Soy bean plantation in Nampula (Northern Mozambique). Photo by the author.
Acknowledgements

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To René for all the love. (and for filling my writing desk with flowers)

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A todos os amigos que encontrei em Moçambique e a todas a pessoas que de uma forma ou outra enriqueceram a minha viagem de descoberta durante esses três intensos meses. Sem vocês este trabalho não seria possivel: obrigada. Estamos juntos.

Amsterdam, 26 June 2015
Nietzsche's Aphorism 67: The Habit of Seeing Opposites

“The general imprecise way of observing sees everywhere in nature opposites (as, e.g., "warm and cold") where there are, not opposites, but differences of degree. This bad habit has led us into wanting to comprehend and analyse the inner world, too, the spiritual-moral world, in terms of such opposites. An unspeakable amount of painfulness, arrogance, harshness, estrangement, frigidity has entered into human feelings because we think we see opposites instead of transitions.

(in Human, All Too Human)
Executive Summary

In the words of the recently elected president of Mozambique, Mr Filipe Nyusi, “Mozambique is a country blessed with resources, therefore on the mandatory track for investment”. One government strategy to attract (foreign) investors has been the ProSAVANA programme, a joint venture between Japan, Brazil and Mozambique to promote agricultural development along the Nacala corridor (Northern Mozambique). The region, known for its fertile soil and recently improved access infrastructures, is being designated as the prime site for large-scale agricultural investments in disregard of being densely populated. On the ground, a wide range of stakeholders is vying for land and positioning vis-à-vis the ProSAVANA, while many are not quite sure what is to be expected from its implementation just yet. At this point in time, some other foreign companies have already been established in the three targeted provinces and their attempts to access land are being strongly conditioned by the parallel discussion on ProSAVANA.

In the past months activism grew in the districts. Peasants associations worked back and forth to meet villagers, their leaders, and international sponsors, combining the rhetoric of land rights and small scale development. Activists at multiple levels organized against the ProSAVANA in particular and large-scale land acquisitions in general. International supported NGOs and their regional operators add to this rhetoric their very own interpretations of development and helped land rights knowledge to be spread. They reminded the public of land-grabs occurring in different contexts and turn them into a unidirectional conclusion: land was and is being stolen from local peoples. As such, they established national and international media chains through which their news travel to diverse parts of the world, bringing more “awareness of the tragedy we face and the need to stop it”.

Local residents become increasingly unsettled by these developments. Findings show how the positionings between and within stakeholders bring a cocktail of unrest, resistance but also avenues for opportunities. In this context most research and news reports focus on the negative impacts for local populations on their livelihood settings. In such portrayals both the investing companies and the villagers are presented as opposing monolithic blocks. This research wishes to peak behind the curtain of such representations by highlighting the role of cultural brokers in stakeholders interactions. By researching the agency of these stakeholders (who position in between) was possibly to deconstruct the artificial opposition of global to local, and to offer a realistic alternative to the story where 'local' people are portrayed as victims of a neoliberal order. Within these possibilities of agency, might rest the hope for more creative outcomes of large-scale land deals.
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADECRU</td>
<td>Academic Action for Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEPAGRI</td>
<td>Comercial Agricultural Promotion Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUAT</td>
<td>Right to use and develop land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRELIMO</td>
<td>Frente Libertação de Mozambique, Mozambican Liberation Front (ruling party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA!</td>
<td>NGO: Justiça Ambiental, Environmental Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSA</td>
<td>Large-scale land acquisitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORAM</td>
<td>NGO: Rural association for Mutual helplessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDSA</td>
<td>Strategic Plan for the development of the agricultural sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPCN</td>
<td>União Provincial de Camponeses de Nampula, Regional (Nampula) Peasants Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAC</td>
<td>União Nacional de Camponeses, National Peasants Union</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction

After the global food crisis of 2007 and 2008, investors became more and more interested in fertile land often available in developing countries on long-term leases at very low prices. The course of this trend was such that by the end of 2009, such investment deals covered over 46 million hectares of farmland around the world (Oakland Institute-OI 2012, 5). These deals, commonly referred to as 'land grabbing', were largely encouraged by worldwide agencies such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Bank. The global land grab – otherwise known as 'large-scale land acquisitions' (LSA) or 'land rush' (Li 2012), refers to the rapid increase of (trans)national commercial land transactions and land speculation predominantly relating to the large-scale production and export of food and biofuels (McMichael 2014, 300).

Africa holds more than 70% of the large-scale land acquisitions in this global demand (Aabo and Kring, 2012, 8), specifically in five sparsely-populated countries with large pieces of land suitable for cultivation and propitious climate – the Congo, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique. Mozambique, as matter of fact, is among the most important destination countries for investors, with 7% of its land currently assigned to foreign investment (OI 2011, 2) and ranking third place as the most popular destination for investment according to the Land Matrix project.

Sixty to eighty percent of the population in Africa live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for subsistence (OI 2011, 5). Access to land is crucial for these people, providing them with food, income and employment (Funada-Classen 2013, 26). In the context of Mozambique, several large projects were already sources of conflict due to the widespread failure of investors in creating conditions to bring greater local benefits (for examples of this see Borras and Franco 2012; OI 2011). In addition to the studies of scholars, much research has been done by international NGOs and national civil society organisations, with the tendency to emphasise social and environmental impacts, such as dispossession, displacement and resource competition – in the context of Mozambique there is a growing network of activists presently addressing these concerns (GRAIN, ADECRU, UNAC, JA!).

Despite its validity, this characterization has its limitations: certain aspects of LSA are not fully-captured or not thoroughly contextualized enough within its frames. While displacement of local people and communities is a real threat and a consequence of land deals, the character and experience of land dispossession and displacement are not the same for everybody or taking place in every instance (Evers, McMichael (2014) sums up well and succinctly the dynamic processes driving contemporary large scale acquisitions: “oil price spikes of the mid 2000s, the food price hikes of 2007 and 2008; the crises in world financial markets in 2008 and the onset of global recession in 2009; the worldwide boom in foreign direct investment (FDI); liberalisation of land markets via the neoliberal economic model; and the need to increase global food production in order to meet the demands of a growing population” (300).

In this paper, I rather prefer to use the terms 'land rush' and 'large-scale land acquisitions' than 'land grabbing', which is, per-se, negatively connotated.

Data from June 2015.
2012; Borras and Franco 2012; McMichael 2014). Critics remark that LSAs reporting has turned into ‘grabbing headlines’: “Certainly many media and crowd sourcing reports are little more than indications or guides about where to look or where to pursue a more in-depth investigation” (Edelman 2013, 1). Several authors appeal to the need of empirical investigation to move beyond the ‘anecdotal' current discussion. Evers (2012) makes this point, through a critical essay where she points out to the 'self-fulfilling' character of research being done in LSA in Madagascar. Tsing launches us a challenge in the same direction with her ground breaking “Friction: an Ethnography of Global Connection” (2005, 269): “Instead of inscribing structures of self-fulfilment, we might immerse ourselves in the drama of uncertainty of global capitalism and transnational liberalism.”

At this point, broad definitions such as 'local people' and 'global pressures' are hiding more than they could reveal. In many settings, Borras and Franco (2012, 47) resume, local people and local community include “elite local chiefs, corrupt petty officials, local bosses, local bullies, moneylenders, landlords and rich farmers, who have competing interests that differ from, and are typically opposed to, the interests of small farmers and landless labourers”. On the other side of the equation, there is no such thing as global actors for “the aspirations of international investors and national elites to emerge as more than a moment's daydream (…) they must be made tangible on a regional landscape.” (Tsing 2005, 74). Global dreams and plans must commit to a place/location and its peoples and these peoples deserve to be given a chance to exist in all their diversity.

