and agriculture, the state works as an instrument to external capital and imposes, through a patriarchal domination towards its people, the redistribution of land based on external interests and priorities to the extent that the state defined its responsibilities as serving capital and its development (Castel-Branco, 2018, interviewed by the authors).

The centralization of ownership of land and its resources to an authoritarian populist state with approximately half of its budget financed by Bretton Woods institutions' loans and donations from investing countries (average of the last decades), results in the concentration of resource-rich land in external economic agents. The role of the state in the process of land occupation in Mozambique has been identified as facilitators or intermediaries (Harrison, 2010; Chivangue e Cortez, 2015; Besseling, 2013; Mosca, Bruna e Mandamule, 2016; Fairbairn, 2011) in both local, district and central level, including local leadership.

In the specific case of the Nacala corridor, a model that supports, at local and community levels, primitive accumulation of capital can be observed. This is supported by a model of land acquisition that does not respect customary rights, marginalizes the needs and aspirations of the family sector and promotes higher levels of vulnerability of the communities resulting in conflicts and higher levels of social and economic inequalities.

IV. Confronting authoritarian populism

1. Resistance, authoritarian populist responses and power relations

It was until mid 2013 that ProSAVANA emerged as a hot topic in Mozambique and brought up discussions among Mozambican society, before this was only a matter discussed among the Brazilian and Japanese parties (Funada, 2013). However, with the leakage⁶ of first zero version of ProSAVANA master plan, resistance was initiated throughout a synergic alliance between the three countries civil society. Up until now, ProSAVANA has been one of the most contested external and internal policy in Mozambique involving not only civil society organizations but peasants themselves as active participants on the movements. ProSAVANA is regarded as the most resisted and contested development policy/program in post-independent Mozambique (Monjane, 2016).

Known as “*Campanha não ao ProSAVANA – No to ProSAVANA Campaign*” (NPC), it consists of an overt contestation is mainly regarding the model of rural development to be promoted by the program using as evidence some pilot projects from the program that resulted in displacements. Additionally, the demand for transparency, inclusion and participation of the peasantry and civil society actors in the planning and decision-making process.

At first, the reaction from Mozambican Government followed the typical deviation from democracy including the one of Agriculture Minister José Pacheco when during a public auscultation of the program, asked for the audience (civil society organization, academics, peasants' representations and others) for “patriotic” interventions and no “obscure agendas”. The minister went on to say that the government was standing firm in that mission and that “any obstacle we will run over and move on” (Monjane, 2015). Nevertheless, in local auscultation (community or district level) similar attitudes were portrayed by local government representatives and even the presence of armed policemen which definitely influenced participants' interventions.

The disregard or repudiation of contradictory positions towards governmental decisions and policies is a clear pattern of Mozambique's Government reaction, often classifying them as ideas “against development” from “city rats that have no experience or knowledge from the field” or even that the opposition to ProSAVANA is being pushed from outside Mozambique and that local organizations are

⁶ <https://www.grain.org/article/entries/4703-leaked-prosavana-master-plan-confirms-worst-fears>

following obscure and foreign agendas (notícias, 2014, edition 25/08). It was the first time Mozambican civil society had successfully mobilized strong international solidarity from international social movements - especially from Brazil and Japan, but also from Southern Africa -. We will debate over this strategy in the next session.

On the other hand, as a response of contestation, although the Brazilian part seems to have backed up in their public interventions, the Japanese part through its International Cooperation Agency (JICA) agreed to be open to involve civil society's and UNAC's (national peasant's organization) in the revision of the overwhelming criticized ProSAVANA Master Plan and on the process of elaboration of its new version. However, the divergence of ideologies regarding market-oriented policies amongst civil society actors created a segregation between two major groups within the movement. Although not in an official manner, even UNAC associations and unions seem to be divided over ProSAVANA. Only UNAC provincial unions in Nampula and Zambezia have openly demonstrated rejection to ProSAVANA. In its turn, the Niassa union of peasants seems to be more supportive. One segment of the divided anti-ProSAVANA movement is represented by the *Mecanismo de Coordenação da Sociedade Civil para o Desenvolvimento do Corredor de Nacala* (MCSC-CN - *Civil Society Coordination Mechanism for the Development of the Nacala Corridor*) and is an official participator, recognized by the government, in the process of revision and elaboration of the Master Plan. On the other hand, the other segment, which still call themselves "Campanha não ao ProSAVANA" portrays that those are not representative of peasants' agency and contribute to the legitimization of the ProSAVANA's model of rural development.

