

Motherhood and Land: A Counterstory of Gender Land Inequalities in Mozambique

Thesis in Cultural Encounters

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Malangatana Valente Ngwenya. *Nude with flowers*. 1962

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Abstract

This thesis explores the gender dimension of the African land question, contributing to debates regarding 'African struggles for development' and 'African national projects'. Specifically exploring Mozambique, the Divine Council Meeting will present Mozambican rural women epistemologies on gender land inequalities, in the form of a counterstory, a method of Critical Race Theory. The thesis goes on to thicken these knowledges, and its connection regarding motherhood and resistance/care/spirituality/land. It also suggests the relevance in working with knowledges that survived 'epistemicides', arguing for a de-link with western and patriarchal imposed axiologies on land-owning. Moving the subject of the land question closer to rural women epistemologies is discussed throughout this thesis, with the objective of allowing for imagining alternative futures that are not built upon capitalist, patriarchal exploitative and racist ideologies.

Keywords: African land question, epistemologies, knowledges, motherhood, care, resistance, feminism, spirituality, land, epistemicides, development, modernity

1. Introduction

In one of my first supervision sessions, my supervisor and I were discussing the possible ways to go about studying the problems of land, the environment and sustainable development projects in Mozambique. My interest in this theme was sparked by a previous project in the subject of International Development theories at RUC, where I explored the case of *Portucel Moçambique*, a Portuguese company investing in eucalyptus plantations in Manica (Mozambique), with the support of the World Bank. This project provoked protests among the rural population of the area, who questioned the company's position in regard to land acquisition (Marques, 2021). In the Portuguese-based critical journal *Jornal Mapa*, I read testimonies of the rural community of Manica regarding the actions of *Portucel Moçambique* that included the company buying the rural workers' private *machambas* (plot of cultivated land) offering zinc sheets as a payment (Nunes & Vinagre, 2021). I have also found out that the Mozambican NGO *Justiça Ambiental* denounced *Portucel Moçambique's* use of a condescending discourse in their justification of the project, where Mozambique was described as a site for land exploitation, and the company promoted themselves as "saviors of the "desgraçadinhos" (a derogatory condescending Portuguese term literally meaning little miserable), that have a lot of land but couldn't possibly know how to use it" (Marques, 2021, p. 9).

International Development Theories was my first subject that had a critical purview of development, and I was stricken by the realization that a development program could displace rural populations and partake in land and water grabs. Using the course curriculum, I sought to understand the historical origins of development and its focus on nation-states. Through Max Weber and Peter Berger (2014), I realized how "the uneven power balance and consequences of coloniality should not be ignored by the subject of development" (Marques, 2021, p. 5). I also used Quijano's concept of coloniality (Quijano, 2000) to approach the case of *Portucel Moçambique*. This concept was useful as it helped my understanding of how colonial relations of domination and exploitation are still present today in land and water grabs carried out by foreign companies in Mozambique, including the condescending narrative that *Portucel Moçambique* used in relation to the rural population of Manica. This narrative, I argued, reproduces coloniality through its representation of Mozambique as a backward country in need of development in order to achieve western modernity. Indeed, to Quijano, coloniality and modernity are two sides of the same coin that work through structures that privilege certain peoples and their knowledges over others. Through Dependency Theory (Wallerstein, 1979), I

also studied *Portucel Moçambique's* powerful position in international trade relations and in relation to the Mozambican nation-state. Decolonial thinking and its importance in “de-link(ing) from western dominated thought” (Hanchey, 2020, p. 262) was another notion that I used in order to understand how developmental aid worked as “a silent imposition of western economic will” (Persaud & Kumarakulasingam, 2019, p. 203 cited in Marques, 2021, p. 5).

In the process of writing that project, I became aware of my lack of knowledge about African scholars' own takes and analyses on these issues, and of the fact that I was not expected to know about these in my university studies. This is a problem in itself, and, as will be evident throughout this thesis, an issue that is continuously critiqued by many non-western, decolonial, or global southern theories and perspectives. So my outset to write this thesis was a complete ignorance in regards to African theories, perspectives and analyses which, I learnt, are multiple. I had to start from scratch, so to speak, which means that I had first to orient myself in a vast field of theories and perspectives. My supervisor suggested that I start from an article written by South African scholar Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), in which he addresses the problems of “the cognitive empire, politics of knowledge and African intellectual productions”, and offers suggestions for “struggles for epistemic freedom” and decolonization. I will return to these concepts in the theory chapter; however in this introduction it is important to mention Ndlovu-Gatsheni's article because in it he offers an overview of African ideological production (p. 889) on the one hand, and another of African intellectual productions (p. 893) that were particularly helpful to guide me into what kind of subfield I should delve in depth with.

In terms of ideological production, Ndlovu-Gatsheni lists the following strands: Negritude, Garveyism, Pan-Africanism, African nationalism, African humanism, African Socialism and African Renaissance (p. 889). Going through the table, the ideology of African Socialism stood out to me, especially due to the presence of the word exploitation used to describe its main concerns. I felt that exploitation was the core issue of *Portucel Moçambique* case, but other than Quijano's coloniality, I didn't know about a theory or ideology that could account for issues of exploitation of land, of humans and of the rural class together, and its reproduction through development/modernity endeavors. Also, African Humanism's concern with the restoration of human dignity, African Renaissance's concern over rebuilding African institutions, and all the other core issues of African Socialism such as anti-classism, anti-capitalism, egalitarianism and self-reliance seemed relevant in relation to my learning interests. Fundamentally, this overview of African ideologies made me realize how unfamiliar most were to me. Even though I knew some of the strands' names, I didn't really know the differences between them, or any relevant authors. This was a sign of the work expected ahead, and also an indicator of coloniality in the university.

In terms of intellectual productions, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) provides an overview described in the image 1 below. Inasmuch as I was interested particularly in Mozambique, in my own country's (Portugal) colonial relationship to it, and in struggles to protect the land from extractivism and monoculture, I chose to start reading and exploring works by the thinkers mentioned under the heading 'African struggles for development and African national projects'. As described in image 1, the intellectual production under this topic is concerned with the land question, land tenure, agrarian reforms and african development plans. In the literature review (chapter 2), I will detail more about those readings and how they inspired this thesis. From those readings, and as I further explored cases and struggles in Mozambique, I found that the land question and the struggles against extractivist and monoculture practices in Mozambique are closely connected to the question of gender and, further, that there are particular ways of understanding the land and gender that differ significantly from the western understandings of such. This led me to the following guiding research question: **How can Mozambican rural women epistemologies inform the African intellectual production concerned with the land question?**

Table 4. Summary of African intellectual production.

Intellectuals/academics	Issues/concerns
<i>Africa's long history predating colonialism</i>	Egyptian civilisation, precolonial African history, African civilisations, African agency, African inventions
1. Cheikh Anta Diop, Theophilus Obenga, Molefe Kete Asante, Jacob Ade Ajayi	
<i>How Africa grappled with African, Islamic and Western cultures and interventions</i>	African personality, intersections and synthesis of African, Islamic and Western/Christian civilisations/cultures/heritages; Concienscism; triple heritage (hybridity)
2. Edward Blyden, Kwame Nkrumah, Ali A. Mazrui	
<i>How Europe underdeveloped Africa and maintained its grip over the continent</i>	Slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism, unequal exchange, unequal development, maldevelopment, underdevelopment
3. Kwame Nkrumah, Samir Amin, Walter Rodney, Dani Nabudere, Bade Onimode, Patrick Bond	
<i>How Europe invaded the mental universe of Africa/colonisation of African minds</i>	Black existentialism, wretched of the earth, coloniser—colonised relations, colonial language, colonial education, colonial library, imperialism of social science, neocolonialism
4. Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinweizu, VY Mudimbe, Claude Ake	
<i>How Europe ruled Africa and its implications for postcolonial reform</i>	Legacy of late colonialism, native question, colonial governmentality, political subjectivity, national question, define and rule, centralised
5. Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Mahmood Mamdani, Issa G. Shivji, Achille Mbembe	despotism, direct rule, iiestion, colonial
<i>How Africa governed itself after dismantlement of direct colonialism</i>	Ideology, class, constitutiortivity, national...y, authoritarianism/commandment, vulgarity, repression, looting, violence, national question, nation-building, state-making, neo-colonialism, democracy, human rights, labour and workers, civil society
6. Achille Mbembe, Mahmood Mamdani, Issa G. Shivji, Adebayo Olukoshi, Ibbo Mandaza, Dani Nabudere, Brian Raftopoulos	
<i>Conceptions of African social formations especially gender relations and womanhood</i>	Colonial invention of gender, sexism, patriarchy, religion, culture, knowledge, feminism, African philosophy, subjectivity, family, motherhood, patriarchy, misogyny, violence against women
7. Ifi Amadiume, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Nkiru Nzegwu, Amina Mama, Rudo Gaidzanwa, Patricia MacFadden	
<i>African struggles for development and African national projects</i>	African nationalism, national question, African state, African nation-state project, structural adjustment programmes, African development plans, African developmental states, governance, social policy, <u>land question, land tenure, agrarian reform</u>
8. Claude Ake, Thandika Mkandawire, Adebayo Olukoshi, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, Dzodzi Tsikata, Rudo Gaidzanwa, Sam Moyo, Fantu Cheru	
<i>African transcendental identity</i>	African combative ontology, national question, nationalism humanism
9. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, Archie Mafeje	
<i>Changing higher education landscape and crisis</i>	Africanisation, internationalisation, curriculum, autonomy, excellence, indigenisation, academic freedom, privatisation knowledge economy, knowledge dissemination
10. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, Adebayo Olukoshi, Mahmood Mamdani	

Source: Drawn by the author.

Figure 1: Summary of African Intellectual Productions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 893)

The thesis is organized as follows. After this introduction follows the literature review (chapter 2), in which I detail the approaches to gender and land in African scholarship that have informed and shaped this thesis. In chapter 3, I provide some historical contextualization relevant to understand the origins of the law of the land and the subsequent resistance to it in Mozambique. Chapter 4 details my theoretical approach, that first centers on presenting the problems of knowledge in its connection to coloniality, and the different approaches that work for what Portuguese scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos has called ‘cognitive justice’ (Santos, 2017). In order to do so, I focus on Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s aforementioned concepts “the cognitive empire, politics of knowledge and African intellectual productions”, “struggles for epistemic freedom” and decolonization, complementing these with insights from Colombian-Danish scholar Julia Suárez-Krabbe’s work on human rights and development (2015). I then present global southern

approaches to gender and motherhood that are important to my approach to the gender and land question. Finally, the theory chapter presents 'racial capitalism' and its analyses of wages hierarchy, which is important to understand the material dimensions of gender land inequalities.

Chapter 5 details the methodology used to approach the gender land inequalities in Mozambique. Since the aim of this thesis is to learn from rural Mozambican women's epistemologies, I struggled a lot to find a way to analyze my material – extracted from the webpages of Mozambican organizations around women's struggles for the land such as FOMMUR and Fórum Mulher. The chapter details these difficulties, and presents the approach of building counterstories from such material, and then conducting a Thickening Analysis that delves in depth with the different epistemological and material dimensions related in the Counterstory. This method is originally from the US Critical Race Theory tradition and proved to be particularly useful and inspiring.

Chapter 6 then presents the Counterstory I made based on the material, entitled Motherhood and Land. In the story, we attend a Divine Council Meeting with the presence of the Mother, organized by her deities Land, River and Bee on behalf of the Mozambican rural women. At this meeting, the women present their case for land ownership to Mother. Chapter 7 consists of the thickening analysis that deepens the exploration of the aforementioned dimensions of the women's struggle by including insights from the theories. The last concluding chapter is organized around the research question, and hence discusses how Mozambican rural women epistemologies can inform the African intellectual production concerned with the land question. I approach this question by including the insights and discussions in the texts presented in the literature review.

2. Literature Review

As explained in the previous chapter, it was Ndlovu-Gatsheni's table summarizing the African intellectual production (see image 1) that molded the start of my literature review work, specifically regarding the land question. Among the African authors indicated there, I chose to focus on the work of Zimbabwean scholar Sam Moyo (2008). According to Moyo, the land question is the key to solving the African development question (2008, pp. 1-24), and his book provides an in-depth overview of the origins of the African land question and its connections with the agrarian question, land tenure issues and the discrimination of women and other minorities. He mentions different kinds of land configuration in African states. Mozambique is part of the group of countries where land expropriation occurred on a large scale during the colonial era, together with South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Kenya, Angola and Algeria (Moyo, 2008, p. 28). The colonial administrations, in these scenarios, gave land-owning privileges only to male adults, in exchange for the payment of taxes (p. 87). This practice became an important discriminatory factor, since women and minorities were denied to receive any allocation of land, being outside of the colonial taxation system imposed by the western patriarchal nation-state (p. 87). Under this land-owning hierarchy, "those who cannot own property themselves become the property of others" (Moyo, 2008, p. 87). To own land was to be free, and thus regulating land-owning was always something explored by the political power. Today, land use regulation in Africa is controlled by domestic elites, the state and "NGO led environment ideologies" (Moyo, 2008, p. 80), and this happens in accordance with the current liberal, capitalist, sexist and exploitative global system that does not prioritize the interests of the rural working class, and even less those of the rural women. Moyo refers to developmental intervention in Africa as mimicking this colonial model of land-owning regulation, calling it a "top down hierarchical, neo-colonial system (...) best described as eco-fascist" (Kirkby & Moyo, 2001 cited in Moyo, 2008, p. 80).

In Mozambique, class, gender and race discrimination in access to land is still notorious today, and this is exactly the relevance in studying the African land question. Marketization of land in post-colonial African countries aggravated land-owning inequality. Mozambique is one of the countries mentioned by Moyo, as an example of constant increase in foreign landholdings (p. 35). The aggravation of inequalities in access to land in recent years is a particularity of the African land question, and, according to Moyo, a result of structural adjustment programs imposed by the IMF and the World Bank that rely on the African nation-states' adoption of

neoliberal economic policies such as liberalism and marketisation, focusing on economic growth indexes instead of “social justice and equity issues” (p. 1) which helped to reinforce this conscience of land marketization with devastating consequences for the rural poor.

The land question in Africa was aggravated by the development industry and by the current economical and political global system that privileges capital/land accumulation by the capitalist class, in a continent where the value of land owning, and the privilege connected to it, constitute the source of class struggles. Due to these same struggles, land reclamation movements have ressurged all over Africa in recent years, with different local characteristics, but sharing “common grievances arising from unresolved land questions” (Moyo, 2008, p. 11). The so-called rural poor do not see an improvement of their living conditions, or any profits from re-distributive land reforms or international aid, and land reclamation movements contest such “elitist’ national land policy-making processes” (p. 12). This is the class dimension of the African land question.