1.1. Research location: what is going on in the Nacala corridor?

Mozambique has a vast territory and reports on large-scale land acquisitions come from varied locations. Some restrictions were necessary in order to make the fieldwork phase feasible. During my primary data research I came across the ProSAVANA programme. The ProSAVANA is an ambitious regional programme, run by the governments of Japan, Mozambique and Brazil. The area under the programme includes (part of) the three provinces of Nampula, Zambézia and Niassa and comprises a total of 14 million hectares of land where 4.3 million people live (Nogueira and Ollinaho 2013, 4) (Map 1). What the programme intends to do with land has been portrayed in different and contradictory ways. The official (up to date) information stands for the integration of large-scale foreign investments with small-scale farmers in a contract-farming basis (i.e. these would received improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and extension services in exchange for part of their production).

The ProSAVANA is located within a wider web of foreign private investments in the Nacala corridor, as part of the Nacala corridor development plan (Fig. 1). In the past decade, Japan and Brazil have been supporting a comprehensive development plan in the Nacala corridor through collaborative projects. They include infrastructure projects, such as the modernization and expansion of the Nacala Port and the upgrading of the roads along the corridor.

---

1 See, for example, the Land Matrix Project.
Notwithstanding these opportunities, ProSAVANA has become by far one of the most contested investment programmes in Mozambican contemporary society. Several NGO’s reports have been denouncing cases of land grab in the Nacala corridor under the ProSAVANA area and some discordant academic research has been conducted (see for example the works of Figermann 2013 and Funada-Classen 2013). At the same time government agencies of the three countries point to the fact that the programme is not yet started to grant land titles and little is to be seen on the ground. In any case, the concern of who is right and wrong did not become central in this study. For this research, the truth surrounding these events is less important than the process of stakeholders conjuring about them.

1.2. Theoretical considerations: researching the 'global' and the 'local' nexus

The tension between the universal and the particular has been an all-times issue in anthropological research, even more in the context of our contemporary world. Eriksen (2001) reflects on it within the conclusion of his book “Small places, large issues”. He poses the question of how to study cultural phenomena which are interchangeable global – “in the sense that they are not located in a particular place”, and local – “in that they are always perceived and interpreted locally” (ibid., 300). Appadurai introduced, already in 1996, the discussion of a locality as a performance in the context of a mediatised and globalised world: the increase on global flows of information, people and commodities has consequences for the sovereignty of the pre-

1 See ProSAVANA official website: www.prosavana.gov.mz
existent 'places'; at the same time, managing the politics of the 'local' is a complex issue for the global system. His reflections are a good place to start thinking of locality as situated in a global context and vice-versa.

An exciting feature of Appadurai's work is the suggestion of locality as context generative-generated. The “building of houses, the organization of paths and passages, the making and remaking of fields and gardens, the mapping of trans-human spaces and hunter-gatherer terrains” become the “record of the spatio-temporal production of locality” (ibid., 180). These social-spatial configurations are the paths by which local inhabitants naturally navigate their world and embed themselves into a structure of knowledge that is local. The struggle to maintain the normal 'production of locality' during a period of global economic-political interferences, can be seen as caused by pressures on the nation-state to consolidate their power in the global order. One can argue that these are not entirely new questions. What seems to be unquestionably new is “the dis-juncture between these processes and the mass-mediated discourses and practices (including those of economic liberalization, multiculturalism, and human rights claims) that now surround the nation-state” (ibid., 199, italics by me). Therefore, to study the global and local nexus, one must consider the interconnected spaces of negotiation between these practices and discourses.

In Friction, Tsing reflects exactly on the diverse and conflicting social interactions born within our contemporary globally-interconnected world. She elaborates on the conflicts of the Indonesia rain forest, explored by capitalists in the 80's and 90's with massive environmental consequences, and the way it led to the awakening of a global movement of protesting made of “uneven and awkward links” (ibid., 4). 'Friction' is the metaphor Tsing uses for the worldly encounters and concrete engagements between the abstract categories of global and local: “a wheel turns because of its encounter with the surface of the road; spinning in the air it goes nowhere. Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick. In both cases, it is friction that produces movement, action, effect.” (ibid., 5). As such, friction reminds us that cultural forms and agency in the globalised world are shaped in interaction.

I believe that this line of critique should be pursued when studying large-scale land acquisitions as a ground where new interactive contexts are born. To support such undertaking, three bodies of literature inform this research. Some initial words about them should be mentioned here to position this research amidst larger debates.

Zones of Intermediality. Evers (2012), researcher with large empirical experience on foreign land acquisitions in East-Africa and Madagascar, proposes the approach of 'zones of intermediality'. A 'zone of intermediality' is conceptualised as the “ontological grids of (inter)national – local stakeholder encounters where diverse ideologies, discourses and practices of land use and valuation are mediated” (112). In other words, the interconnected space of negotiation I have referred to just above. Departing from the idea that “the grid of stakeholder engagement in land deals is anything but static; lexicon, positions, and postures are

---

1 Comparable with Gidden's model for structure and agency (Giddens and Pierson 1998).
deployed interchangeably and for various reasons” (ibid., 113), her approach takes it a step further and looks to the particular communication strategies that mediate the processes of land access, legitimisation and valuation across varied audiences. Intermediality as used in this context transcends the meaning of other concepts of mediality (mediation being one of them). The main distinction resides in the aspect of mutual influence: “intermediality assumes a co-relation in the actual sense of the word, that is to say a mutual effect” (Kattenbelt 2008, 25).

**Access theory.** I argue on the usefulness of the ground-breaking theory of access, as reasoned by Ribot and Peluso in 2003. These authors developed a concept of 'access' that differs from the one used by natural resource analysts. This last concept is criticised by being a weak definition that mistakenly equates 'access' with 'property'. The Access Theory, by conceptualizing 'access' as a matter of *ability*, rather than *rights*, lead researches to a wider reflection on the social relationships that constrain or enable benefits from the use of resources. Using this framing, the authors suggest a method of access analysis that takes into consideration the constellations of means, relations, and processes that enable various actors to benefit from resources: “who actually benefits from things and through what processes they are able to do so.” (154) With this in mind, I will combine an analysis of the 'legal access' – Mozambican land law, regulations on the concession of land titles, customary laws and convenient ambiguities within these laws – with other dimensions that play a role in shaping access to things when diverse stakeholders meet in the 'zones of intermediality'.

**Social navigation.** Vigh's (2009) concept of 'social navigation' is used when referring to “how people act in difficult or uncertain circumstances and in describing how they disentangle themselves from confining structures, plot their escape and move towards better positions.” (419). As such, social navigation addresses the above questioned dynamics between social forces, agency and change. The main point of value for Vigh is considering that an environment marked by volatile changes is pressing. Vigh draws his conclusions from fieldwork done in Guinea-Bissau, which is, similarly to Mozambique, an old Portuguese colony. The actors of Vigh seek to survive socially and physically in a conflict-stricken country. The context of life in northern Mozambique certainly does not differ much from this description. The ProSAVANA has escalated the uncertainty in the Nacala corridor. Life in such circumstances is lived on “shifting ground” and by doing fieldwork in such a setting I quickly became aware that people spend a great deal of time with “debating how global, regional and local influences and conflicts will affect their lives, what spaces of possibility will emerge or disappear, what trajectories will become possible and what hopes and goals can be envisioned” (ibid., 422). In sum, the concept of Vigh can be very valuable in understanding how different people find their way through situations they are not very sure of.