ProSAVANA's commonalities with socialist villagization, in which forced rural populations to "abandon" their lands to concentrated villages, was present in the seeming proposing of the program in its initial phases. The general idea was that people would make room for crop and infrastructures setting and provide labor and market crops to established enterprises for either semi-processing or export for international markets. In the case of villagization, peasants would be proletarianized at State farms. In ProSAVANA, in private farms. Nevertheless, as part of the resistance process towards the implementation of the program, peasants at Nacala corridor have seen it as a perverse way to be transformed into "workers" threatening their current situation as "owners" of the means of production. As a woman peasant from Nampula stated, "I don't want to give away land to them and become their worker. If they want to support us, it is up to us to decide in which way"⁷.

2. Why was resistance to ProSAVANA "successful" ... so far?

Having into account that the most relevant component of ProSAVANA, the master plan, which was the main framework that indicated the inflow of mass investment on land and agriculture, was not yet implemented only because of the strong objection and criticism to its ideology and methodologies, mainly lead by the NPC but also by various sectors of society. Our theses for this "success" can be explained by a combination of a set of strategies intrinsic to the resistance movement. We summarize them into four: (1) agency "from below", (2) inter-sector civil society alliance, (3) communication, propaganda and media strategy, and (4) transnationalization of the struggle. Nevertheless, it is relevant to identify a set of events that transcended the movement itself but may have contributed to the success of it. Those are denoted as "external factors" which include political environment in the host country and in the "investing" countries and global economic environment.

Agency "from below"

The debate about the variations of political reactions from below towards land grabbing, initiated by Borrás and Franco (2013) directly relates to the resistance processes regarding the ProSavana case as the unique feature that quickly brought legitimacy to the movement against ProSavana was the determination of the Mozambique Peasant's Union (UNAC) to lead the process as what the authors called struggle against expulsion and struggle against land concentration and redistribution in which

⁷ Woman small-scale farmer from Malema district, Nampula.

agrarian and environmental justice and human/peasants' rights were pursued (Borras and Franco, 2013: 1731).

UNAC released its first protesting statement⁸ on October, 2012 - before NPC was constituted - from Nampula province. The issue was already generating concerns in a number of other civil society organizations in a national level. For instance, Justiça Ambiental – a Mozambican environmental NGO - released its first position statement⁹ on ProSAVANA in January 2013. What happened next - the growing number of expression of concerns from various sectors and spaces - triggered the foundation of the “No to ProSAVANA Campaign”, which was launched on 2nd June 2014, under the leadership of UNAC. The fact that UNAC, a movement that represents the peasantry in Mozambique, took the lead and soon released a statement of concern, allowed what we call agency from below to happen. Very soon, local associations, district and provincial unions of UNAC have been mobilized. It was becoming to be difficult for the proponents of ProSAVANA, including local government, to easily convince the peasantry of the “benefits” of the program.

This unusual strong position of UNAC against a governmental policy to be implemented didn't quite overcome the authoritarian position of the Mozambican Government as it maintained its position of unreceptiveness towards protests. However, it triggered and strengthened the other factors that contributed to the process of resistance.

Inter-sector civil society alliance and segregated processes of resistance

The “your issue is not my issue” attitude has been very common among Mozambique civil society groups and it contributed to segregated processes of resistance and focus of social change among social movements and activists. In general, urban based struggles dialogue little with rural based issues. Trade unions dialogue little with peasant/agrarian organizations. Women and gender issues dialogue little with housing, transport, environmental issues and so on so forth.