In summary, “both the land and the agrarian questions are critical elements of the national and development questions in Africa today” (Moyo, 2008, p. 23), and “given the social significance of land to the lives of most of the rural classes, its control is an important source of political power, and a terrain for political contests between landlords, peasants, bureaucrats, men and women, ethnic groups and racial groups” (p. 24). The common feature of the inequity in land distribution is the exploitative relationship between large landowners and laborers (p. 27), and thus it makes sense that the pressures for changing the law of the land are coming from the rural working class. Transversal to the class dimension of the land question is its gender dimension. Women’s access to land-owning is inadequate and constrained by customary and patriarchal social relations produced during colonialism (p. 85). “The widest source of gender discrimination in land controls is in the agrarian sphere, given the dominance of agriculture in the African economy” (Moyo, 2008, p. 88), and, as we will see later, given the important role of women in agriculture. Growing land alienation, scarcity of arable lands, large scale commercial agriculture and the increased marketization of land rights, will tend to disproportionately marginalize the land rights of women (p. 90).

Inspired by Moyo's portrayal of the land question in Africa, and the gender dimension of it, I thus decided to explore the Africa Development Journal available through the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, also known as CODESRIA, and to learn more on the topic of gender and its intersection with the land question. Cameroonian scholar Lotsmart Fonjong’s article focusing upon the connection between gender poverty and Large Scale Land Acquisitions (henceforth LSLAs) was the second step in exploring the gender

dimension of the land question (2016). Fonjong's article allowed me to see an example of how questions of land tenure can impact rural women in Africa, since he explores the issue of LSLAs in Cameroon and its negative impacts, especially on women. The article argues that LSLAs, and monoculture plantations are detrimental for the women. Such projects are often presented as development projects, meaning that they will benefit the local communities and provide jobs for them. But, according to Fonjong, the local communities and especially the women end up being pushed away from their land, and those working in these large plantations suffer extreme discrimination and usually see their living conditions as worse than before. Indeed, besides the "widespread evidence of long hours, poor housing, low wages and health risk for most plantation workers around the world today" (2016, p. 61), women usually are paid at even lower rates than men, do the worst tasks due to being considered unskilled labor, and, as "studies in Kenya, South Africa and Zambia also indicate" (p.61), are often only employed during the summer months. Fonjong adds how the transportation to the plantations constitute all sorts of challenges to these women, "with men trampling upon younger and older women without equal physical strength" (p. 62), and where pregnant women are often vulnerable to miscarriage accidents due to poor safety conditions. Also in the plantations, there is a constant environment of "discrimination, violence and sexual harassment" (p. 62). Then the perspective of solving the African land question by giving land tenure to a foreign company who can bring modernity/development or create waged jobs in the region, does not seem to be the right way to account for the gender and class dimension of the land question, actually aggravating the aforementioned issues, and creating a new "rush for Africa", as mentioned by both Moyo (2008) and Fonjong (2016). On the basis of this critique, Fonjong makes the case that small-scale agriculture cannot be "completely sacrificed" as it is the main form of rural employment, and allows for "dependent and harmonious relationship between the land and its users" (2016, p. 51). Another characteristic of the rural communities is the issue of customary rights on land, which accounts for "over half a billion rural Africans" (p. 51). In customary law, the land owner does not own the land through statutory laws but by traditional land-owning systems. Women are the majority of these customary land owners, suffering the most when external forces come in place and see their land as "unused and underexploited" (p. 52). These issues constitute the center of the LSLAs question, itself an important part of gender land inequalities, because the rural women's spiritual relationship with the land, and the centrality of it to their identities, is not taken into account by external investors, who can easily push these women out of their land due to the inexistence of land owning contracts, and offering waged job promises which are not viable for them. As Moyo, Fonjong also highlights the saliency of the power imbalance between the ones who seek to acquire land now, and "the current landholders" (2016, p. 53), which can

cause situations of exploitation by the ones with the power to influence the decisions on land tenure.

Fonjong further argues that the challenges that rural women are facing now regarding land tenure and the threat of LSLAs have origins in land acquisition during the colonial era and in patriarchal customary logics (2016, p. 60). In colonial times land was held to produce export crops, which were farmed by men. Women would assist with tasks such as weeding or harvesting, but would not participate in commercial crops farming; the women instead would participate in small-scale agriculture in marginal lands, in order to guarantee their own community's food needs, all of these with "minimal support or infrastructure to strengthen the sector or women's roles within it " (Fonjong, 2016, p. 60). Thus LSLAs seem to follow the same logic, pushing women to the margins in order to plant *cash crops* to export, and even provoking food crisis when there is no land left that is arable, such as the example described by Fonjong in "the village of Fabe, South West Cameroon when SG-SOC or Herakles Farms took much of their lands and began a commercial oil palm nursery in 2010" (p. 61) causing food shortages in the region.

At this point, and by learning more about the African scholarly debates on the land question, and gender land inequalities, I moved on to focus upon these issues but specifically regarding the Mozambican land question. The first article I explored was actually one that would relate with Fonjong's article. It was Juliana Porsani's case-study on the impact of LSLAs in gender poverty in Mozambique. Based on data collected from the lower Limpopo valley, "where a Chinese investor was granted 20,000 hectares in 2012" (Porsani, 2018, p. 215), she shows how land grabs or LSLAs have a correlation with the feminization of poverty, because, as available land becomes less and less available, labor will be "allocated differently to alternative activities" (p. 215), especially male labor. Women will thus remain dependent on a kind of small-scale farming, where fields are smaller and "of worse quality" (p. 215), while men will slowly disengage from it. Waged labor in large plantations does not seem like a viable option for Mozambican rural women either because they are more exposed to exploitation of all kinds than rural men. There is thus a clear concern in African intellectual productions with the gender unequal impact that LSLAs have in African countries.

As both Moyo and Fonjong mentioned the importance of land to the rural workers' spirituality and identity, I moved on to explore African debates on land and spirituality. With Mozambique in mind, I found Mozambican scholar Laura Nhaueleque's critique of Human Rights Institutions in her study of transition rituals of the *Amakhuwa* peoples in Mozambique, their beliefs and healing social practices (2021). As will be explained in the Methodology chapter (5), this study

inspired the spiritual dimension present in the Counterstory on Motherhood and Land (chapter 6). The connection between land and spirituality, and the importance of nature as a bridge between the people and the gods were really inspiring to my work. Other than that, Nhaueleque's article also reinforced my motivation to explore African epistemologies, since she criticized northern judgments and attempts to illegalize the *Amakhuwa* rituals of transition, which are essential to their culture and traditions, without involving the peoples themselves in these debates (2021). Nhaueleque also explored the spiritual dimensions of being a woman in the *Amakhuwa* society of northern Mozambique, which inspired the Thickening Analysis chapter (7) especially regarding the spiritual dimension of being a Mozambican woman.

While Porsani's article (2018) spelled out the material impacts of gender land inequalities in Mozambique, Nhaueleque's article (2020) inspired me to think about the importance of spirituality and land connections to the Mozambican rural women. Nhaueleque's critique of Global North Human Rights Institutions, also inspired me to work with Mozambican women rural knowledges, since development projects such as the eucalyptus plantations of *Portucel Moçambique* in Manica do not seem to account for these women's knowledges on land and farming, pushing them out of their land and asserting that they do not know how to exploit their land properly. Drawing from these ideas, I saw their connection to South African scholar Olga Bialostocka's concept of African modernity (2021). She critiques the "Eurocentric conceptualisation of modernity" (p. 123), which presents traditional societies as static and opposed to modern societies, by arguing that traditional societies mutate and change, not being stuck in their own time but being dynamic instead. Seeing modernity as a concept dependent on social context, one can state that all the so-called traditional societies are part of our modern world, and that they are both traditional and modern, making the concept of modernity redundant. The conceptualization of African modernity is a decolonial response to the western theoretical concept of modernity, and does not aim to add African culture to the idea of western modernity, or to see African modernity as the ultimate goal to achieve in African societies. Instead, it aims towards imagining a completely different alternative than the western modern linear conception of time and change (Bialostocka, 2021, p. 149). According to her, this is important, as it can grant freedom from the colonial shadow over Africa, and open possibilities for the use of "local axiologies, instead of responding to imperial global agendas" (p. 149). Babalwa Magoqwana, a scholar from South Africa, also supports the urgency of freeing concepts, and subjects, from the imposed colonial and patriarchal understandings. She argues that decolonial thinking should be applied in the subject of Sociology, especially in African universities (2020). She develops steps in this direction, in a paper that argues for reconnecting

African Sociology to the Mother; and to push the subject away from western patriarchal guidelines (2020).

In the same way that the conceptualization of modernity and modern societies in African countries need to break free from western axiologies, and reimagined as new, Magoqwana wishes the same to happen to the subject of Sociology, since by including the institution of the Mother/uMakhulu (the elder mother/grandmother) (2020, p. 84) in the subject body of knowledge, the liberation from western patriarchal imposed logics in sociology is possible (p. 6). Epistemic interventions are essential to achieve the decolonization of sociology, and that is why Magoqwana theorizes “African terms and categories” (2020, p. 19), using indigenous South African languages as sources of knowledge “to the global sociological conversations”. Throughout the article she uses terms such as uluntu/society or umakhulu/eldermother/grandmother in order to produce a “pluralistic understanding” (p. 20) of these concepts, expanding ontological sociological meanings, so that sociology can work as a way to restore hope and heal African communities, and provide a sense of belonging to the students (p. 20). The article inspired me to work with knowledges that could contribute to expanding the ontological and epistemological horizons of the subject of Cultural Encounters and of International Development, by working with rural women knowledges on land, and applying them to the Mozambican land question. Bialostocka and Magoqwana’s commitment to de-link from western colonial and patriarchal influences present on conceptualizations such as modernity or in epistemologies and subjects (such as sociology) guided me throughout this thesis, being the constant backbone of my work.

To sum up, this literature review enabled me to understand how the land question is indeed an essential question in current African intellectual debates on development. Starting with Moyo I was able to understand the origin of the land question as the essential question to focus when talking about African development, as well as the gender dimension of this question. With Fonjong I explored further the gender dimension of the land question, understanding the gender discrimination that exists in land tenure, its origins, and impacts today, and how land grabs only worsen an already structural unequal situation. Porsani's example of correlation between LSLAs and gender poverty in Mozambique made it clear to me how the gender biased land-owning panorama was also relevant to explore in Mozambique. Nhauелеque, Bialostocka and Magoqwana helped me to better understand the importance of spirituality in the relationship between women and land, both essential to this project, and also how to work within a decolonial framework. In the next chapter, I present some historical context regarding the law of the land in post colonial Mozambique, and the subsequent *camponeses* resistance. These are important to further understand the land question reality in Mozambique.

3. Historical Context

Mozambique is a country situated in Southern Africa, with an estimated population of 30 million people (INE, 2021). It is considered one of the poorest countries in the world, with more than half of its population living in conditions of extreme poverty (Mandamule, 2017 pg 42). Mozambique has 69% of its population dependent on agriculture as a means of subsistence (INE, 2017), which justifies the importance of the land question in this country's public debate, especially because of the recent global rush for land, as explained in the previous chapter. The financial and food crisis of 2008 contributed to the increased perceived value of the land, for countries in the global north, who since then are buying large hectares of land in African countries to invest in cash crops and alternative sources of clean energy (Fonjong, 2016, p. 57). Foreign investment of land in Mozambique has been continuously rising since 2008, and with it also came an increased imposition of western views on land value and land-owning, which collides with the local rural communities' land-owning traditions. Land grabs are exponentially rising in Mozambique, with dangerous consequences to the rural communities, who are struggling with land-owning insecurity (Mandamule, 2017, p. 42). Land in rural Mozambique is the motor of the communities. Rural workers do not over exploit the land, and believe in giving back, practicing an agriculture that was taught to them by their ancestors, in order to better preserve a symbiotic relationship with the land (2017, p. 46). Land-owning rights are inherited according to the communities' traditions. For the Mozambican rural populations, customary rights on land are the main axis from which their life is socially organized and built upon, and that is the reason why the state of Mozambique recognizes customary rights on land, and not only statutory rights, having currently a dual regime of land rights coded in the constitution (p. 46). However, despite the *Law of the Land* in Mozambique being considered extremely progressive, in practice the law is not followed (Mandamule, 2017). This is an important consideration to keep in mind in order to understand the main causes of the land question in Mozambique.

Mozambique achieved independence from Portugal in 1975, and with it the country's constitution was born, coding the nationalization of all national resources (Mandamule, 2017, p. 46). Despite an emphasis on the importance of free land and free people being expressed in the constitution, in post-colonial Mozambique a fair redistribution of the land has not been achieved (p. 47). In fact, the Portuguese-colonial administrative practices continue to be reproduced, and formerly privately-owned agricultural properties became state properties (p. 47). Land was then

taken away from the *camponeses* in order to stop individualistic land owning (CAHEN, 1987 cited in Mandamule 2017, p. 47). The first draft concerning a law of the land (*Lei da Terra*) was approved in 1979 (LEI Nº 6/79), defining all land as state property (Mandamule, 2017, p. 47). In 1987 an additional legislation was approved stating that land cannot be sold (DECRETO Nº 16/87). These legal measures were reinforced in the 1990 Constitution (article 46) and in the 2004 Constitution (article 109) (p. 47). The current *Law of the Land* was implemented in 1998. The drafting of this law was a result of a huge collaboration between civic society organizations and local communities. As mentioned earlier, it is considered one of the most progressive in the world because of its stated compromise with the sacred character of the land, and respective consequences in case of not following the law (p.47). However, as already stated, in reality these progressive views have not been respected, and the law is not always applied by the judicial processes at the state's disposition.