In sum, inspired by the pursuits of these authors, this thesis proposes a grounded analysis of the *concrete engagements* between contested views of reality held by various stakeholders to land. Who are the stakeholders to land? What is at stake for each of them? And how are these stakes mediated in their
1.3. Research Questions

Building on three months (Jan-Mar 2015) of fieldwork in Mozambique, over two months of visiting and living in the villages and communities in the Nampula province (northern Mozambique), and drawing on historical and contemporary sources, the analysis was framed by the following question:

*How do stakeholders to land in the Nacala Corridor (northern Mozambique) legitimize their access to land and mediate their access claims against the backdrop of large-scale land acquisition in the region?*

To answer such question, this research distinguishes between three angles of analyses, each related to a different research sub-question. Its representation can be simplified as followed:

**Research sub-questions:**

a) *How do stakeholders position in relation to land debates (in terms of land use and value)?*
To understand how stakeholders position in relation to each-other (with land being the matter that thematically binds them) in the large debate of land use and value going on in the Nacala Corridor; how these positions converge and diverge from one-another, and how they are mediated across this differences and similarities (chapters 3, 4 and 5).

b) *How do these positions affect attempts of access land in the region?*
To understand how the mediation of stakeholders positions in regards to a broader debate, such as ProSAVANA, had travelled across scales to influence the outcomes of specific localized large-scale acquisitions processes (chapter 6).

c) *How do key-stakeholders navigate these attempts of access against the backdrop of a large-scale land debate?*
To understand the role of key-stakeholders social navigate the processes of connecting the macro narratives
Data chapters in this thesis explore these themes as specified above. This thesis is divided into several other sections. The second chapter discusses the methodology and the field work process, presenting strategies and challenges of applying the different methodologies adopted during the field research phase. After the collection of data chapters, a final conclusion follows, where the main findings will be discussed and (hopefully) transported to a deeper level of analysis. At the end, a comprehensive list of sources (academic and non-academic) can be found. Appendixes include extra material useful for the context of the research.

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To conclude, the global and local dichotomy is misleading. International drivers of large-scale land acquisitions are as diverse as its actors, trajectories and outcomes. 'Local' reactions and 'global' processes happen in a continuum of highly-diverse encounters where the interactions are shape by processes of intermediality. The results of such encounters are, in principle, unpredictable. Messiness and ambiguity come as a consequence of assuming this compromise and make understanding large-scale land acquisitions on the ground ambitious. Yet, certainly, worth a try.
Map 1. Area under the ProSAVANA programme and region of the study (ProSAVANA 2015)
Chapter 2. Methodology

"It is misleading, and undesirable, to argue that ethnography is strictly an inductive enterprise. No researcher gathers data without a conceptual apparatus, and most ethnographers engage in a conversation between what they observe and what they theorize." (Herbert 2000, 552)

**Forthrightness, reflexivity and modesty.**

In a pro-ethnographic essay, Herbert (2000) reflects on three points that the ethnographer must consider when presenting his work to the public. The first being 'forthrightness'; the ethnographer must reveal its political agenda to the group he is researching. In a complementary pursuit towards honesty, the ethnographer must also be honest with the audience and make sure he is clear about how access to the group was gained, how relationships with informants were developed, and how his own presence might have had an effect on the activities he observed. The second point in Herbert's recommendations is 'reflexivity'. "One's position affects one's knowledge" Herbert (563) says, demanding the research to be reflexive about how his own culture and intellectual position shape his interpretations of the data. The third and last point of this list is 'modesty'. Ethnographers as other social scientists can only hope to produce partial knowledge of a particular historical moment.

In the current chapter I address my reflections of these concerns.

**2.1. Research Scene: 2000km up north, 300km inland**

When talking about the research scene framed both in terms of locality and time, more than one setting becomes relevant. In the first month, my fieldwork started in a slow (African) pace. When I arrived to Mozambique, on the very first Saturday afternoon of the year, I remembered feeling the void of all those empty streets swept by a heavy, hot African wind. Maputo was a ghost city. In the first weeks of January most of public and private services were closed or curtailed as part of the summer holidays. During this period, I mainly contacted national NGOs in Maputo. My intention was to gain a better insight about the way to approach the field setting – where and how, and to be given contact references in the Nampula province.

From February till mid-March, I was based in the Nampula province in the very heart of the Nacala corridor. I settled in one of its districts, in a small village. During my stay, I travelled around the countryside listening to the insights of local peasant families, peasant associations, formal (local chiefs, district administrator) and informal (church leaders) authorities. Most of my days were spent travelling by motorbike on bumpy paths through the bush to access the communities living in the area. On one of these visits, I was kindly allowed to stay longer. I stayed with the community for five days, sharing the life of one of its families.
Overall, there was a widespread opposition towards the future of land use and its occupation. The people who I talked with were sharing similar narratives of fear and unrest. I am talking about communities hundreds of kilometres apart from each-other, some of them without access to mobile signal or information technologies of any kind. How was that made possible? I was intrigued by the origins of this opposition mobilization, which seemed to be triggered from not so obvious encounters between regional, national and international NGO's, national religious initiatives and peasants associations all together. To find out more about these encounters, I travelled back to the city of Nampula, and to Nacala port. Both Nampula and Nacala are fast growing urban centres, with western-looking five-star hotels and a prohibitive cost of life, as a consequence of a foreign boom during the last decade. There I met some of the organizations that, more or less incidentally, came together to shape (and change) localized experiences of land access legitimisation. This third phase defined the last weeks of fieldwork.

Mainly because it was an impossible task to gain full insight on every stakeholder group that composes my ethnographic puzzle, I followed, in many cases, hints given as important by people inside the events themselves. As such, my itinerary was flexible. Eventually I visited two of the three provinces targeted by the ProSAVANA programme, following the messy web of stakeholders' encounters and engagements that I tried to disentangle along the way.

1.2. 'Zones of Intermediality': an evolving framework

The framework which largely defines the methodology of this research is that of the 'zones of intermediality' approach (Evers, 2012). This framework has been evolving in the past years, through research by the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, the 'intermediality approach' serves both as an umbrella that nicely encompasses the diverse frameworks (intermediality, social navigation and access theory) and as an analytical tool to justify its own methodological steps for the study of large-scale acquisitions.

1.2.1. Analytical tools

The 'zones of intermediality' approach is framed by two complementary research formulas: (1) *mapping geographic place*: researchers do so by investigating policy documents, speeches and media use to legitimise stakeholders land claims, including historical and contemporary discursive contexts; and (2) *mapping ontological space*: done by analysing how diverse land use and livelihood valuations are mediated by culture positions, and departs from the hypothesis that “each actor in the 'zone of intermediality' might use a similar language, but mean something different (…) and approach notions of development, wealth, land use, labour, sustainability, and heritage differently” (Evers 2012a, 18). Mapping in itself is an ambitious task and demands quantitative analysis as well. Instead, I focus on a qualitative study in view of resources and time.

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1 The project can be accessed here http://www.nwo.nl/onderzoek-enresultaten/onderzoeksprojecten/32/2300164032.html
Nevertheless, the methodology for this research was inspired by these mapping frameworks.

**Place and Space.**

As used here, *place* and *space* are two concepts discussed in Svasek’s work from 2002. Svasek reflects in the question of 'home' and homeland' through an analysis of the discourses of German populations, expelled from Czechoslovakia after World War II, and their practices to symbolically appropriate their lost properties. Her theoretical perspective draws from the understanding that people are engaged in different and multiple identification processes, some of which are not necessarily rooted in kinship or territorial assumptions. In this context, the differentiation between 'place' and 'space' gains its relevance. Svasek defines 'place' as the actual locality where people live, or “the material surroundings through which they physically move during their daily routine” (pp. 498). By contrast, space is defined as the “mental picture” (498), the idea of home, or ideas about where things should be placed in relation to each-other, physically and culturally speaking.