Although there is no a clear relation between the two, in the past, the “*Campanha Terra* - Land Campaign” was probably one of the few and most vibrant inter-sectoral groups to build an advocacy and debate platform to influence the inclusion of popular views and defend the interest of the peasantry in the 1997 land law. At the beginning *Campanha Terra* was not structured. According to Negrão (2002: 18) “there were fundamentally sensitivities covering a wide spectrum of layers and groups of social interests, churches, associations and cooperatives, non-governmental organisations, academics, politicians and even elements in the private sector, in addition to dozens of incognito honest citizens”. Once after the passing of the 1997 land law, *Campanha Terra* languished. Nevertheless, the land question in Mozambique impels us to consider it as a mobilizing element when it comes to losing it for capital grab.

However, the integration of strength of different sectors of the Mozambican civil society created synergies that fed the growth and legitimacy of the fight for environmental, land, agrarian and gender issues as a big and cohesive cause. The main subscribers of the NPC are: UNAC (National Peasant's Union); ADECRU (Academic Association for Rural Communities Development); CAPUJANA (Nampula Archdiocese Commission for Justice and Peace); CDJPN (Nacala Diocesan Commission for Justice and Peace); Fórum Mulher (Women Forum); Justiça Ambiental (Environmental Justice); LDH (Mozambican League of Human Rights) and Livaningo. Apart from some platforms that have emerged and died along the years with no clear common ideology or program, NPC is undoubtedly the most innovative and effective alliance among groups of different fields of action and interests and that paved the way for ProSAVANA to be perceived an important national issue, arousing public interest.

Nevertheless, it is relevant to consider other sources of objection among civil society in Mozambique. Despite being strong and consistent, NPC subscribers were not the only civil society organizations to

⁸ <http://www.inesc.org.br/noticias/noticias-gerais/2012-1/novembro/pronunciamento-da-unac-sobre-o-programa-prosavana>

⁹ http://radiomundoreal.fm/IMG/pdf/prosavana_posicao_final.pdf

question and oppose to ProSAVANA's guidelines and its strategy of communication. Many academics and civil society organizations presented public critical assessments regarding the discourses of the program itself, its Master Plan and the primary effects of its pilot projects.

Communication, propaganda and media strategy

One of the strengths of the campaign was the designing of an effective communication and media strategy. The use of online communication channels, from websites, blog to social media, as well as local newspapers has been a strong tactic. Very regularly the campaign would publish - and publicize - content such as statements, testimonies, articles, videos and images (photos and infographic material), highlighting resistance to ProSAVANA and exposing its negative social and environmental issues. Extensive communication and media experience from some of the members of the campaign may have allowed an effective use of tools and existing networks to publicize protest content.

The campaign would publish its communication materials in various websites its members - in Mozambique, Brazil and Japan - as well as share the links and key messages in the campaign's facebook page¹⁰ - which at the moment of writing this article (january 2018) had more than thousands of followers¹¹. The campaign material would quickly be republished in many website, including media organizations such as Pambazuka News¹². Their media strategy would include getting the issue being covered in local and international mainstream media. As a result, leading international newspaper, such as the Guardian (2014)¹³, Neues Deutschland (2018)¹⁴, Deutsche Welle (2017)¹⁵, have published stories mentioning resistance to ProSAVANA. Some regional media organizations, as is the case of the Zimbabwe Herald (2017) would also publish stories, celebrating the program, which shows that proponents of ProSavana would also promote media coverage showing the "bright" side of the program.

Transnationalization of the struggle and solidarity mobilization

The involvement of Brazil and Japan's social movements/civil society in ProSAVANA resistance favored the mobilization of international solidarity. Almost all of the main Brazilian agrarian movements (all component of Via Campesina Brazil) and a number of progressive NGOs were part of the campaign, as they were some NGOs and progressive intellectuals in Japan. In their respective countries a number of activities were carried out since 2014 as a strategy to exhaust representatives of key institutions and, wherever possible identify allies inside those institutions. This was possible in the case of Japan, where their lobbying and advocacy actions at parliament resulted in a strong alliance between Japanese organizations and a left-wing parliamentarian that pushed for fierce debates on ProSAVANA at Japanese parliament.