An important mechanism to mention in order to understand how foreign companies have such an easy access to land-owning in Mozambique in this scenario of a fair and progressive *Law of the Land*, is the DUAT (*Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra/ Land Use Right*) (Mandamule, 2017, p. 48). The DUAT is a written title emitted by the Mozambican state that authorizes a national or foreign company to explore a determined solicited area (p. 48). In theory, the DUAT is only issued if the local authorities confirm that no one lives in the same solicited area (p. 48.). The local authorities are then mandated by the law to meet with the local communities in order to assess the impact of any investment near their lands. However, the process is not as transparent and democratic as prescribed by the law. These consultations are often influenced by existing alliances at all political levels, and the result tends to benefit those in power instead of the local communities (Mandamule, 2017, p. 51). Conflicts thus arise from these deficient steps in the process of conceding DUATs, making land-owning security a struggle for rural communities in Mozambique. As we saw in the previous chapter, access to land-owning in Mozambique is highly gender unequal, and even though women represent more than half of the country's rural workers, in most cases the men are the ones who own the land where the women work (p. 49).

Population growth, the increasing foreign agricultural investment oriented towards commercialization of commodities and the LSLAs (Large Scale Land Acquisitions) are the main factors behind land-owning insecurity in contemporary Mozambique (Mandamule, 2017, p. 53). 2,7 million hectares of the country's arable land are today property of foreign investors (p. 54). These extensive concessions of DUATs to foreign companies are defended by both the foreign investors and the national administrative authorities as a good solution to Mozambique's

development problems, allowing for the modernization of the communities and for poverty reduction (p. 55).

In order to fight against this current land-owning insecurity in Mozambique, the rural communities are organizing themselves, and opening dialogues with groups from the civic society and with the government. Rural mobilization is not uncommon in southern Africa. Traditionally, political mobilization in Mozambique actually has its origin in the countryside (Monjane, 2021, p. 2). One important example of the strength of rural agency in Mozambique is the case of the National Peasant Union, UNAC (União Nacional de Camponeses), and its resistance to ProSAVANA, “a capitalist, large-scale, agribusiness project” (Monjane, 2021, p.7) that intended to produce soy in the Nacala corridor, the most populated region of Mozambique, where small-farming is abundant, and where the whole country’s food security is ensured (Fórum Mulher, 2017). After a decade, the project was halted in 2020, and UNAC’s resistance was successful against all odds (Monjane, 2021, p. 7). Pro SAVANA was especially contested by the rural women, who did not agree with its production model (Fórum Mulher, 2017). As patriarchy still plays a part in access to and control of land in Mozambique, gender dynamics shape “the nature, form and texture of peasant struggles for land in southern Africa” (Monjane, 2021, p. 209). From 2007 gender became increasingly central in UNAC’s agenda, and a gender office to address women’s concerns of land-owning was created (p. 209). UNAC acknowledged “that they were operating in a “macho country, with a patriarchal system”” (p. 210).

As we have seen, the land question in Mozambique includes a history of struggles against land-owning insecurity, which has increased since the global food and financial crisis of 2008 that provoked a global rush for land in African countries. Despite the progressive Mozambican *Law of the Land* dual rights system that recognizes customary rights on land as equal to statutory ones, foreign investment conflicts with the customary rights on land. Elites and the political powers collude with foreign investors which causes local consultations with community leaders to be unfair, not accounting for the rural communities' concerns. Alongside with the land-owning insecurity that rises with unfair DUATs, there is also the concern of the gender inequalities in land-owning. Thus struggles arise from both the uncaring emission of DUATs and the patriarchal characteristics of land-owning in Mozambique.

4. Theory/ Methods

In this chapter I present the theoretical framework that informs my work, and how it also inspired the method of working throughout the thesis. In the next chapter (5) I will explain specifically how I put these knowledges into operation. As mentioned earlier, Ndlovu-Gatsheni's concepts 'cognitive empire', 'cognitive (in)justice' and 'epistemic freedom', are pivotal to my theoretical approach (2020). These concepts will be unpacked in the next section (4.1). The concept of the 'death project' that Suárez-Krabbe (2015) develops drawing upon Indigenous knowledges in Latin America and how it allowed me to go further into southern theories and perspectives will be presented in section 4.2. Nigerian scholar Oyeronke Oyewumi's (1997) critique of western understandings of gender as presented in section 4.3 will contribute to the analysis of the gender dimension of the land question in Mozambique, and finally, American scholars Jodi Melamed (2015) and Selma James' (1975) critiques of western marxism will be helpful in explaining the different material implications and dimensions in being a rural woman, worker of the land in Mozambique (4.4).

4.1. The Cognitive Empire and the need for Epistemic Freedom

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), there is a need to recognize the primacy of epistemology over ontology, meaning that the purview we take upon understanding and interacting in reality shapes what is considered real and important to that reality. Since the empire is European and North-American centered during the last 500+ years (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 885), then the knowledge and the science was always built in favor of this empire, privileging its epistemologies, and spreading them across the world. Epistemology was thus a tool used by the colonizers, in order to build a model of the world that would resemble their own, being this database of dominant knowledge currently still stored in universities, libraries and museums predominantly in the global north (p. 884),

In order to move away from this assembled knowledge one needs to follow the advice written between the lines of Ndlovu-Gatsheni's article (2020). As mentioned in the introduction, (chapter 1), he presents important topics discussed by African scholars in a very intuitive table summarizing African intellectual production (see figure 1). This table allows anyone not familiar with these topics to explore them, and to be introduced to authors that for instance write on the question of African development according to perspectives not much explored in global north

universities. It was through this table (see figure 1) that I understood the importance of the land question (and its gendered dimension), in relation with questions of African development and the African nation-state. Then the impact of this article, as my database of theoretical knowledge, contributed to naming this section as Theory/Methods, due to the closeness between Methods, Analysis and Theoretical Framework that occurred during this whole process of discovering and learning while writing.

In order to understand Ndlovu-Gatsheni's conceptualizations of the cognitive empire, cognitive (in)justice and epistemological freedom, it is important to understand how coloniality (Quijano, 2000), meaning the system of domination imposed by the European empires and later reproduced by the the modern state still has an impact today, being "the mind" thus also subjected to domination. Coloniality of power, and modernity, are the basis through which the global and Eurocentric capitalist power still operates, and is able to maintain its domination and exploitative sphere of influence. Thus, it is important to be aware of the influence of coloniality, and to depart from this cognitive empire, meaning the empire of the mind, by pushing for an epistemological shift that will allow for cognitive justice. Such cognitive justice entails recognizing different epistemologies than the ones imposed by the colonizer. The crimes of the cognitive empire can be epistemicides (elimination of endogenous knowledges), linguicides (elimination of endogenous languages), culturecides (elimination of endogenous cultures) and finally alienation, meaning the full detachment of reality, that can happen to Indigenous populations subjected to the previously mentioned cognitive injustices, when not understanding the unknown reality now imposed on them by the dominant knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 886). To amplify the knowledges that managed to survive these epistemicides, is to work against the cognitive empire, and to experiment epistemic freedom. When presenting the Mozambican rural women's knowledges on the land question, I thus intend to shift the epistemological perspective, presenting endogenous knowledges that subsist despite the european-american-centric empire.

As explained in the introduction, I wanted to explore the case of *Portucel Moçambique*, as an example of a project of International development that only aggravated the living conditions of the populations of Manica, stole their land and rivers, while masquerading as a green initiative of reforestation. However, to think of Africa as a site to hunt raw data, to further process it in Europe is to contribute to cognitive injustice. And that was the dilemma I felt when beginning this thesis, however without the theory to back my feelings yet. Why not then find out what African scholars think about these International Development projects in Africa? This question later morphed into: what would the populations actually make of these struggles, and how could they inform the current African body of knowledge on the question? If mainstream knowledge

was not successful in solving structural societal issues such as sexism, racism, classism, and in stopping land exploitation before it was too late, it seems only logical to study and build upon epistemological perspectives that could create new results and solutions, rather than once again explore the same knowledges which do not seem to produce any changes. One of the foundations of decolonisation is then “the assertion of epistemic freedom” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 887), since working with theories produced outside of the imperial realm could indeed be the key to solve the inequalities caused and needed by the global capitalist extractivist system.

4.2. The Death Project

In her book “Race, Rights and Rebels” (2015), Suárez-Krabbe engages in a critical analysis of human rights and development from southern perspectives, and introduces the concept of the Death Project, used by Indigenous peoples in Colombia. The death project includes the violence intrinsic to coloniality, thus relating to Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2019) as “the power and capacity to dispose of life” (Suárez-Krabbe, 2015, p. 17), whilst also including the national and international legal dimensions of such a system. The codification of land, for instance, would be part of the death project, since this power of life and death is not only exercised beyond the law, but also implemented despite the law. As it will be further explored in the analysis (7), the western framework of land use is reproduced in Mozambique, and with it also its racist, patriarchal, and exploitative practices, and consequently their deathly consequences.

According to Suárez-Krabbe, Mbembe’s necropolitics additionally does not account for the importance of spirituality and communion with earth, and its pasts and futures, that violence, death and exploitation entail. In other words, contrary to the death project, Mbembe’s concept does not consider the epistemological dimensions of the global colonial system. In the analysis, I explore these dimensions of death in connection with the Mozambican rural women’s knowledges. When Mbembe thinks of the violence behind coloniality as a power that dictates the ones who live and the ones who die, the intergenerational consequences of these deaths should also be included in the violence of domination. The concept of the death project allows understanding how domination and violation of space can dictate the death for the Mozambican rural women, but also the death of their ancestors connected to the land and the death of these

women's connection with their children. The dominant power thus dictates who lives and who dies, in the present, past and future.

According to Suárez-Krabbe (2015), in order to work against the death project one needs to also work against the “globalized institutions for the implementation of the death project” (p. 20), such as development. Development projects, including green development projects, tend to aggravate the “destruction of the Mother world” (p. 20), further contributing to the death project since they are “linked to the Eurocentric secular rationality” (p. 20). Considering critical thinking from the global south is then vital in order to build knowledge that can work against this dominant framework (p. 20). The concept of the death project resonates with many other theories and perspectives from the global south, and as we will see in the analysis, also with the Mozambican rural women’s perspectives.

My understanding of the concept is as much informed by the Mozambican women’s articulation and continued use of the word ‘death’ as something imposed structurally. They mention past death when speaking about their mother’s relationship with land, and how they connect with the land remembering this exact relationship; present death when thinking about neoliberal agricultural business that pushes them out of their land (meaning home, life and the self, as explored in the thickening analysis); and future death when thinking about motherhood and their children. This past, present and future death is what informs my understanding of the death project, and what makes it relevant in connection with the Mozambican rural women’s articulation of the practices of dominant power. Drawing upon Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), one can say that the conquest of place implies the conquest of ancestral bonds, which again implies culturicides. The imposition of monocultures and extractivist views of the land implies epistemicides. And all of these productions of death in the end cause alienation, and the colonization of the mind. The death project not only means symbolic death. It also entails physical violence that should not be covered up. When Mozambican rural women are pushed from their land they often see themselves in extremely vulnerable positions, without work, home or food, and thus it is important to enhance how actual genocide is also a characteristic of the death project.

4.3. The modern-colonial gender system

In order to tackle the dimension of gender regarding the Mozambican land question, I used African feminist perspectives, such as the one from Oyewumi (1997), that proves useful in order to approach an understanding of gender that accepts the weight of coloniality and of the death project, but that also takes African epistemologies into account, thus going beyond the axis of the coloniality of power defined by Quijano (Lugones, 2007). I intend to continue to work within a frame that works against the colonial empire when exploring gender dynamics in Mozambique, in regard to the land question.

In “The Invention of Women” (1997), Oyewumi makes a crucial critique of western understandings of gender and sex as separate things, where gender is socially constructed and sex is biological. Her argument, and critique, is that if “gender is socially constructed then it cannot behave in the same manner across time and space” (1997, p. 10). Thus, sex/gender disputes can not be understood only through the effect of coloniality of power (the reproduction of the dominating power in different endeavors), since the modern/colonial gender system is a social construction, a creation. For this reason, there is a need to examine the various sites where gender was constructed, acknowledging how variously located actors were part of this construction (Oyeumi, 1997, p. 10). Assuming then that gender is socially constructed, and continuing to follow Oyeumi’s work, we must acknowledge that there was a specific time before the construction of gender, and that such constructions happened in different cultural and architectural sites (p. 10), and therefore there has also been a time where gender was not constructed. In other words, if gender is socially constructed, then gender cannot be an always-existing and universal form of social categorization. This also means that patriarchy might not be valid as a transcultural category, and assuming so when thinking about gender struggles produces an invalid portrayal of other gender dynamics (Lugones, 2007, p. 196). An example unpacked by Oyéronké Oyewùní (1997) is the construction of gender in Yoruba society, where, she argues, there was no gender system in place “prior to the colonization by the West” (p. 31). In fact, Yoruba was forced into “the Western pattern of body-reasoning” (p.30), among others through the mistranslation of the Yoruba categories “*obinrin* and *okunrin* as ‘female/woman’ and ‘male/man,’ respectively” (p. 32) despite these categories not being “binarily opposed nor hierarchical” (p. 33). The imposition of the European category of “women”, subordinated to men and with no access to leadership roles, was imposed during the European colonial rule in Africa, through the patriarchal colonial state (Lugones, 2007, p. 197). Colonization introduced the concept of state as “male-gender power”, being unthinkable “for the

colonial government to recognize female leaders among the peoples they colonized, such as the Yorùbá” (Oyewùní, 1997, pp. 123-125 cited in Lugones, 2007, p. 197). It is then important to take into account the difference between the challenges feminism faces in the west, that struggles against “the gender-saturated category of “women” (towards) to the fullness of an unsexed humanity” (Oyeumi, 1997, p. 156 cited in Lugones, 2007, p. 198), and those of Yorùbá, where “the notion of an ““unsexed humanity” is neither a dream to aspire to nor a memory to be realized” (Oyeumi, 1997, p. 156 cited in Lugones, 2007, p. 198).

Understanding gender in pre colonial societies is then a necessity in order to further understand the modern/colonial gender system, since, when looking through an eurocentric and capitalist lens to the gender dynamics imposed in the colony, the own definition and concept of gender is at the outset already narrowed accordingly to the European category of “women”. Other than that, there was no reproduction of this category of the “white bourgeois women” in the colony neither, since colonized females were always seen as belonging to an inferior category, even though having a superior role in pre colonial societies than the western women in their (Lugones, 2007, p .206). Lugones conceptualizes these differences as the light and the dark side of the construction of the colonial/modern gender system (p. 202). The light side orders the lives of “white bourgeois men and women” (p. 206) and defines the “modern/ colonial meaning of men and women”. White bourgeois women reproduce “the class and the colonial and racial standing of bourgeois, white men” (p. 206), at the same time they were banned from leadership roles, from the production of knowledge and from control over the means of production. The dark side of the gender system “was and is thoroughly violent” (p. 206), constructed along racial lines. As seen in the gender analysis and conceptualization done by Oyewùní, the colonial/modern gender system has to be seen not as a reproduction of the gender conceptualization in Europe, but through the influence of the colonial and patriarchal state into relations “between capital and labor, and the construction of knowledge” (p .206).