**Narratives of the geographic location.** The narratives of 'home' and 'homeland' must always be seen in the political, economic and social context where they take place: “if we want to understand why people tell specific stories of belonging to themselves and others, we must look at homes that are not just imaginary, and examine the legal and political battles surrounding property issues” Svasek (2002, 509). Roymans et al. (2009), have developed the concept of 'landscape biography' as a research strategy to encompass the way landscapes are shaped as a *longue durée* and complex interplay between the dynamics of history of mentalities and values, governmental changes and social and economic developments. Their work is born in the context of south Netherland, where pressure on living space is changing landscape dynamics at a rapid pace.

In the context of the Nampula province, different historical and contemporary socio-economic and political factors deserve attention as they persist to influence current land access and legitimisation processes. The way in which the present rural area landscape is organized depends on decisions as varied as: the ones made by the Portuguese during the years of colonial occupation up to 1975; the socialist economic reforms done by the FRELIMO government in the years that followed; the displacement experiences from the civil war; and the new liberalist orientation towards foreign investment inactivated by IMF and the Word Bank upon African countries – all together.

The goal of this analytical tool is to research how different actors define physical space (as a *longue durée*) in their processes of accessing land and legitimizing this access. Data collected in order to fulfil this analysis includes analysis of legal framework to understand how government itself defines (access to) physical space and analysis of different stakeholders discourses on the access to physical place. Archival research was not possible, but I reconstruct the history of the district's landscape through oral stories and different interpretations of them, and from a literature review on the larger context influencing landscape use (incentive to foreign investment) in the region.

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1 I draw this perspective from 'zones of intermediality' discussion papers.
Ontological experience of the geographic location. Ontological space concerns the embodied meanings people locate in the places they inhabit. As an analytical tool it comprehends a set of methods beyond the scope of this study mainly due to its short duration. But as a research means, I have found very useful to consciously carry the awareness of how important elements are in the environment to find meanings for 'place' – “what is there and how people choose to interact in that setting” (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater 2012, 187).

I have used visual methods (photographs, descriptions of activities and drawings) through participant observation as a technique to make my observations more systematic. People can find various embodied meanings into the same environment and diverse routines of engaging with space. Mapping these differences in practice opens the door to further explore the differences in meaning (Evers 2012, PAGE). Stakeholders can be very skilled in doing this as well. For example, some peasants have a house in the village where they live most of the time and work on the crops, living in a house next to it, for only few months in the year. This difference was used by an informant to make his point clear: that people displaced in a given community were “overreacting” in their claims of access, when the houses they lost were not their first housing place.

I have also explored language patterns in interactions with my informants and how groups of stakeholders talk about specific concepts related to land. For instance, I have noticed that some of the peasants I have talked to would always refer to the exact number of hectares of land (e.g. at risk of losing), while government informants would not refer to the exact number. Another example is the meanings of the expression *terra nullius*, or empty land, which is very controversial in presenting land to investors. In one conversation, the minister of agriculture in the district explained to me, which areas in the district were 'empty' and 'free' for investment. One of them was the large area occupied by the community of Nemapheca. Later on, because I spent a few days with this community members, I discovered that they look at the concept of *empty* land differently. For the naked eye the area looks like a densely inhabited landscape, but a closer look reveals a populated area, with large stretches of *not permanently occupied* land, crossed by numerous community tracks.

**Stakeholder Analysis.**

As intermediality is about the mutual interactions among different groups and people, it is important to outline who these were in the first place. In this research I use stakeholder analysis as a means to identify stakeholders and research relationships between stakeholders. I look at stakeholder as defined in broader terms than a homogeneous group. Studying power and organizational learning, Roome and Wijen (2006, 236), present stakeholders as “individuals or groups who significantly affect an organization's behaviour”. The strong point of this definition is that it encompasses both stakeholders as attached to institutions and stakeholders acting outside these institutions individually or in constellations. In order to fulfil the analysis I have looked specifically at data that informs me about the relation between stakeholders: what stakeholders know about each-other, which experiences they use to make assessments about each-other, and what kind of narrative they tell to each-other based on these assessments. Because there is a lot of 'talk-about' and rumour...
around land-deal projects, many of the interactions between stakeholders take place during imaginary encounters. Accessing these imaginaries is possible in the context of the sort of questions presented above.

**Social media analysis.**

As Evers (2012, 113) points out “intermediality necessarily entails media analysis, partly due to the effective use of media by conservation groups to explain and legitimise their work to audiences far beyond local settings”. The analysis in this research concerns in large matter the mediation of stakeholders’ positions in relation to land. I have looked into government discourses, I have followed regularly the news in the ProSAVANA website and relevant NGOs' social media. I have gathered media shared among different audiences by different stakeholders. My research portfolio includes a variety of artefacts: booklets about land-law and ProSAVANA information, done by one of the NGOs; photographs from material use by the government to mediate information about the ProSAVANA, in the form of flyers in the local language and a poster with comic strips; a DVD with a documentary about 'land and resources grabbing’ in Mozambique; and a comprehensive collection of news clippings.

**2.3. Experiences in the field**

During my research, I have been in contact with many different stakeholders and individuals; I have also moved in many different settings. From these experiences I have learnt that methodology is no rigid plan, as it required much more of myself as a creative person and flexible researcher. With time, it was necessary to adapt and diversify the research strategies for these different stakeholders and diverse research settings. I now reflect on the challenges of and results from applying the methods used to fulfil the analysis described in the previous section.

**2.3.1. Methodology in practice**

*Participant observation.* A big part of the data collection consisted of participant observations. These were, for instance, days spent in the village, at the communities settings, attending meetings with peasant associations, visiting the company quarters and hours spent the in waiting room of the Ministry of Agriculture. Staying longer in any of these setting had many advantages and allowed me to put together a much more complete puzzle of the phenomena I was looking at. Spending time at the same place also permits time to observe changes and events in a continuum and can bring awareness to important discrepancies between what people say and what they actually do.

At a more general level, it also allowed me to participate in the lives of my informants, sometimes through a vivid experience of their daily struggles. During the whole month of February, Nampula province had no electricity. Because of the heavy rains, both the railway and the road were damage for many weeks and goods could not make it to their destinies. The markets were largely empty, with a limited variety of products (lemon, cucumber and banana). On the side of the road, a line of a hundred trucks with people
sleeping outdoors was growing everyday. Being close to these experiences, even if they don't relate directly to the topic of this research, was very important to understand the context of my informants' life-worlds.

It took me a long time to understand how to get access to some of the relevant research sites, particularly to the communities' settings. They do not appear on maps and some are very isolated. Makhwua (local resident) communities are very scattered along the landscape, organized in kin households. It was a challenge to find how to approach them. During the day, the small yards around their houses are empty of people. Everyone is busy. At the first rains they start farming their lands, sometimes in the areas surrounding their houses, some others several kilometres away. This is an all-important labour that occupies their time until April. The nature of these communities' organization also makes it difficult to engage isolated individuals in a conversation without the prior agreement from the community leadership. They take this social norm so seriously, that one time I waited four five hours for the leader to be present before being able to present myself and my research to the group.

The data from my encounters with communities draws essentially on meetings with the members of the community leadership, followed by open collective meetings with members of the community to understand which topics and issues were relevant to them. The interviewees who knew each other and had a common background discussed the broader issues I mentioned. The group-interviews consisted of 5-10 topics and meetings usually took up to three hours. I partially used a translator. After these, I would stay 'behind' to give an opportunity of short informal talks with the members that wished to do so. I've also attended churches' celebrations on several Sundays. At the end, I was irrevocably invited to present myself by the church leaders. After the ceremonies, outside, many people were curious about me and I had the chance of having many informal talks. I also lived with the community of Nemapheca, where I stayed five days with the family of the pwiyamwène. During this period, I took part in her family's activities, such as harvesting tobacco leaves, preparing food and washing in the river. While walking around the forest, I also had many talks with the pwiyamwène herself, since she was happy to practice Portuguese. I deliberately chose not to take notes during these participant observations because I felt that would distance me from the community members. I had long days where I could not write my notes down. I mostly managed to write down rough notes in the evenings, hoping to develop them at the first opportunity.