For the case of Brazil, it is difficult to measure institutional impacts of their advocacy and mobilization actions. What is interesting to note is the progressive decline of Brazil institutional "involvement" in the implementation of the program. Political and economic events of the last 3 years, namely the deepening economic crisis, the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and the taking over of a right-wing government - combined with the Brazil silence over ProSAVANA – impels to the prediction of a withdrawal.

Another key element here is the fact that some Mozambican organizations in the campaign were part (members) of some of the biggest and most radical transnational social movements. UNAC is member of Via Campesina, Fórum Mulher is a member - and hosting - the World March of Women and Justiça

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/naoprosavana/>

¹¹ The facebook page was opened in 2016.

¹² <https://www.pambazuka.org/land-environment/mozambique-government-not-sincere-about-prosavana>

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jan/01/mozambique-small-farmers-fear-brazilian-style-agriculture>

¹⁴ <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/1075801.nd-soliaktion-teilen-macht-satt-umkaempftes-saatgut.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.dw.com/pt-002/mo%C3%A7ambique-investiga%C3%A7%C3%A3o-%C3%A0-jica-no-caso-prosavana-vista-como-conquista-na-luta-contra-o-projeto/a-39648276>

Ambiental is a member of Friends of the Earth International. These movements are known by their capacity to mobilize global solidarity, attract media attention and give global visibility to local struggles.

External factors: political and global economic environment

A number of factors that were out of control of the movement and the resistance actors, however these could have directly or indirectly contributed to the strength of the resistance process. In a national level, the rise of localized government unpopularity due to overlapping crises can be seen as emergent localized tendency of rupture of the authoritarian populist regime held by Frelimo, especially in the areas where ProSAVANA is to be implemented. In an international scale, political environments both in Brazil and Japan, can be seen as a potential factor of the stagnation of the program. Additionally, the trends of commodity prices need to be analyzed in order to understand the behavior of potential investors in the line of ProSAVANA. Although it is uncertain the degree in which each of these factors influenced the rupture of ProSAVANA's implementation, those are further analyzed in the following points.

The rise of localized government unpopularity and overlapping crises

The process of discussion and resistance of ProSavana was characterized by a parallel emergence of political and military crises that consequently contributed to the rise of the economic crisis in Mozambique. Coming from a combination of micro and macro issues of political and economic instability such as unjust resettlements of peasants due to the development of extractive industries and agrarian investments, the uncover of hidden and illegal public debt involving Ministers and both current and former President, the rising discontent of Renamo party including the competitiveness over the control resource-rich regions. Resulting in recurrent armed conflicts in rural areas and the inability of the state to control social instability, rural inhabitants and peasants were economically affected and insecure.

The importance of analyzing the context in which the process of resistance was developing lays on the fact that it contributed to the increase of awareness of Frelimo's failure in adopting a social just development model (rural or urban) which facilitated and/or motivated the engagement of peasants in the struggle. This fact, marked the transformation of the roots of rural Mozambique's typical way of resistance, which had been characterized by Scott's (1986) everyday forms of resistance until the incorporation of an overt and semi-organized way of protesting as it was verified in the case of ProSAVANA.

Brazil's political instability and Japanese democracy

As Brazil's political crisis emerged in the last years, Brazilian cooperation's agency (ABC) role in the implementation of ProSAVANA has been decreasing, especially in terms of degree of involvement in the responses to the program's resistance movement. Contrary to this position, the Japanese cooperation agency (JICA) took the lead in attempt to revise the program's Master Plan claiming to be open, to a certain degree, to "negotiate" and "integrate" civil society's demands and even finance the formation of an integrated organism to manage all civil society claims regarding the implementation and revision of the Master Plan, which so far, has been considered a failure.