Assuming that gender is a social construction, then it was also constructed in Mozambique. To see how gender was constructed in Mozambique is, under these circumstances, the most important question to analyze, according to feminists such as Oyewumi. That is exactly why in the analysis I approach an understanding of what Mozambican womanhood entails, asking “who are you?”, arguing that it is connected to land, motherhood and spirituality (7.1).

4.4. Racial capitalism

The material dimension of gender land inequalities, in Mozambique, is also explored in this thesis, since the influence of western value chains has produced an unequal wage system where the Mozambican women are particularly vulnerable. Western Marxism fails in fully acknowledging the struggles of women, Indigenous peoples, solidarity economies, and even the struggles of environmentalist and ecologist movements (Monjane, 2020, p. 51). This highlights the need to analyze the material dimensions of the land question through a lens of critique to dominant marxist thinking, in order to account for the struggles of the Mozambican rural women against a sexist, capitalist society that moves around the logic of accumulation.

In the racial capitalist world, wages assume a significant role as the hierarchical expression of the inequalities (Melamed, 2015). Melamed engages Marx's chapter on primitive accumulation that involves the violence of dispossession and disconnection from the land in her analysis of how unwaged laborers were treated as criminals and vagabonds in England during the "period of transition from feudalism to capitalism" (p. 80). Vagabonds were almost not seen as humans since they were workless, and thus disqualified "as relational beings in the present because the capital relation that now dominantly binds them to the social also separates them out as useless, immoral, and disposable" (p. 81). According to Melamed, the vagabond thus emerged as "a racialized status whose members can be blamed for their own past expropriability and present precarity" (p. 81). Wageless people were different and criminal in the capitalist system, and marked in their bodies as such, "with the letter "S" for slave" (p. 81).

According to Selma James (1975), wage creates hierarchies amongst the working class, and capital is ruled and reproduced through this same wage, which also is the foundation of the capitalist society. Non-waged laborers are traditionally seen as vagabonds, or as outsiders, not being a part of a society with its foundations on wages; exploitation is also easier to hide when there is a lack of wage. In a society hierarchized through wage, the least powerful are the unwaged, such as children and pensionists, or the housewives (James, 1975). As it will be further explored in the analysis, the Mozambican rural women do not work for wages, being then seen as being at the bottom of the capitalist society. It is clearly seen in the analysis of their economies, how wage is not a part of these women's routines (7.2.2). They work in the land to feed their families, their communities, and to sell their crops' surplus in order to help to pay for their children's education. Despite Mozambican rural women's labor struggles happening outside of the factory, and outside of the capitalist chain, they are the producers and the ones

who feed their husbands who spend their days at labor intensive waged jobs, such as in mining and sugar cane plantations.

Mozambican rural women's labor power is wageless, and thus seen as invisible and as existing outside of capitalism, as a sort of charity work. Their time, spent working on the land, on the house and on the children, is not acknowledged by the capital as working time, and thus is also not considered waged work. However, it is reproductive labor. As James puts it, children are sent to school to stay out of the way of the ones who do productive labor, and in order to later be "accepted as an integral part of the productive activity of the community" (1975, p.28) and housewives "service those who are daily destroyed by working for wages and who need to be daily renewed" (James 1975 cited in libcom.org). In cases where the children are not sent to school, housewives should care for these future workers to be. There is indeed an oppression of the wageless, and a hierarchy based on this scale of wages, founded upon racist and patriarchal values, that allows the economical and social exploitation of the ones seen as in the bottom of the waged hierarchy: the women, the housewives, the Blacks, the children, the workers from the Global South (James, 1975), and thus the Mozambican rural women.

5. Methodology

In this chapter I explain the whole process of knowledge operationalization, meaning how I have worked with the knowledges presented in Theory/Methods (chapter 4) and applied them into a Thickening Analysis (chapter 7). As mentioned in the first and previous chapter respectively, in order to engage with current African intellectual debates, I followed Ndlovu-Gatsheni's work (2020), read the authors that explored the land question, and explored current debates on gender land inequalities recently published in journals under CODESRIA. With more knowledge regarding African intellectual debates on the land question, it was time to think how I could build a relevant project that could inform and contribute to those African discussions. The intent to work with Mozambican rural women concepts and theories, that could inform the current African intellectual debates on the land question in Mozambique, became then my main interest to achieve with this project.

The new question now was how to access these knowledges. I had already emailed some NGOs that work within land politics and environmental questions in Mozambique, such as *Justiça Ambiental*, *Adecru* and *Fórum Mulher*, and got no answer, so the possibility to have an interview on the subject, with someone that has contact with the Mozambican rural women and is familiar with their knowledges seemed scarce. Also, even with the possibility of an interview, could these interviews be used as a source? And what kind of analysis could result from that? At this point I was really confused. The literature review process seemed to have moved me very far from the purpose of this thesis, and I couldn't seem to find a relevant Research Question to answer, and a feasible manner to work with the Mozambican rural knowledges. In the following supervision session (October 2022), I talked about this sense of losing myself in all the new knowledge I had learnt in the past month, and how I needed help in finding a way to grab it and work with it, since I was now losing overview, and felt like in the middle of a wool ball of African epistemologies. During the session, Julia and I agreed that I needed to think about the analysis and to take a distance from theories. When we were discussing the materials that I had already researched, I showed her the website of *Fórum Mulher*, and its section on life stories, that I thought could be useful in this regard. These first-hand accounts were important, and as I proceeded exploring the website, I found that it contained other relevant materials that would allow me to work with the Mozambican rural women's knowledges in a thorough way. The *Fórum Mulher* (2018) report, "DIREITOS DAS MULHERES À TERRA NO CONTEXTO DA PLURALIDADE DE DIREITOS: O CASO DE MOÇAMBIQUE", featured a chapter exploring testimonies of *camponesas* from different regions of Mozambique, and *Fórum Mulher* webpage

had a library with different materials other than the life stories, such as “videos”, where, once again, multiple stories by *camponesas* across Mozambique were featured. My supervisor and I agreed that I should work with a methodology that allowed me to filter this material according to issues pertaining to land, and allow me to go into depth with the epistemological dimensions of the Mozambican rural women’s struggles around the land question in Mozambique. Julia suggested that I look into the methodology of stockstories and counterstories used in Critical Race Theory (CRT), and suggested that I first look into Marta Padovan-Özdemir and Trine Øland’s work with this method in their book on “Racism in Danish Welfare Work with Refugees” (2022). In the following, I explain the operational aspect of working with stockstories and counterstories adapted from that book, with the particularity that instead of using this methodology to extract dominant knowledges, as the authors did, I use it to extract the counterstory on Motherhood and Land, the first analytical step of this thesis.

In order to organize the material in a way that would allow me to get familiar with these knowledges, and to build a montage that shed a new light on the theme I wanted to explore (Padovan-Özdemir & Øland, 2022, p. 68), it was necessary to engage in the backstage work of processing the entire source material, and to sort it according to the most important themes raised by the Mozambican rural women. Every Mozambican rural woman’s testimony found on the Fórum da Mulher website, was registered as a table overview in an excel (see annex 1: building the counterstory), and organized by Title/Date, Author/Source, Genre, Brief Summary, Recurrent Words or Themes, and Problem Definition & Solutions. In this way, and following Padovan-Özdemir & Øland (2022), it was possible to have a deepened understanding of the material, and to look at it as “a cabinet of curiosities” (p. 69), allowing to easily move from a theme to another, cropping and pasting together a montage that later would be developed into the counterstory on Motherhood and Land. The building of this excel table was then the first step of the analysis, since it presented the material in a way that granted the recognition of the cross-cutting themes of Motherhood, Care and Land as essential for the Mozambican land question, according to the Mozambican rural women knowledges.

After processing the source materials, and to have found out the importance of land, motherhood, and care, clearly seen in the “recurrent words or themes” column (see annex 1), it was time to think about building a counterstory that would privilege these themes, not always seen as determinant for the African land question. Unlike Padovan-Özdemir & Øland, I did not work with testimonies told by majority members, but like them, I used storytelling to show “that what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel” (Delgado, 1989 cited in Padovan-Özdemir & Øland, 2022, p. 70). By changing power dynamics, assuming that the Mozambican rural women are seen by the Mother as the ones who should be heard regarding

the land question in Mozambique, and even by showing these women's similarities with the Mother herself, the goddess of goddesses and creator of the universe, a shift regarding who is in charge, and who is closer to the gods is achieved, making us question who then "owns and operates the tools of reality production" (Aguirre 2000, 321 cited in Padovan-Özdemir & Øland 2022, 71). Thus my composition of the counterstory is informed by my reading of the source material, where it was possible to observe how the minority group (Mozambican rural women), despite having deep knowledges about the land, still were subjected to the power and actions of the men who make the law, the majority group. The counterstory then also intends to play with the dynamics of "superordination and subordination", to transmit the good vs bad feeling, allowing the reader to have their own interpretation.

Relying on "CRT's tradition of "unapologetic use of creativity" (Aguirre 2000, 321 cited in Padovan-Özdemir & Øland 2022, 70), I was first inspired by readings, mentioned on the literature review, such as the article of Laura Nhaueleque (2021), explaining the belief system of the *Amakhuwa* peoples from northern Mozambique and the article of Nigerian scholar Jacinta Nwaka (2020) exploring belief systems in Africa and the rise of occultism in youth in Nigeria. As Nwaka puts it, in African belief systems there is usually the presence of a powerful god, and the existence of deities, who connect the people to the gods. This inspired me in terms of the structure of the counterstory. I was sure I wanted to explore the relationship between the Mother and her deities, and their connection with the Mozambican rural women, but still I did not have the right scenery to write about it. While I was in the Copenhagen metro thinking about how to figure out a setting that would allow me to explore the connections between these 3 elements, I imagined how cool it would be to actually have a meeting, as a kind of a divine council, where the Mozambican rural women could simply talk to the Mother through her deities, and just explain to Her their solutions to the gender land inequalities in Mozambique. The creation of the deities as Land, River and Bee was obvious, since it came directly from the Mozambican rural women's description of who they were: "the *camponesas*, the producers, the informal sales women, the fishers, the ceramists, the girls, the paralegals and the beekeepers" (FOMMUR, 2019). But the urgency of land tenure issues for rural women should also get to the reader and not be lost in the story, so the solution was for the goddess/Mother to also hint how the land question in Mozambique is a priority to Her. The Counterstory on Motherhood and Land is then, obviously, a fictionalization, but "based on analytical findings developed through close readings of the empirical material (Staunæs and Søndergaard 2006, 74 cited in Padovan-Özdemir & Øland 2022, 71), composed by "empirical excerpts and references from the source material" (Padovan-Özdemir & Øland, 2022, p. 72), arranged as a new fictional narrative

that invites the reader to decide what is a representation of reality, what he believes to be the unspoken truth, and what constitutes fiction (p. 72).

This counterstory is later thickened in the Analysis chapter: “Who are you?”, where the reader has the possibility to meet the Mozambican rural women again, after presentations were made in the Counterstory (6), with new empirical information, and the concepts and ideas presented in the Theory/Methods chapter (4). The Thickening Analysis (7) will thus further deepen and nuance the knowledges that the reader got familiar with in the Counterstory on Motherhood and Land .

6. Counterstory

*"Mães, mulheres. Invisíveis mas presentes.
Sopro de silêncio que dá a luz ao mundo.
Estrelas brilhando no céu, ofuscadas por nuvens malditas.
Almas sofrendo na sombra do céu. O baú lacrado,
escondido neste velho coração
hoje se abriu um pouco para revelar
o canto das gerações. Mulheres de ontem,
de hoje e de amanhã, cantando a mesma sinfonia,
sem esperança de mudanças¹"*

Paula Chiziane in "Niketche: uma história de poligamia"

"A woman is earth. If you don't sow her, or water her, she will produce nothing."

Zambezian proverb

6.1. The Divine Council Meeting

Chairs are already positioned in a semicircle waiting for the women.

Mother still hasn't heard a word from her deities today and was starting to get anxious. She became less and less patient with age. "There is nothing to do now. I can only wait for the council's meeting time", She thought while exhaling so deep that her breath almost undressed one hundred trees at once. She laughed at the vivid portrait of Her anxiety. Mother can sometimes have a dark sense of humor. Today's meeting (and the origin of Mother's anxiety

¹ "Mothers, women. Invisible but present/ Silent breath which gives light to the world/ Stars shining in the sky, overshadowed by damned clouds/ Souls suffering in the shadow of the sky. Sealed chest/ Hidden in this old heart/ Today opened up a little to reveal/ The chant of generations. Women from yesterday/ Today and tomorrow, singing the same symphony, / without hope for something new"

burst) was summoned by Her own deities, the River, the Land and the Bees. They summoned Her to preside over a Divine Council Meeting, so that She could listen to the Mozambican rural women land's struggles. It is indeed extremely rare, or maybe even unprecedented, for such a meeting to occur, but the deities felt, as never before, that the Planet Earth, which Mother has created, was also going through unprecedented dangers and tumults. The deities saw, in the Mozambican rural women, a way out for Planet Earth. They could recognize the women's care for the land, as if they were the Mother themselves.

6.2. The Mozambican Rural Women

Who are then these women who were able to be listened to by Mother's deities, and to arrange a meeting with a divine being such as the powerful Mother? Eight out of the nine Mozambican women who will be present in the council defined themselves as mothers and carers, when answering the question of "who are you", which made the Mother realize that she would give the same answer to this question. Maybe it would not be so hard to find common ground between the Mother of Humanity and the Mozambican rural women after all. Mother also remembers how people from the north came to Mozambique, made the land their captive, and through dominance and violence turned the men of this land into similarly violent and dominant beings. She opted to isolate Herself in the last decades since it was hard to see all the destruction, and thus Her reluctance and anxiety in presiding over this meeting.