To my surprise, I was not the only one to benefit from these encounters. I felt that my informants enjoyed being together with one another, talking about issues that were and are important to them. One time, an old man openly thanked me for creating the opportunity for a meeting, and on a different occasion, the pwiyamwène thanked me for coming to their community, and she told me “we do matter”.

Interviews and informal talks. Interviews were semi-structured with open questions, which allowed follow-up questions of relevant information to this research. Questions were prepared in advance, but not followed rigidly. The dialogues became more conversational many times, because my informants ask questions about me in return. I felt it important that sometimes the researcher permits to be researched him or herself in order

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1 Makhuwa for the matriarch, the female version of the community chief.
to set up a more natural basis for an interview. As many of the questions were innocent and guided by genuine curiosity, no ethical dilemmas were born from this sort of interaction. Most of the times, informants were interested in finding out more about Portuguese customs (food, clothes), Portuguese/European agricultural systems (the crops we produce and how we do so) and my family. Answering these questions was essential in keeping a dialogue that felt natural for both parties. Interactions with villagers and peasants were set up through snowball techniques, with new connections arising from acquittance.

Informal talks, in the form of spontaneous short conversations took place outside my methodology planning. Inside its frames, neither researcher nor informant deploy fixed places, and sometimes the informant is not aware of the researcher's agenda. An example of this is the following transcript:

“Let me start with one thing: Mozambique can't become like Zimbabwe.
- Oh, what happened in Zimbabwe?
- People have lost their own land. And now they are living parallel to the investment. I mean parallel, because they live right next to it but they aren't part of it!
- Your name is Filipa, like the presidente [Filipe] Nyusi!
- Yes, indeed! But don't tell me that. I heard people in the north are not happy with him...
- We aren't. Have you been to Maputo? Have you seen how life is there, and how is it here?"
I nod in confirmation. - So where are all those votes coming from?
- Eeeh. I must tell you... They come even from Portugal! They arrive in a suitcase from Portugal, from FRELIMO family in Portugal. And here they vote like this. (he starts printing imaginary digital prints with all the ten fingers of his hands) "I vote for ten!"

(field notes: talk with a local artist, outside of the ethnographic museum in Nampula 28/01/2015)

This conversational sample have shown me that the question of investment, and particular of investment through the exploration of resources has become highly politicized in Mozambique. With time informal talks as this one, gained status in my field-notes through fragments of episodes which despite messy and often misplaced were very telling for the context of this research. For this reason I decided to include them.

Formalized interviews (more directed to NGOs and government officials) were arranged in-advance and recorded. When possible, I tried to meet the same organization/person more than once, as well as for more informal discussions, so I could gain insights from different moments (and also brake the tendency of 'one-on-one research in a one-hour interview', that most of these organizations had become used to, with the boom of reporters, journalists and students interested in their land conflicts.

It is important for the reliability of the data to reflect on how my respondents are distributed within the research field. In order to keep identities as blurry as possible, and still give an overview of the background of my correspondents I provided simplified information as follows:
Table 1. Key informant interviews carried out in the scope of this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key informant</th>
<th>Number of occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government officials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProSAVANA representatives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProSavana/ land issues researchers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasants associations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company representatives</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs and associations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church leadership (in this case, catholic)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.2. Finding Respondents: “The Comrade Reception”

Large-scale acquisitions have become a very sensitive social-politic topic in Mozambique, especially after the results of the past October elections. The results showed a decrease in Frelimo's popularity, especially in the districts of Nampula and Niassa, where protests against perceived 'land grabbing' cases have strong expression. In the beginning of my fieldwork preparation, I have worked towards the plan of going to Lichinga (province of Niassa, one out of three provinces mediated by the government as prime location for large scale investment). Ultimately, I had to let go of this initial idea, since having the support of a local association meant being strongly involved in their political agendas.

Amidst these discouragements, I have decided for a more careful approach, rather than pre-established agreements, taking into account the expectations stakeholders can have for and from me. Stepping back, and only a few weeks ahead of my departure, I changed my strategy and directed my efforts to the Provinces of Zambébia and Nampula through contacts I hoped to grow once in the field. Due to this setback, I could no longer ensure to which extent I was going to have access to the different groups of stakeholders. The contacts established and evolved during the first weeks were determinant to the (re-)direction of my efforts.

Access to the people: Jay central role in my research.

Jay is a peasant, originally born and raised in the community of Namepheca, but living with his family in the 'urban' (still very rural) centre of the district. Jay belongs to a peasant association and I came across him due to my good relations with UNAC. He was valuable to this research in several ways. Travelling between the centre and the community locations was one of my main challenges. Detailed maps of the area were not available, so at first I had no idea of where the communities were situated. Jay was very knowledgeable about the area, which was essential to reach those sites. He was also an experienced driver and took me through very rough paths on his motorbike. Sometimes the grass would reach our height and I would stop breathing for the while it would take us to cross long stretches of terrain submerged in water. With time, I

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1 This table is not exhaustive: informal meetings and conversations are also a relevant part of the research data.
gained more and more trust on his riding abilities but I also came to realise that assisting my trips was both a huge responsibility and effort for him. In one occasion, I burned my lower leg on the motor bike's exhaust pipe. At other times, the motorbike had minor problems, more from lack of maintenance than from our trips. In any case, I decided that assisting him with the repairing of these problems was a good compensation for his efforts. Occasionally he would also ask me for money, for instance to charge his phone in order to arrange meetings for me. I carefully dealt with these requests, attempting to be fair to both of us.

On the other hand, I recognise the extreme importance of his presence during my visits to the communities. His level of Portuguese was excellent which also made him a good translator. In the local settings, I have experienced a general climate of suspicion against foreigners and I sensed the significance of working with someone from the local setting. It was the rule that sooner or later up to my arrival, I would be asked if I was an 'investor'. Usually people would ask it in my presence but indirectly, to him in the local language. And, as I have seen many times, they would trust his answer. It felt meritorious to break the barriers imposed by the suspicious atmosphere towards foreigners. Working with Mozambican people, instead of trying to carry research on my own was fundamental in achieving this.

**Access to the 'top-down' scale.**

One of the main challenges I have faced was the closeness of both government and ProSAVANA representatives. The government ministries, at this time, had a good excuse. I came onto the scene when the new government was announced and when ministries were just starting their mandates. I got no feedback to my attempts to contact the new ministry of Land, Environment and Rural development. My contacts with government representatives were confined to the district level. As explained before, ProSAVANA has been widely discussed in media and in political and public discourses. One of the main critics to the programme's performance was the secrecy around its progress. They were very solicitous about answering my emails but the goals of my research needed to be more clear, and my interviews had to be submitted to approval before they could assign someone to talk to me. This frustration was described by other researchers in the field site. However, through an online network of travellers I have used for different purposes before, I got in contact with one of the three JICA volunteers in the province of Nampula. From my time spent with him, I draw the only part of my data on the Japanese involvement in the ProSAVANA project which is not derived from online available data.

**Establishing trust.**

In one of the everlasting darks night in Nampula, I went out for dinner with two young Brazilian filmmakers:

“My companions are a young female researcher and a dreamy guy who is a film-maker. They are doing a documentary about development along the Nacala corridor. They tell me a story of how they were taken by car were to the Administrator office to be interrogated. ‘- Are you against or in favour of ProSAVANA?’, he
asked them. They told him that they were speaking with everybody and that their documentary pretended to cover opinions of all parts involved. But it took a long time before he let them go.”(from field-notes, 30/01/2015)

This dinner took place in the beginning of my second month and it was the first time I felt vividly how this research could affect me and the real challenges of mediating my position as a researcher. This mediation was problematic at two different levels. First, people from different backgrounds would initially be suspicious of my motives. I conducted this research without the formal support of any research institute or organization in Mozambique. This choice seemed far from ideal, especially in the context of political and social tensions surrounding land rush debates in the country. Later, I began to see it as an opportunity: because of my detachment to a particular group I could benefit from the neutrality advocated in this research.