It is relevant to approach the determinant role of the Japanese parliament and democracy in the process of resistance regarding the implementation of ProSavana. More than cooperation within the struggle being conducted in Mozambique, the pressure exercised by Japanese civil society towards the Japanese parliament would directly reflect on the decision-making process of JICA, which would consequently compel the Mozambican Government to give in, given the power relations existing between the two (beneficiary and donor). It has to be clear that the subject-matter is not to romanticize the idea of "democracy" in Japan, although it ranks much higher than Brazil and Mozambique, nor to diminish the efforts of Japanese civil society, however, the authors recognize that the processes of resistance from the Mozambican civil society couldn't rely on the existing "democratic regime" in Mozambique as much as the Japanese civil society does.

Global economic environment: commodity prices trends

As ProSAVANA's implementation was to be supported by an inflow of internal and external investors, one may consider the proportion to which the investment decision of those is determined by the global trends of commodity prices. The Master Plan identifies two main crops as the "priority crops" to be promoted by the program, namely maize and soya. Analyzing the international price of maize¹⁶, the trends show high prices for the period between 2011 to 2013 with a peak of approximately USD330 per metric ton between July and August of 2012. Nevertheless, sharp decreases were verified late 2013 reaching the lowest in 2017 of a bit less than USD150 per metric ton.

Regarding the international price of soybeans¹⁷, rising prices were observed in the beginning of the current decade reaching a maximum of USD684 per metric ton in August of 2012, period in which ProSAVANA discussions were still ongoing far from the public eyes. With some instabilities between late 2012 and 2014, it was in mid 2014 that the price started to register significant decreases until it reached the minimum in early 2016 of USD370 per metric ton. Although is hard to measure, it is important to take into account the principles of market supply and demand and its influence in investors decision process regarding the ProSAVANA program as both priority crops' international prices fell approximately in 50% throughout the period in which the program's resistance movement took place.

3. Emancipatory politics emerging from the resistance process

No to ProSAVANA, Yes to Agroecology and Food Sovereignty: resistance and emancipation

We, the peasantry of Mozambique, remain steadfast in the struggle to defend peasant agriculture and food sovereignty... [and] we will continue to protest against the undue and irregular land granting to megaprojects, demanding the replacement of our lands and our rights (UNAC, 2015). Agroecological agriculture practiced by small peasants is the only real and effective solution to respond to the multiple challenges that we face (...). Peasant agriculture is the pillar of the local economy and contributes to maintaining and increasing rural employment "(UNAC, 2012).

UNAC positioning on ProSAVANA has gained support from other campaigners in collective statements as well as in UNAC individual positioning. According to its statutes, one of the objectives of the UNAC is "to intensify actions that contribute to guarantee the food sovereignty of peasant families" (Boletim da República, Statutes of the National Peasants Union, 10/18/2006). In recent years, agroecology as a productive practice and its political dimension has become part of its positioning and its training initiatives.

The agro-ecological methods of production have always been part of the social and cultural life of several rural communities in Mozambique. Some of these practices have been marginalized or forgotten during the process of agricultural commodification introduced by the colonial regime and due to the more recent introduction of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and monoculture modes of production. Based on a field work with an association of peasant women from Namaacha, southern Maputo province, it is shown shows that members of the association are producing different crops using organic manure and techniques based on biodiversity. Production is both intended for self-consumption and for selling in local markets (Monjane, 2015).

Another experience to be highlighted is the Alfredo Nhamitete Agricultural Association, in the district of Marracuene, whose 280 members produce various food crops, especially sweet potatoes, carrots, cabbage, onions, cabbage, beans, lettuce, eggplant, among others. Part of the production is marketed in the local market and income is shared equally among members (LVC Africa News, 2014). Still in

¹⁶ <https://www.indexmundi.com/commodities/?commodity=corn&months=120>

¹⁷ <https://www.indexmundi.com/commodities/?commodity=soybeans&months=120>

Marracuene, several peasants began an exchange with a peasant organization in Brazil, the Small Farmers Movement (MPA), to "rescue native seeds that are at risk of extinction and which are of greater importance for food sovereignty ..." and to develop simplified and easy-to-understand techniques [...] to maintain purity of varieties and improve their productive potential "(MPA and UNAC, 2012). This initiative brought some seed sovereignty locally and drastically reduced the cost of commercial seed procurement.