The Divine Council Meeting finally starts. The Land, the Bees and the River arrive first in order to warn Mother of the arrival of the women. Then the nine Mozambican women, workers of the land, arrive. Mother could not help but see the proud look on the face of Her deities, as the women sat down and prepared their notes. She was surprised by how at ease her deities seemed to be, especially given the circumstances. Let's say that River, Land and Bees are not exactly the same as when She first created them... they are always grumpy, usually not very talkative, and very rarely smiling like they are today. So yes, She had to admit, She was more curious than anxious now. "The nine Mozambican women, here present today, are workers of the land", begins

Land, presenting the women to the Mother, in a ceremonial gesture, “they are, and represent, the *camponesas*, the producers, the informal sales women, the fishers, the ceramists, the girls, the paralegals and the beekeepers” (FOMMUR, 2019). “Mother, I, Bees and River thus ask for your permission for them to speak, and for us to act as their translators”. Mother nods to Land. Land shakes under Agira’s feet. Agira understands it is now her time to speak to the Mother. Agira is from Nampula-Mecuburi (Nhavoto, 2020). She presents herself to everyone in the council. She is a woman, a *camponesa*, a wife, a mother and a daughter. She explains how she is also a *produtora* (producer), feeding the community, and thus taking care of the nutritional needs of her community and not only of her family. To her, the problem that needs to be presented in council today, in order to gain Mother's support, is plain and simple: women should have rights to land. She further defends her statement by again emphasizing her role of carer, both of her community and her family. She plants, she cultivates, she provides the nutrients, she is a care-taker and she uses the land for it. She is the one who actually uses the land she lives in and, as she states to end her point: “I feed my husband, owner of the land” (Nhavoto, 2020.).

Justina, agrees with Agira's statement, she also feeds her family by working on the land (Nhavoto, 2018). She cares for the land and she cares for her family with the land’s help. She started learning how to care for it properly when she was 6 years old, through her mother’s teachings. “The land makes me be somebody” she adds, “I am a *camponesa*, born in a family of *camponeses*, I work with the land” (Nhavoto, 2018). Zumira, a rural woman from Ilha Josina in Maputo, also identifies herself with the definition of worker of the land (Nhavoto, 2020). She tells the council: “The difference between me and my husband is that he can work on service jobs, I can only work in the land. I know how to cultivate, how to herd, how to produce”. The other women present in the council made similar presentations, where the self-identification with words such as carer, worker, mother and daughter, were commonly used. The last of the nine Mozambican rural women in the council presents herself. This woman from Namina is a land-owner, the only one out of the women present at the meeting (Fórum Mulher, 2018, p.36). She is also a *camponesa*, a community activist, a wife and a mother (p. 36). She explains her unique position, further stating how the land was given to her by the community leaders. “It is in

fact a very small machamba”, as she emphasizes, “but I own it, and my husband and children live there with me” (p. 36). “My machamba is my home and my land”.

Mother was quietly listening to the women. She could not help but notice how calm Her deities were when the women spoke. River was trying its hardest to avoid any disrupting noises, with the help of the rocks who softened themselves out of respect. She felt that it was important to hear these women, in fact they were carers of the land, as they stated, and mothers like herself. Would it help them indeed, to better take care of the land, if they had rights to it? Should they all be land-owners like the last woman who spoke? How could that help both the women and the land?

6.3. Land

It was then clear to Mother how land was essential to these women. Land provided the nutrients to feed their families and communities, and was their main means of sustenance. It was part of these women’s identities. Justina asked for Land’s permission to further communicate with Mother, which was granted. She explains how she could not see any difference between her life and the life of the land. “*A terra é minha vida porque sem a terra e a água eu não estaria viva*” (Nhavoto, 2018). Land is my life because without land and water I would not be alive. Land means life to Justina. The other women seemed to agree with her statement. Mother could now understand why Land seemed so unusually happy under the women’s feet, going against the turbulent, eager and agog character that Mother got used to seeing from Land in these last years. Actually, the devotion to Land that She could see from all of these women surprised Her. She did not think it was possible for Her, creator of the universe, to have so much in common with mere humans. She had to admit, watching how busy Her deities were for centuries and centuries, trying to warn humans on how they were going against Mother’s own wishes, only for them to ignore Her and make a mock of Her, made Her distrust, and even fear, humans. But these women made Her feel hopeful again, as She had not felt in centuries.

Land meant home for these women. Land is also their workplace. Land is how they feed their families and communities. Land is *Vida*, as their mothers have taught them. Or land is life. Land is a means of connection with their ancestors and their daughters.

6.4. The Land Question in Mozambique

The gender dimension of the land question in Mozambique is the reason behind the summoning of the Divine Council Meeting. As these women have been explaining throughout it, they should have rights to the land, since they basically are the ones who know how to take care of it.

But Mother does not take the exceptional meeting summoning lightly. It is indeed an unprecedented responsibility for Her to meet with humans through her deities, and thus Her support to these women's cause, in spite being also for Her and Her deities' own benefit, should clear away any accusations of illegal favors and preferences and so on. As exhaustingly explained before, no one recalls any other situation where the deities summon a meeting, and even more unlikely to think that Mother would choose any position in the favor of a specific group of Her beings. With that in mind, the women also came prepared to the meeting. They already presented themselves and their relationship with the land, so now it was time to expose the vulnerabilities that they went through because of not having the same rights to the land as men have.

First, it is important to have more context to how and why the Mozambican rural women allied with Mother's deities to summon this meeting. FOMMUR is an organization of rural women that integrates UNAC, AMUDEIA, AMPCM, Fórum Mulher and Via Campesina among others, and through which it was possible for Mother's deities to organize this council meeting (FOMMUR, 2020). Fórum Mulher and UNAC frequently organize actions that inform the rural women of their rights to land, planting the seed of resistance in these Mozambican rural women, who answered by organizing against oppression with so much strength, that even the deities could

not resist joining their resistance. The rural Mozambican women, through all the organizations that integrate FOMMUR, held a meeting on the 5th and 6th of August of 2014, where they elaborated the “II Declaração das Mulheres Rurais Moçambicanas”, in which they addressed their demands to the Mozambican government, its partners and the civic society (FOMMUR, 2020). This document is relevant since it states in writing the rural women’s perspective on the land question in Mozambique. The positions stated by the women in this manifesto were reinforced in 2020, in a series of meetings held by FOMMUR that had the objective of collecting the political perspectives of these women on the ongoing National Land Politics Review (PLAAS, 2020). As stated in the opening statement of the “II Declaração das Mulheres Rurais Moçambicanas”, 80% of the Mozambican population live in rural areas, of which 58% are women, who find in the land their only source of sustenance (FOMMUR, 2020). As such, FOMMUR, the organization constituted by the *camponesas*, the producers, the informal sales women, the fisherwomen, the ceramists, the girls, the paralegals and the bee keepers, claims that since women are the one who “use” the land, then they should have control, including ownership, over it (FOMMUR, 2020).

Situations of vulnerability can also occur when a woman does not own her land. Justina gives her own example, stating how the *agro negócio*/agro business is forcibly separating land from its women carers, in many districts in Mozambique (Nhavoto, 2018). Justina lives in bairro Namipua in the district of Malema, where Agromoz, a company exploring soy production, is threatening the existing agricultural practices of the community of *camponesas*, by over exploring the soils instead of practicing ecological agriculture (Nhavoto, 2018). Beyond that, Agromoz also expelled many women out of the *machambas* (*plot of arable land*) they lived in, since they were not seen as owners of that land, by the state. Agromoz stole the *camponesas*' land since it is in fact the most productive land of the region, explains Justina (Nhavoto, 2018.). She continues: “nos impõem sua semente maléfica e destroem nossa cultura / they impose on us their evil seed and destroy our culture” (Nhavoto, 2018). This invasion of monocultures is seen as evil by the *camponesas*, who know what is best for the land, not being indifferent to over exploration in the dominant agricultural practices. At least one reason why women must have

more owning rights to the land is also clear to Mother: in order to secure their homes and means of sustenance when faced against the *agro negócio/ agro business*.

A second woman wants to speak, and tells the council that she had to wait 21 years in order to get a piece of land that would finally allow her to have means of sustenance (Nhavoto, 2020). Those were 21 long years of vulnerability. A third woman, from the region of Limite, intervenes to state how she also feels the same kind of vulnerability and sense of insecurity, since she only has rights to the *machamba* she lives and works in, due to being married (FOMMUR, 2018, p. 34). When her husband dies, she will be homeless and without any means of sustenance.

Mother can thus see examples of how dangerous it is for these women to not have owning rights to the land. If land means home, care and work, when a woman loses her land it is hard to actually live. Giving Mozambican women owning rights to the land they live and work in, seems to be an urgent task, and a matter of life and death more than tenure. However, Mother also has to keep in mind how the situation in Mozambique is not homogenous. A fourth woman, the land-owner from Namina, gave again her testimony on how she in fact owns her *machamba*, given to her by the community leaders (FOMMUR, 2018, p. 36). Also Corona, a woman from Nampula-Malena, further explains these discrepancies, by explaining to the council that there are regional differences regarding women's land-owning in Mozambique, for example, in North of Mozambique women can actually inherit land from their parents, as in her own case (Nhavoto, 2020). Thus, and despite the situation regarding land-owning in Mozambique not being homogenous, it is clear for Mother how every woman mentions the urgent desire for a change in the current land situation in Mozambique.

The meeting was now closer to the end, and the women had already previously decided that they should also present solutions to their problems, since they in fact know how to fix it. Thus, they came to the meeting prepared with concrete points that should be read out loud by all of them, since they had already written all these demands in the "II Declaração das Mulheres Rurais Moçambicanas". The women thought it would be worth it to repeat them loudly to the Mother. A woman starts to read: "peace is a gift, and a collective women's right, therefore, first and foremost we appeal for the maintenance of peace, and the right to communicate and to have

transformative dialogues” (FOMMUR, 2020). The second woman continues: “our well-being and autonomy are connected to our access to land, therefore we want to be included in the discussion and decision making processes on land use and natural resources exploration in Mozambique, regarding small, medium, and large scale investments.”(FOMMUR, 2020). A third woman takes the notebook: “initiatives regarding agriculture in Mozambique should valorize women's knowledge, technology, and practical experience on the subject, thus emphasizing agro ecology and the nutritional needs of the Mozambican families” (FOMMUR, 2020).

Mother was listening and registering these women's demands and solutions, since the main reason for today's meeting to occur was for the women to get Mother's support in their fight for changing the current laws of the land for women in Mozambique. Peace keeping and communication, participation in the decision making processes regarding land use and land investments, and a valorization of these women's knowledge regarding agricultural projects in Mozambique were these women's demands so far. Mother was curious to hear more and the women went on reading: “development practices should privilege solid rural infrastructure's building, and the massification of prevention technology that could alert for the occurrence of natural disasters” (FOMMUR, 2020), states the fourth woman. Another woman added right after: “as the ones who use the land the most, we want more control over this resource. Through the easier and free attainment of the DUAT (*Direito do Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra/Land Use Right*), all Mozambican women can finally have rights to property and heritage” (FOMMUR, 2020). A sixth woman proceeded with the sixth demand: “we demand more efforts in order to reduce the women's illiteracy, a problem that affects especially the rural women and girls” (FOMMUR, 2020.). Finally, the last demand is read: “we want to achieve egalitarian participation in the state's decision making organisms, on a local and national level” (FOMMUR, 2020.).

The reading of solutions and demands marked the end of the council. The women and the Mother's deities did all they could at this point, to have Mother's support on the Mozambican land question. These women would now proceed with their work, their care, their dedication and their knowledges, as any other regular day of their lives. All together, the women yelled “We will march for the rights of rural women until every single one of us is free!” (FOMMUR, 2018). The meeting is now over.

7. Thickening Analysis: Who are you?

In this thickening analysis, I unpack and develop upon the different layers and nuances regarding the gender dimension of the land question in Mozambique, on the agenda at the Divine Council Meeting between the rural women and Mother and her deities in the counterstory. The analysis is divided into two sections, according to the rural women's suggestions of topics of importance: We are Mothers and Carers (7.1) and We are Workers of the Land (7.2). Section 7.1 will explore Motherhood as seen by the lens of African epistemologies, meaning care, resistance and spiritual guidance, and will also connect the concept of motherhood with the rural women's relationship with land, as opposed to western views on the same subject. The subsection 7.1.1: We are carers of the Land, will focus specifically on this importance of land to the Mozambican rural women's identity, spirituality and security, reinforcing the connection of Motherhood and Land as the main axis of the land question in Mozambique, according to the rural women's knowledges. Section 7.2, will draw from the introduction of the "*II declaração das mulheres moçambicanas rurais*" (FOMMUR, 2020), that underlines the importance of the different kinds of women workers included in the concept of rural women. As we saw in the Counterstory, indeed the manifesto mentions the *camponesas*, the producers, the informal sales women, the fisherwomen, the ceramists, the girls, the paralegals and the bee keepers. The Mozambican rural women intended to show the different kinds of women workers who contribute to the care of the land, which reinforced the position of the *camponesas (rural women)* as a member of the female rural working class. This section starts with a contextualization regarding how land as seen by an western capitalist, patriarchal and extractivist lens was imposed in Mozambique, in opposition with the Mozambican rural women understanding and connections with land explored in section 7.1. Subsection 7.2.1 explores the position of the Mozambican rural women as workers of the land in this capitalist, patriarchal, racist global framework, and subsection 7.2.2 does a micro analysis of the Mozambican rural women's economies. On the basis of these two sections, the thickening analysis pays attention to how the Mozambican rural women's epistemologies can inform and widen our (westernized) understanding of questions relating to land, motherhood and non-waged economies. A

recurrent theme in the thickening analysis is then to understand in depth who the Mozambican rural women are, taking seriously the historical, material, political and cultural dimensions that configure the reality that they live in, and the world they struggle for.

7.1. We are Mothers and Carers

Deities are entities through which the supreme god relates to humans, as well as “accessible intermediaries that render subsidiary services” for humans to relate to the supreme god (Nwaka, 2021, p. 55). This ‘diffused monotheism’ that includes the existence of deities, is a common characteristic “of African indigenous belief systems” (p. 55). To the *Amakhua* peoples of the North of Mozambique, for example, the mountains of Namúli, where a huge *imbondeiro* or *baobá* tree is located, are sacred, since it was through the roots of this tree that a powerful divine being was able to create the whole universe (Nhauелеque, 2021, p. 74). The *imbondeiro* roots here thus work as a kind of deity to a powerful divine being. My choice of the Mother and the deities Land, River and Bee in the Counterstory of Motherhood and Land is based on the understanding of the ‘spiritual’ dimensions of Mozambican women’s rural epistemologies. Indeed, the Mother in the Counterstory is mothering humanity, with the help of her deities, the Land, the River and the Bees, who represent the Planet Earth and the connection between the supreme god and the mortals. Additionally, in the Counterstory, Motherhood is seen as a spiritual category (Oyeumi, 1997), where the Mother is the goddess, a complex spiritual being who tends to protect, but who also demands respect, reciprocity and exercises authority. Motherhood should also be seen as resistance in this context, since “articles, journals and books published by female authors concerned with matriarchal structures (...) show a direct link between the concept of motherhood and political resistance in Africa” (Magoqwana, 2020, p. 11). The Mozambican rural women defined themselves as mothers, but are also agents of change, summoning the Mother as an act of resistance, where they read their own demands on how to solve land-owning insecurities for women in rural Mozambique.