2.4. Reflection on the research ethics

Ethical concerns should consider both privacy and confidentiality issues and daily issues which are likely to emerge during the field-work phase. I have dealt with ethics through continuous reflexivity, from preparing the field-work to the process of writing this thesis.

Confidentiality. In order to protect my informants identities, in this thesis all the original identities were turned into pseudonyms. The names of the communities, the villages and the investor company are also changed. For the same reasons, when referring to the the district of the Nampula province where my field-worked was based, I will do so in generic terms, as 'the district'.

Raising expectations. I knew that my presence could probably become the incentive for new debates about land issues and play with local expectations and anxieties. Aware of this, I tried not ask directly about those topics, but explore them when people brought them into discussions, which happened often. Many times, I noticed that locals expected something from me, in the form of knowledge or assistance. I tried to explain to my informants that these meetings were being held for them to share their experience with me and each other, thus they were central in our discussions, and not my presence. I repeatedly ensured my role as a writer of their stories: my only capability was to write and publish my thesis and that the rest was outside my power. I have also shared some of my knowledge when I thought that it could help reduce their anxiety about specific issues.

Feedback and informed consent. Informed consent to use information was usually solicited after I explained my project to the people involved. When possible, I asked my informants which part of my research could be relevant to share with them. After the conclusion of this master thesis, small reports of the gathered information will be shared with the associations that showed interest in it. As to what concerns many of my
other informants – I know that my words will probably never reach them. I also acknowledged that the time of people is valuable. From hindrance to their normal routines, forms of hospitality were given. People were often eager to learn at various levels. My knowledge was shared with them in return.

A reflection of Evers (2012, 113) brings me shortly to the last point, namely that:

“researchers do not have a direct stake in the land deal but through their publications are part and parcel of the mediation processes informing audiences outside the land project and therewith fuelling perceptions and imagined communities of what local Malagasy are like in the minds of people throughout the world. As scientists, we need to be fully aware of our substantial responsibility when the 'information' we pass on is being disseminated to audiences we may not even be aware of.”

This relates to previous considerations on the self-fulfilling prophecy (see introduction). A south-African man in Maputo asked me “You are an anthropologist. If you are interested in people, why don't you become a revolutionary?”. Even if this idea attracts some of us anthropologists, it is not necessarily attractive to us all. I am curious and eager to learn about the ways people deal with the challenges they face in the world we all live in. If one shall do so in order to directly shape its reality or in order to tell stories from a distant, more neutral position, remains for one's self to decide. In this thesis, I propose myself the task of sharing the stories of the people I met during the fieldwork: their experiences shall live through my writing and hopefully bring a more human and nuanced version of LSA 'reality' on the ground and its worldly encounters. By adopting this approach, I have no illusions of being neutral, but I am forced to a neutral viewpoint as first stance.

This thesis, in its processes and results, attempts a fair representation of the experiences of my journey as a master student. As knowledge is always positioned, my claims to it shall be moderate. While you read this work, keep in mind that is was a learning-based research.
Prologue

After the first weeks of living and conducting research in one of the districts of Nampula province and its surroundings, a non-orthodox pattern seemed to emerge from the LSA case study I was following. One international company outside the scope of ProSA V ANA was vying for land in the village and, to my surprise, the stakeholders against it were hooking in alliances to the parallel discussion of ProSA V ANA to legitimize their rights to land in arenas far beyond the local setting – even, or specially, when the land deal in question could not be traced back as part of the ProSA V ANA operations.

This suggested that even for the case of localized attempts to access land, in the context of contemporary large-scale acquisitions in the Nacala corridor, there is no such thing as an obvious static stakeholder configuration in the form of the traditional nexus ‘company-local community-local government’. At this point, my awareness to move beyond simple dichotomies (global forces versus local struggles) and to study large-scale land acquisitions under the light of the emergence of new interactive contexts, had met grounded evidence. Stakeholders moved in a complex chain of connections at different scales, ranging from regional to international (table 2). This forced me to look at the background context.

In the collection of chapters that compose this thesis, I invert the order by which I came to know these things. First, I start by exploring the diversity of stakeholders positionings in the Nacala corridor (regarding land use and value) and how these convergence and diverge in the formation of alliances; secondly I move on to show how this have a serious effect in more localized attempts of access to land.

Table 2. Stakeholder configuration showing the need for a intermediality approach and the research of convergence and divergence among stakeholders. Keep in mind that the purpose of this table is purely a graphic illustration. Stakeholders are not homogeneous groups and not everybody inside a group thinks the same (note for instance, how different ‘peasants’ categories are disperse at the regional level).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(international)</th>
<th>(national)</th>
<th>(regional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>ProSAVANA (1st phase discourse)</td>
<td>District Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Company Group</td>
<td>JICA district office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC(Brazil)</td>
<td>Mozambican Government (FRELIMO)</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JICA (Japan)</td>
<td>ProSAVANA (2nd phase discourse)</td>
<td>Affiliated Company Peasants</td>
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<td>UNAC</td>
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<td>ORAM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GRAIN</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ other iNGOs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ProSAVANA (2nd phase discourse)</td>
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Part I
Scale-making: articulation of futures and utopias

“Scale is the spatial dimensionality necessary for a particular kind of view, whether up close, from a distance, microscopic or planetary. I argue that scale is not just a neutral form for viewing the world; scale must be brought into being: proposed, practiced, and evaded, as well as taken for granted. Scales are claimed and contested in cultural and political projects.” (Tsing 2005, 58).

Ideas are rich and complex, and to pass them on we need to embed them with signification. The process of giving signification to ideas all depends on the way we represent and reproduce them. In different words, the way we *scale* them. As such, scale is a representation, a model of the world. It makes me think of a *maquette*, the French word for a tridimensional model of a building made by an architect: not everything can figure in and there is virtually no way that a scale can represent all the aspects of the real world to perfection. To make scale is then, to choose what will figure in one's representation of reality. Through these choices people actively deconstruct, reconstruct and share a version of reality that fits with their vision of the world.

New international development projects, particularly the ProSAVANA programme, revived intensely the debates over land-use and value in northern Mozambique. In the process, all stakeholders engage in endeavours for particular configurations of scale. Even people without a direct stake to land, have a share in the process: anthropologists, for instance, are linked from the beginning of the profession to the production of scales through ethnographic work: “researchers indeed are also engaged in scale-making when they publish on the local groups or ‘communities’ described in their publications.” (Evers 2012, 114).