A School of Agroecology is being installed in the district of Manhiça, north of the province of Maputo. It is a physical school, the first in Mozambique, where UNAC intends to train its members - and not only - on agroecological practices. The school is part of a training process aimed at strengthening the organizational capacity of the movements and promoting peasant agroecology.

These are indicative examples of a series of initiatives across the country, both restoring ancestral knowledge and innovations driven by a political and productive project that the peasant movement embraced in Mozambique, with the vision of challenging the dominant models of capitalist agriculture and to give back the autonomy to the producers responsible for most of the food consumed in the country, the peasant class.

The issue of how food sovereignty and agroecology are realistic to African food producers - and to which extent they would respond to food needs to feed growing populations, both in urban and rural regions - has been posed by some leading scholars. Our focus, in this paper, is not to evaluate the practicability of those proposals. Instead, what we bring here is the discourse and narratives proposals that - to evaluate by its narrative and practicality ("peasants" seeds, local markets, use of organic local manure, etc.) as well as what is already being implemented in the few cases we give - and more - represents a degree of an emancipatory effort. The growing of a national movement of the peasantry questioning large-scale capitalist farming model - and questioning ProSAVANA - as a regressive way of relating to land is, in this context, indeed emancipatory.

V. Conclusion

By examining the main clusters of rural and agrarian politics in Mozambique, from colonial era, to the short socialist experience and then the adoption of a market-based economy, shows that the peasantry has been marginalized and more recently induced to engage in a process of commodification. The most recent approved policy for the agrarian sector, PEDSA, highly promotes medium to large scale market oriented agribusiness investment as the main priority of the sector. Engaged with guidelines of this policy, ProSavana, a clear deviation of democracy, triggered a major confrontation of authoritarian populism verified in Mozambique. This resistance is a result of ideological discrepancy between proponents and opponents, as it promotes medium to large-scale market oriented agribusiness investment, as well as due to lack of transparency and unilateral decision-making process.

Being the most contested policy in Mozambique and with the most effective outcome in terms of struggles, ProSavana is still a target of discussion and contestation among civil society actors, peasants and government. Although the Government's authoritarian populist position have been maintained throughout the process, external forces and power relations impose limits to it. Nevertheless, the strength and cohesion of the process of resistance is seen as a combination intrinsic and external factors that work in an inter-related way which opened the way to transforming the political consciousness and reactions of the peasantry. Specific features of the movement itself such as agency from below, segregated processes of resistance, transnationalization and international solidarity and the role of a strong communication strategies and networks, are clearly determinant in confronting authoritarian populism.

However, confronting authoritarian populism may go beyond the intrinsic features of the movement and the external factors, such as political environment of "host" countries as well as "investing" countries and global economic environment may also be considered. Additionally, identifying breaks/ruptures in the authoritarian populist regime, such as the emerging unpopularity of Frelimo in

specific locations, can be used against the regime itself as long as it is taken as an opportunity to make alternatives emancipatory politics work out. Overall, the paper offers a range of inputs in confronting authoritarian populism in the lens of the ProSAVANA program process of resistance. Although emancipatory alternatives to the ProSAVANA Master Plan are proposed by the peasants and the movements involved in resistance process, the authors do not approach arguments regarding the feasibility or the existing debates around the proposed alternatives.

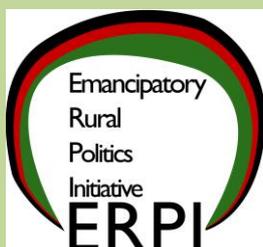
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The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless ‘growth’, climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

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