That the Counterstory is set in an unprecedented Divine Council Meeting where the rural women intend to convince the Mother of the necessity of their right to own the land is based on the understanding that for the Mother, the land cannot be owned. Indeed, the idea of ownership of the land is nonsensical from many indigenous perspectives (Suárez-Krabbe, 2015). This relates to another facet of the notion of motherhood that was clear in the women's statements during the Divine Council Meeting, where motherhood is not an individualistic concept, but a "community-oriented, all-inclusive, life-giving, life-sustaining and life-preserving" one (Oyewumi, 2015:220 cited in Magoqwana, 2020, p. 11). According to Magoqwana (2020), drawing from Shiva (2014), Motherhood can serve the purpose of "reimagin(ing) the relationship between science and nature" (p. 11), and aid us to reconnect (...) to the "'feminine principle' of nature, which was destroyed by the patriarchal, fathers of modern science" (p. 11). This is the masculinity that the Mother remembers in the counterstory, a specific western phallic, possessive, extractive, violent and exploitative male subjectivity (Lugones, 2007) that came with the peoples from the north; the man who wants to exploit and dominate the woman will reproduce the same need for dominance and mastery into the land. Following the work of Indian scholar Vandana Shiva (1988, 2014) once again, Magoqwana (2020) emphasizes that the patriarchal science which serves the man, should be fought, since it "sees women and nature as raw materials to be dominated, violated and exploited for capitalist interests" (p. 11).

Eight out of nine of the rural Mozambican women present in the Divine Council Meeting defined themselves proudly as mothers, being the ones who feed their children and families, using the land to do so. The role of "the mother" has a definition and an intensity, in most African countries, that differs from the West. *UMakhulu*, meaning the elder mother, "forms the pillar of many African communities and households" (Magoqwana, 2020, p. 8). According to Magoqwana, the concept of "Motherland or mother Africa (which simply means common motherhood)" (p. 8), is additionally tied to the African continent since there is a matriarchal basis and consciousness that prevails in the continent. This means that "seniority and headship in African social structures are not always gendered or chronological" (Magoqwana, 2020, p. 8 see also Oyewumi *The Invention of Women*). Indeed, "opulent matriarchal histories of pre-colonial Africa, imparting knowledge on how the African woman influenced armies, religious

institutions, national economies and political leadership” (Magoqwana, 2020, p. 8), have helped to build a collective memory which values the mother and motherhood as powerful and influential. Indeed, many scholars point to the fact that the erasure of the mother’s role in the African society was mainly a product of colonial and capitalist structures who saw the elder women’s body as unproductive, and obscured and eroded Africa’s matriarchal structures in place (Magoqwana, Oyewumi, others).

It is hard for me, as a western woman, to understand this concept of motherhood and of such a matriarchal society, since I am used to, as Magoqwana puts it, a “Western patriarchal social order, where women are marginalised and relegated to private spaces, with a restricted capacity to resist this encompassing patriarchal order” (2020, p. 11), especially older women. One must thus keep in mind that in a matriarchal society, the productive role of women is not limited to their body type or age, and seniority is “a system used to allocate and negotiate power” (Magoqwana, p. 8, Oyewumi 1997). Thus when listening and reading to the Mozambican rural women testimonies, it is important to understand the epistemological/spiritual dimensions of such a concept, and not merely reduce it into motherhood as understood in western societies. This also allows understanding how, in the rural women’s references to their mother’s and grandmother’s teachings, the elder *camponesas*, can be seen as a presence of the *UMakhulu* pillar mentioned above. Indeed, the *UMakhulu*, the elder women, possess and pass on the knowledge, thus being the ones who taught the ways of the land to the *camponesas* who shared their stories in the previous chapter.

There are also specific values that are allocated to a matriarchal society, and that differ greatly from the ones which are prevalent in the western patriarchal society. Mothering can be present in the ways we relate to another and as politics of care. Principles of “community orientation, life preservation, life-giving and life-preserving” (Magoqwana, 2020, p. 8) are a constant in the Mozambican rural women testimonies. These set of values, different from the ones that I have learn living all my life in the west, were the inspiration for creating a counterstory where the figure of The Mother is a divine powerful one, in order to build a reality that could mostly be seen as fantastical in the west, however being closer to the reality in today’s Mozambique. The Mother’s knowledge also comes from matriarchal values, where care is not seen as a weakness,

as I am so used to learning. In the Counterstory, Justina embodies the human resemblance to the divine, especially when stating that “terra é vida/ land is life” (Nhavoto, 2018), positioning the land as the one who rules her life within the matriarchal principle of life preserving. She does not intend to over use the land, or to kill the land, she wants to preserve it and keep giving it life in an act of reciprocity, as the land preserves her and gives her life. When she refers to the company *Agromoz*, and the way they use the land, she uses the word *maléfica*, meaning evil or the most evil, as something that is opposed to life and care, and to her principles of communion and life-preserving. Resonating with eco-feminism, Justina is a carer who does not intend to dominate the land but to work together with it, in harmony; it is a symbiotic relationship. In the Counterstory, this relationship is represented in Land’s calm behavior under the women’s feet – a behavior that astonishes the Mother who has seen the last several centuries’ suffering of Land under patriarchal violence .

7.1.1. We are the Carers of the Land

Land grabs have a huge impact on gender poverty, and thus the feminist necessity to build futures without land grabs and exploitative over-extractionist models. Lately, and influenced by the West’s needs of alternative sources of clean energy, or *cash crops* to export, such as soy and eucalyptus, the Large Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLAs henceforth) or land grabs, became even more frequent, disrupting even further the already unfair power balance in rural African regions, between “those seeking to acquire land and the current landholders” (Fonjong, 2016, p. 53). As suggested in the previous section, the relationship between the Mozambican rural women and the land they live in, and take care of, is characterized by a politics of care. If their land is taken away from them, through land grabs, as in the case Justina addressed referring to *Agromoz* (see chapter 6), they are no longer rural women, and no longer carers of the land. They lose their home, their means of sustenance and this also impacts their identity, and contributes to feelings of complete alienation, which happen when Indigenous populations do not recognize their new reality imposed by dominant knowledges (see Ndolovu-Gatsheni section 4.1). The problem of land grabs is thus included in this section because it poses a real threat to women in rural Mozambique, and constitutes an important element in their struggle for land-owning

rights. One needs to look at the question of land eviction keeping in mind the knowledges of the Mozambican rural women in order to understand the impact of a land grab in these rural women's lives. As once again Justina stated, "land is life"; she even added how she didn't know who she was without the land, being her main identity (Nhavoto, 2018). When rural women are pushed out of their land in order to give space for foreign crops, a matter of life and death is discussed, and not of land tenure (see section 4.2). These women lose their home, their food, their means of sustenance and sometimes their family, being in situations of extreme vulnerability. In consequence, I address the problem of land grabs within this frame of life and death, a frame that resonates with Mbembe's necropolitics and Suárez-Krabbe's 'death project'. I also explore the land grabs through a lens of gender discrimination, which requires further explanation, or thickening, on the material dimension of the Mozambican land question, and why the proportionally heavier impact that LSLAs have on rural women than it does on rural men, explored in section 7.2: We are Workers of the Land.

In his study of LSLAs impact on gender in West Africa, Fonjong (2016) gives the example of a LSLA that happened in Mozambique: the sale of 30 000 ha of land to a British company, in order to plant sugar to later be used for biofuels production (p. 54). In her testimony, Justina herself tells how Agromoz is a threat in her community, Namipua (Mutuali district), taking the most productive land from the *camponesas* in order to plant a *cash crop*, in this case soy, and putting the land at risk due to monoculture practices (Nhavoto, 2018). A woman from the community of Limite, also in the Mutuali district, is affected by the same company who has bought 3000 ha in the region, but, in her community, the water grabs done by the company to maintain its soy production are the main concern, since the river is used by the women of the community to wash clothes, prepare the vegetables and prepare the baths for their families, and they have concerns that Agromoz might try to privatize the river (Fórum Mulher, 2018, p. 35). Another case concerns *Portucel Moçambique's* eucalyptus exploration in Manica. Part of a for-profit non-profit partnership for development, the project is supported by the World Bank, who financed the first 40 000 ha of the exploration, and intends to help reduce deforestation (Nunes & Vinagre, 2021).

As seen in the previously described cases, the problem of land grabs is widespread in Mozambique, and plays an important role in Mozambican land politics, since “land and water are geared towards export at the expense of local communities” (Fonjang, 2016, p. 58). These commercial values imposed on land and nature promote “the eviction of communities and women from ancestral land” (p. 58). Both customary and statutory tenure systems in Africa tend to favor men (p. 59). The Mozambican rural women’s written demands on land tenure issues, which they read out loud to Mother, show how important it is for them to make the DUATs (*Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra/ Land Use Right*) decree accessible for all women, with less bureaucracy and at an affordable price, so that every widow, single and householder women can enjoy this right, already in the constitution, but seldom put into practice (FOMMUR, 2020). The accessibility to this right is of extreme importance to the Mozambican rural women, since “37 per cent of the female rural workers in Mozambique are divorced, separated or widowed” (Fonjong, 2016, p. 62), and therefore with less financial means to go to the extreme long process of legalizing their right to own land. A woman who spoke in the Divine Council Meeting proved this point, when she stated how she had waited 21 years for the right of owning her piece of land (Nhavoto, 2020); the process is long and contributes to the aggravation of already vulnerable situations lived by the rural women. Another woman also present at the meeting, from the community of Limite, exposed how the fear of losing land is always present even when the woman has a land to live in; this woman has a constant fear of what will happen to her when her husband dies, since she only has access to land through marriage right (Fórum Mulher, 2018, p. 34).

The rapid pace of LSLAs “is outstripping the efforts to register customary land rights, and especially women’s land rights” (IFPRI 2011), and thus the sense of urgency that I tend to transmit with this analysis. Women are the most affected in LSLAs due to “constraints and systemic discrimination that women generally face in relation to their access to ownership of, and control over land, including the level of legal protection of their land rights” (Fonjong, 2016, p. 59). Despite the legal work of movements such as FOMMUR, who work hard in order to accelerate the registration of land so that women are not as vulnerable to expropriation, most

often the companies that conduct the LSLAs are faster than them, ignoring any other lens of land tenure than the legal one imposed by the state, and that therefore discriminates women.

The gender discrimination on land-owning in Africa have roots in the “legacy of widespread land acquisition during the colonial era and patriarchy” (Fonjong, 2016, p. 59), where the farming of commercial crops for export were done by men, and women would only play a supportive role. Small-scale agriculture, and consequently the agriculture practiced by women, was pushed to the margins. Justina states how the Agromoz seed is destroying *camponesas* cultures, and this is another consequence of the fast growing of land grabs (Nhavoto, 2018). As companies plant *cash crops*, such as soy, eucalyptus or sugar, less land is available to plant crops that provide nutrients for the Mozambican families, being this fact actually part of the demands made by Mozambican rural women in their manifesto; they have demanded the protection of the right to feed their families, protesting the use of land to export instead of consume. As Fonjong puts it “summarily, LSLAs take away women’s customary land rights and increases their burden” (Fonjong, 2016, p. 61), thus contributing to gender poverty and exposing rural women to violent, and even deathly, situations, due to the extreme vulnerability they are put in when their land is stolen. Again, as the Mozambican rural women have explained, land for them means home, workplace, food, and is mixed together with their identities and lives.

The new spike of LSLAs happening in Africa is seen by some authors as a new “colonial rush for Africa” (Fonjong, 2016, p. 64), with the difference of including local elites and the states. In these processes, vulnerable rural communities’ rights are not taken into account by the western actors or local elites. Minorities and women are excluded from land negotiation processes, and are often taken by surprise by land grabs, water grabs and all types of investments on their land. In Mozambique, women are the ones who use the land the most, constituting 58 % of the rural population of Mozambique, and, therefore, they also demand to have a proportional importance in the decisions regarding the land they care for; they demand more political participation in land owning processes, and a say in any small or big investment on their land (FOMMUR 2020). Women, being the most affected in the current Mozambican context of LSLAs, and also the

pillars of these rural communities, providing nutrition and care, should not only be involved in land investment deals, but playing a central role in them (Fonjong, 2016, p. 64).

7.2. We are the Workers of the Land

In the first section of this analysis (7.1), a decision was made when including the impact of LSLAs in gender poverty, as an identity issue to the Mozambican rural woman. Since land is not exclusively seen as property by these women, it would not be accurate to mention dispossession of land only in regards to the impact on their work, when, after all, land **is** the Mozambican rural women's life. However, in this section, land (and land grabs) will be looked upon with a different lens, that will prioritize capitalist relations involving land, and the interconnection of capital, race and gender.

The whole idea of land as valuable, and as property, was one imposed by the West in African states during colonial times, and that continued to be followed through neoliberal economic reforms in post-colonial Africa, which mostly have neglected social justice and equity issues in favor of economic growth and exportation (Moyo, 2008, p. 1). The question of the land in Africa thus mirrors the incomplete decolonization processes entangled with the existence of a global capitalist development model. "Pressures for the growing marketisation of the land reflect the external interests in access to land and natural resources" (p. 2), and the dominance of an extractivist model in the African state's economy; marketisation of land constitutes also one of the main engines for the increasing existence of internal class struggles over the primitive accumulation by an African capitalist class (p. 2). The over escalating unequal access to land in African states thus represents the real land question in both rural and urban Africa (Moyo, 2008).

Land grabs and dispossessions should be seen as characteristics of these primitive accumulation processes, “where capital is accrued through transparently violent means” (Melamed, 2015, p. 76), as seen in the previous section (7.1), where several examples of violent displacement of communities, in order to build space for *cash crops*, are currently happening in Mozambique. Land grabs are still part of both the Mozambican rural women's lives, and the primitive accumulation processes of capital, meaning that relationships of dominance and violence constitute basis to act under capitalism, since capital can only accumulate by “producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups—capitalists with the means of production/workers without the means of subsistence, creditors/debtors, conquerors of land made property/the dispossessed and removed” (Melamed, 2015, p. 77).