In this part the thesis, I wish to show empirically how scale is being practiced by diverse stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, peasants associations, community members, villagers who live in the country side, villagers who live in the city) according to their perceptions of what land is and how it should be used. But it is not much to say that different people see and scale the world differently and one cannot come to grips with it merely by comparison of these similarities and differences. Rather, the real challenge is to embrace the mystery living within the attempts of mediation of these scales across difference (as well as similarity). As such, my focus is on the interactions between stakeholders in the mediation processes of their scale-making projects. In order to bring some coherence to the text, I define the next chapters in accordance with different aspects of scale-making: *representation* (presents an overview of stakeholders' positions in relation to land use and value), *reproduction* (explores how the aforementioned are mediated through intermediality practices), and *imagination* (explores the processes of intermediality and imagination in relation to each-other).
Chapter 3. Representation

3.1. We are open for business

A good place to start reflecting is to consider that foreign actors do not 'grab' land illegally from weak governments, as stressed in Evers, Seagle and Krijtenburg (2013, 5). Usually the states of destiny create appealing conditions for investors and negotiate contracts in a partnership regime. Mozambique is no exception to the rule. Consider for instance, the inauguration speech of the recently elected president Mr. Filipe Nyusi:

“Our country is a country blessed with natural resources, particularly arable land, forests, minerals and marine resources, which pose Mozambique in the global route as an investment destination. In my government, I will ensure that research activities, production, distribution and industrialization are made in a transparent and responsible manner, contributing to the expansion, transformation and modernization of the Mozambican economy.” (Maputo 15/01/2015)

When Mozambique emerged from two successive wars in 1992, one of the priorities of the government was to convince investors that the country was open for business. With the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, FRELIMO\(^1\) left socialist tendencies behind and Mozambique gave its first steps towards neoliberal politics. In the same period, IMF and the World Bank had just started to promote a regime of privatization, liberalization of trade and cuts in government spending with the reconstruction of decades of war damage. The rural areas had been strongly affected by the wars and the agriculture sector was in recession. In this case scenario, the Mozambican government realized that the only way to promote rural development was through foreign investment and a way to attract foreign investors was offering them large pieces of land (OI 2011, 2-15)\(^2\). Part of this strategy has consisted in presenting the country in political discourses (such as the sample of Mr. Nyusi speech) as a resource-rich country whose development foreign private companies are welcome to support.

In this scenario I am particularly interested in zooming in on the investments carried out in a specific area of the country: the Nacala Corridor and its ProSAVANA programme. I go online to explore the official website of programme. The key ideas I found online can be summed up as follows: “strategic plan for development, “appropriate agricultural technology”, “development in the Nacala Corridor”, “social and economic development”, “engaging private investment to promote sustainable production”\(^3\).

\(^1\) Since the independence in 1975, Mozambicans have not known any other leadership besides FRELIMO, which remains the ruling party until the present day
\(^2\) The CEPAGRI, created in 2006 to promote large-scale agricultural investment, delineate 7 million ha of land suitable for large-scale agriculture and granted 2,5ha currently for investment until 2009.
\(^3\) ProSAVANA official website: www.prosavana.gov.mz
What do these ideas mean? Do they hold the same meaning for all the people with a stake to land in the region? To answer the question of what development is for people in the Nampula province, I have selected some examples of its multi-interpretations.

'Local' dreams and aspirations: a simplified inventory

When speaking to the regional director of agriculture, he seems to praise transnational investments as the ones ProSAVANA might bring, as opportunities for local residents:

"companies will bring opportunities for the local: catering and housekeeping services in the company housing places, transportation, guards... They could give up on farming and get behind the wheel of a machine." (25/02/2015)

The reception of foreign investment in the district is, however, far from being so straightforward. Alzira is a nun who lives for 20 years in the region and directs an agrarian school quite isolated from the urban centres. She believes that life for the local people is profoundly connected to the past and therefore they are very reluctant in welcoming changes:

"It is very hard to introduce changes in these peoples lives... The future is uncertain because it might disturb the ways of the ancestors... They say 'my parents lived this way, my grandparents lived this way, so this is the way we want to live now.'" (12/01/2015).

The existence of a “strong tradition” was pointed out by Alzira as one of the possible causes of friction between the plans the government has for these peoples' lands and their own aspirations. As a matter of fact, in the region the condition of being a 'peasant' can be seen as part of the cultural identity of the local residents\(^1\). A middle-aged man from one of the communities in the district expressed his pride with the following words: “I am no employee, who pays me is my land!” (27/02/2015).

But tradition is also susceptible of changing and not everyone thinks necessarily the same. It is equally important to give voice to these divergent opinions. Some peasants seemed willing to welcome the sort of development foreign investments will bring. For example, a male informant who chose to work in the urban centre, at one of the Chinese construction sites, tells he decided to so in order to have a fix income:

“I think development for us would be to have fixed jobs. Oh... we don't farm onion and pepper to eat, but to sell... Our soreness is to make business! If we don't produce we won't have salt. We all want development. We

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\(^1\) My aim here is not to fall into the discussion of cultural identity. I make this argument since in the context of the region there is a clear distinction between a 'peasant' and a 'farmer' (in Portuguese, “camponês” and “agricultor”). A peasant is someone traditionally linked to farming for nourishment purposes, a farmer is someone to whom farming constitutes, first and foremost, an economic activity. In this thesis, the use of one term or the other is never at random.
produce [we are peasants] for there are no jobs.” (24/02/2015)

Others engaged half-half with the idea: on one hand they are alarmed by the possibility of having projects occupying huge tracts of land; on the other hand, they still think is a good idea to follow the necessities of the market and to produce crops that have a guaranteed buyer (which are in the case of ProSAVANA, mainly soya):

“It's not that I don't like to have a company here. Having an employer is development. What I don't like is if they come to occupy 10,000 ha at once... But... Aren't we producing tobacco here? We produce tobacco! If they want us to produce soya, we'll produce soya... we'll produce soya because the onion we produce now is giving us troubles.” (24/02/2015)

Calling this section a simplified inventory is a minor irony. I include these informants' voices as such for the sake of breaking through simplified and homogenous representations of 'local' people as holders of similar dreams and aspirations regarding development. Development is a highly contested concept between groups of stakeholder groups but also within these groups (Evers 2012, 112). Life is neither black nor white and on the ground, opinions are divided: the aspirations of the government (and land development projects) and the dreams of local people can both diverge and converge.

3.2. The quest for empty landscapes and the use for unused land

Another highly contested concept is the idea of 'empty' or 'unused' land. The World Bank released in 2010 a report entitled 'Awakening Africa's Sleeping Giant', prospecting the potential for commercial agriculture in the Guinea Savannah zone. The Guinea Savannah crosses 25 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but the report is exhaustive about three case-study countries that “feature large expanses of underutilized Guinea Savannah” (ibid., 50). Mozambique is one of them. Some catchy lines might forcefully illustrate the content I intend to highlight here: “Africa's Guinea Savannah zone contains probably the largest area of underutilized agricultural land in the world.” or “The Guinea Savannah zone is one of the major underutilized resources in Africa.” (both ibid, 25).

The discourse to legitimise the ProSAVANA programme in the district converges with the World Bank report. It draws on arguments of “underused land”, based on the explanation that peasants use rudimentary techniques and are not able to explore land “efficiently”:

“With these rudimentary techniques it is very hard to start farming more land. (...) The large projects are not projects intending to occupy the areas traditionally occupied by the families. There are areas that people do not occupy effectively. For us, these are free areas.” (regional minister for agriculture: 25/02/2015)
These positions were from the beginning highly contested by the opponents of ProSAVANA, based on the fact that two of the three targeted provinces of the programme are the most populous provinces in the country: Nampula and Zambézia, holding about 40% of the entire population. One can read in a UNAC position statement made public in 2012 (UNAC 2012): “We note with great concern that ProSAVANA demands millions of hectares of land along the Nacala Corridor, however, the local reality shows that there is a lack of disposable extensions of land, as the existent ones are used by peasants resorting to the technique of fallow land”.

In practice these divergences allow me to argue that what some stakeholders described as empty or unused land, might not be as such for other implicated groups. To further illustrate this point, I bring a concrete example from my field-work. The region of Nemapheca, in the district, is one of the sites signalized by the regional agriculture's office as 'empty land' with investment potential. Some of my informants insisted that I should come and visit their families and relatives living in this region, to show me how the director for agriculture was “mistaken”: “In Nemapheca no one lives? It is full of people!”, they repeated many times with indignation.