Capitalism is indeed necessarily a racial capitalism, since relationships of violence, domination, subordination and inequality are the basis imposed by the ones who accumulate the capital. The same dynamics of domination and subordination are also characteristics of the white man's relationship with land, since they constitute merely reproductions of capitalist hierarchical relations present among human groups. When accumulation constitutes the one and only goal, the losses and dispossessions that capital accumulation causes are just seen by the capitalist as necessary and required to the same accumulation (Melamed, 2015, p. 77). Thus racial capitalism includes all “the central features of white supremacist capitalist development, including slavery, colonialism, genocide, incarceration regimes, migrant exploitation, and contemporary racial warfare” (p. 77), but also any kind of inclusion that intends to merely “fit the needs of reigning state-capital orders”, even if implying the devaluation of a determined form of humanity. Narratives of western development based on economic liberalism and modernity can constitute one example of this kind of imposed inclusion to the African states. Neoliberal land reforms were embraced by the African bourgeoisie in the decades of 1980/1990, following narratives of western economic liberalism and modernity, and failed to achieve an effective agrarian transition that would benefit the African state's development (Moyo, 2008, p. 7). The externally imposed structural adjustment programs, on the contrary, have only influenced land reforms policy “towards elitist market agendas and agrarian capitalist development” (p. 8), leading to class based struggles throughout the continent. The state has also been complicit in this maintenance of social dominant relations of production, that disadvantage workers and

peasants (p. 9). In Portuguese-speaking Africa, and especially in Mozambique, the agrarian transition has also followed the previously described line.

In addition to the historical contextualization presented in chapter 3, it is important to note that the “*extroverted*”, or “*extravertido*” (Amin, 1976) economic model of Mozambique, characterized by exportation of commodities, lasted until the 1960s, and was mainly controlled by the *Companhias*, who dominated land exploration in the country since colonial times (Bussotti, 2020, p. 41). Anti colonial leaders of Portuguese-speaking Africa, such as Amílcar Cabral, thus prioritized the agrarian question, and saw the fight against this “*extravertido*” model of agriculture as integral to African development (p. 41). Cabral believed that monocultures always implied the over exploitation of the land, and of the indigenous communities, through deteriorating work conditions, being the rural question the real African development question (p. 41). However, Cabral’s ideas regarding development were an exception amongst Portuguese-speaking African leaders. In Mozambique, the elite that contributed to the decolonization struggle had an urban influence, working mostly outside of the territory that they intended to liberate, and studying in universities in the global north (p. 41). This lack of knowledge regarding their own country’s rural reality, led the leaders to adopt inappropriate agrarian models that did not fit the national situation of the countries they intended to liberate. For instance, Eduardo Mondlane, one of these freedom fighters leaders’ and founder of FRELIMO (the political party that liberated Mozambique from Portuguese rule), studied anthropology and sociology in Ohio and thus was inspired by the liberal principles of the US-American society, wanting to impose principles of individualism, equality and private property, in a society that had yet to perform a healthy agrarian transition, and in which the prioritization of a market economy would proven to be harming to the rural workers in the current years of large land sale and exploitation (p. 41). Mondlane was never in a political power position in order to apply his ideologies, being murdered on the 3rd of February of 1969, now Hero’s Day in Mozambique (Posse, 2020). Samora Machel was then the first president of post-colonial Mozambique, and also a freedom fighter part of FRELIMO, but unlike Mondlane he was mostly influenced by the Soviet approach to industrialization and modernization with a focus on industrial workers, and of collectivisation of agriculture (within the same modernization beliefs), which ended up to prioritize state support for large parcels of arable land instead of support for small individual

camponeses (Bussotti, 2020, p. 42). Even though the socialist ideology was the one applied regarding land-owning in post-colonial Mozambique, and not a liberal one as defended by Mondlane, what is relevant to transmit in this description of two of the most important Mozambican freedom fighters, is how far they were from their own national rural reality, which ended up contributing to a failed agricultural transition, inadequate to the Mozambican rural context.

Still in socialist Mozambique, in 1979, the rural sector was codified in *Lei da Terra*, a law that constitutes today's legal basis for the ambiguity that characterizes all of Mozambique's agrarian policies, as it will be further explained (Bussotti, 2020, p. 44). Failed agrarian policies and the almost two decades of civil war, almost destroyed the Mozambican rural world, causing the food production in the country to drop by two thirds in the first fifteen years of Mozambican independence (p. 44). In 1992, with the signing of the Roma treaties, Mozambican agrarian policies became more and more shaped by external agents such as the IMF, the World Bank and the western countries. State companies were privatized, and then once again the extractivist economy was privileged, which only aggravated the already hard living conditions of the *camponeses* (p. 45). With the election of Guebuza in 2004, known for being the first president in post-colonial Mozambique ruling with a non-Marxist political programme, the recent "*rush for land*" acquired new proportions, leading to Mozambique being the fifth country in the world with the largest amount of land on the hands of foreign investors: 2,2 million ha (Wise, 2015 cited in Bussotti, 2020, p. 49). Guebuza's nickname is "*Guebusiness*" due to him being one of the wealthiest individuals of Mozambique (Nhachote, 2012). Guebuza consolidated the marketization of the land intent, and the neo-liberal ideology's influence on Mozambican government's agrarian policies, which no longer had an ambiguous basis, but, instead, it was clear the Mozambican state's interest in changing Mozambique's land-owning panorama, without much concern over the rural indigenous communities. To sum it up, *Lei da Terra* of 1979 coded an ambiguity in Mozambique regarding the government's priority on agrarian politics, is it familiar farming or export crops? (Bussotti, 2020, p. 44). Despite not being clear in the law, the government seems to have invested much more (90% of total agricultural investment) on state owned agriculture (large crops) than in *camponeses'* land (p. 44). The government's model of

claiming to incentivize small-farming at the same time that opts for LSLAs investments' simply "does not work" (Smart & Hanlon, 2014, p. 1).

The case of *Portucel Moçambique* presented in the Introduction (chapter 1) and also briefly mentioned in section 7.1 is an example of the impact of Mozambique's agrarian politics, and their extractivist orientation, on rural populations. The imposed dispossession of rural populations in order to produce and export eucalyptus to Europe, mimics a colonial relation between a Portuguese company and the rural populations of Manica. This is clearly reflected in Portucel Mocambique's statement of their role as one that seeks to help the "desgraçadinhos" (meaning little miserable) in exploring their land (Nunes & Vinagre, 2021). Such neo-colonial narratives are linked to the ideology of neoliberalism, and are employed as justifications for such development projects. The globalist position of the subject of international development, that obeys to the "logic and temporality of the death project" (Suárez-Krabbe, 2015, p. 34), allows for for-profit/non-profit relationships to occur, meaning that private companies receive monetary help from international institutions in order to implement development projects. Operating under a racial capitalism frame, such development projects reproduce relationships of exploitation and dominance instead of contesting them (Marques, 2021, p. 10), and are thus insufficient in achieving real transformation or liberation. Also, looking at the global value chain in this case, Mozambique is exporting the commodities (wood from eucalyptus) to Portugal, so that it becomes an end product (paper) to later be exported at much higher prices, thus a typical extractivist economical model occurs (Marques, 2021, p. 9.).

The new African proletariat, composed by all "the social groups in rural areas who bear the brunt of the negative impacts of extractive industries, namely miners, waged workers, rural landless workers, indigenous communities, and peasant farmer communities" (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2013; Hogenboom, 2012 cited in Randriamaro, 2018, p. 7) are the ones most affected by the land grabs, since, when dispossessed of their land, these communities lose their whole value chain economies and food sovereignty, meaning their whole livelihoods. Failures of both state-led and market-led redistributive land reforms, impact rural women the most, since they usually are the ones most affected by the land grabs, out of all the groups that constitute the new African proletariat, being gender inequality another defining characteristic of racial capitalism,

where “women’s unpaid labor has been crucial to both the primitive and neoliberal accumulation strategies” (Randriamaro, 2018, p. 7). This specific set of capitalist caused inequalities and violence, and the failures to contest it, had inspired the resurgence of varied social movements pressing for land reclamation starring rural women; with local and national differences “these movements share common grievances arising from unresolved land questions (agrarian questions more broadly), common location in the development dialogue about the rural poor, and are subject to welfarist ‘rural development’ programmes which have not led to significant change of their material life’s” (Moyo, 2001 cited in Moyo, 2008, p. 11). The rural Mozambican women, organized through national movements such as FOMMUR and Fórum Mulher, intend to resist and fight for land rights, ensuring their own voice in discussions regarding land investments.

7.2.1. Unpaid Labor

As previously stated, during the Portuguese-colonial administration of Mozambique rural women were pushed to the margins, practicing since then small-scale agriculture mostly of subsistence (see Fonjong chapter 2). At the same time, they have been the main sustainers of community spaces, such as medicinal gardens and common cultivated fields. Rural men were in charge of “opening new lands, hunting, fishing and herding” (Feliciano 1998: 189 cited in Porsani, 2018, p. 216). The low wages and poor working conditions prevalent in colonial Mozambique, and the fear of being drafted into *chibalo*, meaning a kind of forced labor, “led to the invigoration of the male migrant flow from colonial Mozambique toward wage employment”, which structurally changed the division of labor in Mozambique, allowing men to achieve financial independence in a context where “the fulfillment of household needs was increasingly dependent on cash” (Porsani, 2018, p. 217). The division of labor in rural areas is then still defined by gender, and farming is mostly “regarded as women’s activity” (Covane 1996; World Bank 2008b cited in Porsani, 2018, p. 217). Mozambican men’s migration to South Africa in order to find wage employment in the mines or sugar cane plantations further reinforced this gendered labor division, built upon a hierarchy of wage vs wageless.

The men's monopoly of migration, and consequently of sources of cash, aggravated female dependency on men, creating a social differentiation with an emphasis on gender within communities (Porsani, 2018, p. 217). The same kind of predominantly male migration happened during the civil war after Mozambique's independence, since women would mostly stay in the rural areas of Mozambique (p. 217). Gender stereotypes regarding women's engagement in wage employment are changing, albeit wage labor continues being a predominant male activity. As Zumira, a rural woman from Ilha Josina in Maputo, explained in the Divine Council Meeting, she only knows how to work in the land, not like her husband who is able to work on "service jobs" (Nhavoto, 2020), meaning waged jobs. These structural differences of the working force in rural areas of Mozambique are still prevalent due to the lack of secure job alternatives for women, allied to the prevalent belief that waged jobs are not meant for women. Gender inequalities in workforce in rural Mozambique also impacts land-owning. The debate between waged and unwaged jobs in rural Mozambique can thus be seen also as a gender debate, and it is something important to keep in mind when analyzing the land question in Mozambique. Indeed, wage does not seem to be the main engine of the Mozambican rural women's economies, as proved in the historical and structural processes addressed in this section.

Extractivism, and the economies fueled by it, have clear impacts on women's unpaid care work. First of all, unpaid care work "refers to the domestic work performed, mostly by women, to reproduce the labor power of household and community members, such as cooking, cleaning, collecting firewood and water, and looking after children and the elderly" (Randriamaro, 2018, p. 11). This labor power, performed by women, is what supports the ones who are exploited while working for wages, and what provides care for the ones who one day will do the same (James, 1975, p. 28). Extractivism can contribute to the reduction of the amount of time available to the rural women, since land grabs or water grabs can change the configuration of the women's daily lives, making them travel longer distances to an alternative water source, or even due to chronic diseases among family members resulting from polluted water sources or mining work (Randriamaro, 2018, p. 11). Also, with the increase of women's 'time poverty', the availability to find paid work becomes even harder. From within a capitalist economic lens, paid

labor is central, and indeed such understanding often underlies the idea that the solution to poverty is access to paid labor. Within this logic, the women's unpaid work takes time away from them to have a waged work, and hence become economically independent. However, feminist materialists have contested such an understanding in their theorizations about unpaid labor.

According to Marx, "the foundation of capitalist society is the wage laborer and his or her direct exploitation" (James, 1975, p. 28 cited in libcom.org). What is the place of the non wage laborer then, living in the same capitalist society? In order to redefine class to include women, feminist materialists thus include the "unwaged labour of the housewife" (James, 1975, p. 28 cited in libcom.org), since, otherwise, power labour will continue to be treated as existing only in the outskirts of capitalism, paying a personal service to it, but not being acknowledged by it. The struggle can exist outside of the factory, and still be a class struggle (James, 1975). The Mozambican rural women are unwaged workers of the land but also have struggles regarding the unequal relationships that provoke exploitation. Their position as land-owners, compared to the position of power of the land buyers (foreign companies) reflect the material division that arises between the worker and the owner of the means of production. The one with power to influence land tenure decisions, in the patriarchal, racist and capitalist global system is the one with power to influence statutory law. Thus despite the struggles of the Mozambican rural women being outside of the factory, their self definition as workers, should be enough to understand their position in the capitalist chain. The women's position as wageless in the capitalist hierarchy is unpacked by Selma James (1975). The material division between workers who work for wages, and workers who are wageless is, according to her, connected with racist, sexist, nationalist chauvinist, and generational chauvinist beliefs; a wageless rural woman from Mozambique is thus at the bottom of both the hierarchy of labor powers and scale wages. Wages are not only economical determinants but also constitute strong social differentiators, determining social power within the working class, and weakening the "power struggle between the classes" (James, 1975 cited in libcom.org). The logical solution for the inequality amongst the working class, since it is also determined by wages, would be then to demand wages for the work performed at home, by the women, allowing for the independence from the waged man. The imperative is to reduce the disparity of power within the working class, since that is where the strength of the capital resides (James, 1975).

7.2.2.Mozambican rural women economies'

The Mozambican rural women's declaration of demands to the government, partners and civic society, represent all the women who work on and with the land, being the *camponesas*, producers, informal sellers, beekeepers, ceramists, fishers, and even the paralegals who help these women to legally register their land (FOMMUR, 2020). It is possible to take a closer look and analyze the micro value chains where some of these women participate, especially through the analysis of the Report on Mozambican Women Land Rights, done by Fórum Mulher, and where there are extensive representations of individual and communal economies performed by different rural women from different Mozambican communities (Fórum Mulher, 2018); the same women who sat on the Divine Council Meeting in the Counterstory of Motherhood and Land (chapter 6). A closer analysis to the women's economies will allow to apply the previously explored concepts of power labor, waged and unwaged laborer, and knowledges of the gendered labor division in rural Mozambique.

Justina Wiriamo is a constant presence in this analysis, since she gave a very complete interview to Aida Nhavoto (2018), where she explained in detail her relationship with motherhood and land. She also explained the logistics of her rural work. Justina is a mother and a *camponesa*, from Namipua (Mutuali district) who started working on the fields with her mother when she was 6 years old. She is a housewife, and she is responsible for feeding her family. When the time for collecting the cultivated products from her *machamba* (henceforth plot of cultivate land) arrives, she splits the given production in three parcels: one that is conserved, the second one that will satisfy the family's nutritional needs and the third and last one that is destined for sale, in order to help to pay for her children's education (Nhavoto, 2018). Justina does not mention her husband, and also does not reveal if she is a widow or separated, but taking into account the Mozambican men's labor migrations, it would not be unusual for her to live alone and providing for her family; or it could also be possible that her husband is the one who sells the part of the crop destined to pay for the children's education, as will be the case for some of the other women illustrated in this section. She takes care of the land that provides the crops which

constitute the engine of the economy she participates in, being through politics of care as nutrients, or as a product to be exchanged for cash.

Taking a closer look now to the community of Limite, also in the Mutuali district, it is possible to observe economies that interconnect at a community level, giving a better comprehension of what are the value chains for the Mozambican rural women, at a village level. There are individual chains to be focused upon, and also common activities that will contribute to the village well-being, and that are done together, in order to benefit every one of the villagers. A woman from this community shares with the authors of the Report on Land in Mozambique, that she has a business together with her husband (Fórum Mulher, 2018, p. 34). Her husband is the owner of the *machamba* they both live in. In the *machamba* they produce cotton, manioc, corn and soy, and they also own a machine that peels corn. She cultivates the above-mentioned crops, and her husband sells the peeled corn in the village. She also shares how in this village, the women go together on walks to find communitary land to fetch firewood, in order to cook every night for their families, and the same happens to fetch water in the nearby river (p.34). The men also go together to find non cultivated lands where they can fetch piles to build the houses for their families, however not as frequently as the women, since the men only build houses every two years (p.34). Huntings are also performed together by the men, and medicinal herbs are cultivated by the women in a communal garden to be shared by the whole village (p.34).

Looking at two other reports from women from Limite, it is possible to see the same dynamics. They live with their husband and children in their *machambas*, where they cultivate crops, to later be sold at the village. Woman A cultivates onion, manioc and beans, and produces cooking products like oil and bouillon, and her husband sells in the village the surplus of manioc and beans and also the cooking products (Fórum Mulher, 2018, p. 35). Woman B, unlike the other women from Limite, owns her own *machamba* that she shares with her husband; it was given to her by the community leaders, and it is highlighted in the report how small this *machamba* is (p. 36). The woman has a selling spot in the village, where she sells sugar, salt cookies and rice.

Another community that makes sense to look at, is the community of Ilha Josina in Maputo, also represented in Fórum Mulher's report. There is a clear difference in this community, compared to the community of Limite, since these rural women live without her husbands, who are mostly migrant workers, thus the men do not hunt or fetch piles together, and do not sell the crops surplus at the village, being waged workers in mines or sugar cane plantations in South Africa. Zumira is a rural woman from Ilha Josina in Maputo. She's a *camponesa*, a housewife, and she feeds her family. She states how she has to work on the land, since she doesn't know how to work on service jobs like her husband does (Nhavoto, 2020). Zumira's husband works on a waged job, while she performs unpaid care work, reproducing the labor power usually done by women, being taking care of the house, cooking, feeding and also taking care of her husband who works for wages, and her children who one day will also work for wages (James, 1975). In this household Zumira's husband probably provides the only source of cash, since she did not mention the selling of her crops. Another woman from the community shares how her husband is working in the mines in South Africa; she lives alone with their children (Fórum Mulher, 2018, p. 37). Besides her husband's wages from the mines, she also produces corn, peanuts, manioc and beans in her *machamba*, and sells traditional beverages in the village. The third woman from this village also lives alone, she's a widow and her children are already married. She produces on her *machamba* corn, manioc and beans, and she also has a banana plantation, selling a part of the bananas she produces at the village, being her only source of means (p. 37).

Looking at the economies in these two villages, especially looking at Limite, it is possible to identify an economy similar to the alternative feminist economy of Gift Economy, whose main message is "We are born into a Gift Economy practiced by those who mother us, enabling us to survive. The economy of exchange, quid pro quo, separates us from each other and makes us adversarial, while gift giving and receiving creates mutuality and trust" (McFadden & Twasiima, 2018, p. 3). Gift economies allow for a clear and holistic relationship with nature, and a different kind of relationships with other women, for example while gathering firewood and water together (p. 3). This kind of economy encourages women to think about their power of giving life, through her bodies and through the land, and build connections of gifting and trust upon it.

8. Conclusions

The Counterstory on Motherhood and Land introduces Mozambican rural women epistemologies, and the land question in Mozambique according to what these women see relevant to mention in regard to it. In the Thickening Analysis of such epistemologies I explored the connections regarding motherhood and resistance/care/spirituality/land. Land, according to the Mozambican rural women epistemologies, is seen through a lens of care, sense of balance and connection to the ancestors. Land means identity, and almost constitutes a member of the rural women's families and communities, providing the means for them to be able to live. In section 7.2 I explored the material dimension of the land question, again working with Mozambican rural women knowledges. The Mozambican rural women thus see land-owning inequalities as **the** land question. They struggle to achieve the same owning rights as men.

Going back to the Literature Review (chapter 2), and to the works of Fonjong (2016) and Porsani (2018), they explore how LSLAs do not actually constitute a viable waged job alternative for the Mozambican rural women, when they lose their land. Both these authors show how alternatives to small-farming are more dangerous to rural women than to rural men, since the women suffer bias in their wages, have less opportunities of employment and of progress in the job, and are subject to sexual harassment from their employees. Zumira, a Mozambican rural woman present on the Counterstory, confirms this reality stating how her husband knows/is able to work on services (meaning plantations, mining, self-employment), whilst she only knows how to work on the land (Nhavoto, 2020). None of the other women even mentioned the possibility of working in large plantations, when mentioning land grabs. This caught my attention. Even though the possibility of employment was something discussed as non-viable to both Fonjang and Porsani, to the Mozambican rural women it seemed that it was not even worth mentioning. Of course I do not have a complete image of the whole situation in Mozambique, but according to the Mozambican women who explained their reality to Fórum Mulher, living in different places in Mozambique, discussions on choosing a waged job if they are pushed out of their land simply do not occur. Maybe they don't even have this opportunity, or they know it is too dangerous for

them to find a waged job outside their land. But the reality is that they just do not want to lose their *machambas*. Their land is their life, and it was on this piece of land that they learnt how to farm, cultivate and produce with their mothers, and how they connect with their daughters. They don't accept the reality where they lose their piece of land, and that is why they organize and fight.

The Mozambican rural women define themselves as mothers and carers of the land, and this is exactly how they see land, something to mother, something to care for. I believe that looking at LSLAs with an understanding of this conceptualization would make it harder to defend them as helpful to the development of rural communities. Land grabs might create waged jobs when constituting large plantations, but when pushing rural women out of their land, they have a negative impact on their sense of identity, spirituality, and connection to their ancestors. Thus defending LSLAs as bringing development/modernity to rural communities, reducing poverty, something defended by both the NGOs, foreign companies and the Mozambican government, is to only look at land through a western perspective. For the rural women the LSLAs mean “evil” (see section 7.1), since they do not see what they bring as development but only as a source of worries. Moyo (2004), Fonjang (2016) and Porsani (2018) do recognize the importance of land as connection to ancestors, for the rural communities. But this needs to be the priority when discussing LSLAs, since this is exactly how the Mozambican rural women see land. Any other views of land are not their reality, but the western reality, and then it is not relevant to them. To see LSLAs or land grabs as active agents of epistemicides, culturecides and alienation is imperative (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni section 4.1). The rural women when pushed outside of their land do not think about the material implications of it, or if they should find a waged job, when their identity is shaken to the core. Participating in a reality that is unfamiliar to them, without the land that is their life/ *minha terra é minha vida* (Nhavoto, 2018), causes a lack of a sense of purpose, food insecurity and disconnection with their family and community. LSLAs are physically and psychologically violent and should be seen as such. They constitute western projects, and are most of the time included in the modernity/development complex, contributing to the further edification of the death project (see Suárez-Krabbe section 4.2). To be clear, Moyo, Fonjang and Porsani indeed mention the importance of land to the rural women's connection with their ancestors, as something to take into account when land grabs occur. But

according to the Mozambican rural women, the spiritual dimension of losing land seems like the most important loss, and not just one dimension of the land question in Mozambique. They are used to mother and care for the land, and this land always cared for them, their families and community. The interconnection of land, food, mothering and care constitutes the basis of the Mozambican rural women's lives, and that is why they don't want to be pushed out of their land, even if, in a western view that privileges dominant knowledges, there are waged alternatives offered to them that could provide a so-called better life (which in fact is already false since these alternatives are gender biased, not even constituting a real option). In my view, the relevance of the Mozambican rural women's symbiotic relationship with land, contrasting with western exploitative views, are an important addition to current African intellectual production on the gender dimension of the land question in Mozambique.

By paying attention to the Mozambican rural women demands, stated in the *II Declaração das Mulheres Rurais Moçambicanas*, and explored in the Counterstory where the women read these demands out loud to Mother, one can better answer how Mozambican rural women epistemologies can inform African intellectual production concerned with the land question. They demand "to be included in the discussion and decision making processes on land use and natural resources exploration in Mozambique, regarding small, medium, and large scale investments." (FOMMUR, 2019). The Mozambican rural women are thus interested in participating in decisions regarding land investments that can impact their communities. As already explained, the process of communicating any land exploitation project should be done between the local leaders and the affected communities, always before the emission of the DUAT (*Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra/ Land Use Right*). However, these processes of communication were not always democratic, usually benefiting the political power and the elites instead of the communities, as proven in this demand, where the Mozambican rural women want to participate in the process of conceding DUATs, as predicted by law. This demand also proves the threat that the recent "rush for land" constitutes for the rural communities, in the form of LSLAs, and thus essential to address regarding land-owning security in Mozambique, according to the rural women. The importance of land-owning to the Mozambican rural women, and the impacts of LSLAs regarding their land-owning security, were extensively explored throughout this work, according to these women epistemologies.

Mozambican rural women have a clear notion of how valuable their knowledge on land is, in fact they even demand that “initiatives regarding agriculture in Mozambique should valorize women's knowledge, technology, and practical experience on the subject, thus emphasizing agro ecology and the nutritional needs of the Mozambican families” (FOMMUR, 2018). Magoqwana (2020) questions how knowledges of the Mother should be applied into the subject of Sociology in African universities, breaking free from western and patriarchal imposed axiologies (see chapter 2), and maybe the same approach should be applied regarding the land question in order to achieve a de-link with western views on land-owning. Epistemic interventions are a step forward into decolonization, and thus when moving production on the land question closer to the Mother, or closer to rural women epistemologies regarding agro ecology and general understandings of land, is possible to create alternative futures where land is not seen as exploitable or profitable. Bialostocka (2021) also explores this idea of alternative futures with the concept of African modernity (see chapter 2). Just as Magoqwana (2020) she intends to work towards a de-link from western views on modernity, and instead conceive an African modernity. With this concept she didn't mean to add African culture to western conceptualizations of modernity but to, again, create a new concept that can be anything else. To think about new alternative futures, based on non-dominant knowledges that somehow managed to resist to epistemicides and culturecides is to work against the death project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Suárez-Krabbe). And there is value in producing knowledge that might allow for futures that are not built upon capitalist, patriarchal exploitative and racist ideologies, just by the sake of being different from most knowledge produced in academia in the last 500+ years. Mozambican rural women epistemologies allow for an understanding of land outside of the capitalist, patriarchal, extractivism and racist western dominant framework. Their knowledges on land-care survived epistemicides, and thus constitute a rare knowledge outside of the imposed dominant colonial epistemologies (section 4.1).

One of the final demands stated by the Mozambican rural women mentions the development industry. They demand for development projects to have a long term impact on infrastructures, and to prioritize technological investment that could help with the prevention of future climate events (FOMMUR, 2019). In this demand they are stating how their knowledge could help to build a so-called modernity, where they can participate and state where technology should be

helpful. To be a traditional society is not to be stuck in time (Bialostocka, 2021). Technology can be part of societies that do not function within the frame of western modernity. These women did not ask for more *cash crop* plantations in order to help reforestation, such as the *Portucel Moçambique* project that motivated my work and critique. They however are not refusing development projects. Simply for them to be adequate to their realities. Rural women epistemologies can thus inform the concept of African modernity, since they have their own views of what a rural community is in this modern world. Traditional societies can mutate, and just because they don't mutate to a westernized version, it does not mean that they are stuck in time.

Working with the Mozambican rural women knowledges made me realize how in my future academic work there would be no point in working within a dominant knowledge framework. This thesis was born from struggles around epistemologies. First I had to delve on African epistemologies, specifically regarding development, since I felt it would not make any sense to explore a case on modernity, coloniality and development, inside the subject of Cultural Encounters, without having a clue what African intellectuals were debating on these subjects. Reading and learning about epistemologies on the land question in Africa, and specifically on Mozambique, require hard work especially regarding the epistemological shift involved. I was mostly used to reading work that would privilege one part of the dialogue regarding development and human rights, being produced in universities in the global north, and to shift this perspective took time, and several attempts. After this first challenge, to go from familiar epistemologies to non-dominant epistemologies such as the ones from the Mozambican rural women, constituted the main struggle. Once again I was never exposed to these knowledges, and thus did not know how to better operationalize them. But from the struggle also came an enthusiasm of working against the 'cognitive empire'. I felt more connected than ever to myself as a woman, and went through not only epistemological discoveries when writing this thesis but also emotional discoveries about myself as a woman. I felt entangled in this work and cared very deeply for it, maybe because of how much I've read about care. This work was a work of care, more than a thesis, and as I am finishing it I already feel a sense of longing. I appreciate the experience I had writing this thesis, and have to end by highlighting how it changed me as a

student/academic to have the opportunity to see knowledge as something that can be spiritual, manifested as care and close to the Mother.

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