One morning I left with my informant Jay to a visit to the Nemapheca community. The community was far away and the access precarious. We were on the road by six under a blue sky, the road streaking ahead in two parallel ruts of dark water. We drove through the woods like this for five hours. In some places we needed to cross a floodplain with bushes as tall as us. I held my heart tight whenever the wheels began to spin in the mud. Finally, I began to identify groups of huts dispersed among the trees. “Who could imagine,” said Jay, “that this is a community of thousands of peasants?” (27/02/2015).

Material and intangible dimensions of land use: “Makhuwa people look down”

“Makhuwa people look down”, to the earth, says Pe. José Frizzi, an Italian priest who dedicated his life to the study of Makhuwa language in the region, allegoring to the central position of land in Makhuwa societies. The argument that the traditional Makhuwa communities rely on land for their subsistence could be confirmed through observations in the field:

“The pwiyamwene lives with her large kinship (family of her brother and sister) on land inherited from her parents. In the centre of the crops they have built one house and one 50m long shelter with terracotta bricks and thatch roofs. The boys (her grandsons) are busy with making more of these bricks with water and the red, compact soil. With a stick they show me a plan for a chicken coop on the ground. The pwiyamwene family farms around two hectares of maize. Around the patio, they have cassava and pumpkin plants. Behind the house, they grow tobacco. Later, the children explain me how to distinguish tobacco leaves which are ready to harvest. They start hanging them under the shelter, in long sticks, tied with long leaves of grass on both sides. In the morning, the two older kids disappear into the forest and come back with wood. The fire is always burning, and they skilfully incorporate the new pieces of wood into the old fire. It gets brighter. The

1 Makhuwa-Lomwe is the largest ethnic group in the province of Nampula.
*pwiyamwene* is bent over the cassava plant, removing the roots. I help her with pulling them and we cook them for breakfast. In the afternoon, we walked further down the winding path of tall grass that climbed up the small hill on the back of her family's land. At a certain point, I was surprised that we were walking for so long, through large stretches of forest without seeing signs of occupation. “Is this land empty or does it have owners?”, I asked her. She nodded. All the land we could see around us up to the Napatiuá – she pointed to a mountain at a distance, belonged to members of the community of Nemapheca. She guided my gaze through the density of trees to show a group of young trees and bushes. “There were crops before, and now they [the land owners] are bringing the strength back to the soil, so their children can have that land one day.” Some other areas were recently burned down, and they will be used soon to start new crops. “Our woods are not empty! We do rotation of crops and some of our land is now under fallow. We use everything for our own benefit. We need all this land. And if those investors want to come here, to this land, I need to take flour [sorghum flour used in sacred rituals] and ask the spirits if they want to accept them and protected them”. (field-notes: 28/02/2015)

The uses of physical locality are the “embodied practice of discursive expressions of what, for example, value of land is, and what concepts like development, land and heritage means for the stakeholding individuals.” (Evers 2012, 114). From the days lived with the *pwiyamwene* family, I observed the multiple ways in which the landscape is useful for these people livelihoods, supplying materials for construction, food for nourishment and purpose for the daily activity of everyone in the family. Moreover, Makhuwa communities live on shared land with a group of ancestors, who are linked to all the important events in their lives (birth, marriage and death, and economic activities such as harvesting). These ancestors are consider figures with authority over the life of the living (Martínez 2008, 173) and also seem to have a stake to the land, when considering the *emic* perceptions.

Are these valuations of land being taken into consideration by other stakeholders to land? Interestingly, although not all, some of the worries of the *pwiyamwene* find convergence and answers in the national legal frame which regulates the allocation of land.

**Legally speaking 'community' and 'communitarian lands'**

The Mozambique Land Law of 1997 retains the principal that land cannot be sold or mortgaged: it is owned by the state which grants communities and individuals permanent occupation rights, known as DUAT. DUAT stands for “right of use and benefit” over land (Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra), which can be inheritable and transmittable. Such a right can be acquired by customary or traditional occupation; or through recognition of long-standing occupancy, through good faith occupation for more than ten years. DUATs can also be granted on a concessionary basis. In theory, national and foreign investors can obtain these concessions for 'unused land' after the local communities being consulted for a period up to 100 years (OI 2011, 2-18). A FAO report from 2002, prizes the legal recognition of 'local communities' as one of the most interesting innovations under the Mozambique law. A 'community' has the legal potential to gain recognized
rights over the common areas of its territory, as integral parts of their livelihood strategies and farming systems. This common areas can be “areas of habitation, agricultural areas, whether cultivated or in fallow, forests, sites of social-cultural importance, grazing lands, water sources and areas of expansion.” (GoM 1997, 1).

However, despite the protective nature of the land law, some accuse governmental agencies and local elite groups of manipulating the opportunities to their own benefit and not taking the phases of community consultation seriously. One of my informants, an well-educated man working for one NGO in the region, provides an example of these charges:

“The land law in Mozambique is considered progressive in Africa, yes! The problem is that our executive power is very strong... For example, when an investor comes in, he goes directly to the Investment Center and delivers all the needed documentation to obtain a DUAT. Then, the Investment Centre gets back to the Minister of Agriculture: this person can hold a DUAT of 'x' years for 'x' hectares. Only then, the investor goes to the province with his DUAT, to materialize it. This mean that within that province he shall be granted the hectares of land which have been approved. Note here, Filipa, that by the time they were approved both the investor and the minister were unaware of where exactly exists the land he was signed to have! Then, a process of consultation begins with the people living in many of the 'empty' sites of that province. And many of these people don't dare to say 'no' to an investment sent by the government... Partly because it is presented as 'we have found an investor for your land. We think you should welcome him'. You see... the project is already approved, and the consultation serves to legitimize. And in the Province, I assure you, they do everything they can to find those hectares... And some people have too much power... They have tribal and political alliances, from being combatants in the War of Independence, so all the opposition is removed from their positions. For instance, they often hire leaders within this alliances to sign the approval documents.” (7/01/2015)

Another informant, a peasant resident in the district and not linked to any NGO, expressed his mistrust along similar lines:

“The problem with these big projects is that they [the government] ruin everything. Instead of coming here and talking, they send the others [the investors] with all the papers signed, from Nampula, from Maputo... And then, these companies start exploring resources that we peasants even don't know what they are!” (22/02/2015)

Similar claims are described in the literature (see for instance German and Schoneweld 2013 and Funada-Classes 2013), whereas these were contested by informants working inside the government. In the past years, some projects had knocked on the doors of the regional agriculture's office. My interlocutor said promptly
that the process of allocating land to investors and the consultation meetings to make sure land is not occupied, are both taken seriously.

“We know that land in Mozambique belongs to the state... But we are not just sending companies to the communities to occupy their land. Only if the community agrees. We come to a community and we say 'there is a project that needs 1000 ha, where can we send them?'... Then the community says 'that area they can occupy because there they won't disturb us'. And in this case we perform a consultation, in order to confirm officially the community's acceptance of the occupation of that area. And in this process we will speak to all, until the last person in that community.” (regional minister for agriculture: 25/02/2015)

By bringing all these samples together it becomes clear that land is valued differently in the region based on divergent conceptions of what land is and how it should be used. These processes of evaluation find convergence and divergence in the 'zones of intermediality' when people and groups come together and allows to capture potential areas of contestation (Evers 2012a, 18). From these, frictions are likely to emerge.

3.3. Symptoms of contestation: from business trips to protest petitions

In the summer 2012, the administrator of the district went on a business trip to Brazil. He was one of seven district government authorities chosen to be part of this overseas adventure. All together, they visited Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and “some countryside places”. They stayed in a “very good hotel, on the 7th floor, with a astonishing view over the city”. He was particularly enthusiastic about the new camera he'd bought and took thousands of photographs. “Brazil is an amazing country”, he concluded during our talk.

2012 was also the year that marked the critical phase of the opposition to ProSAVANA in Mozambique. Abdul from ADECRU, explains that only then “the intentions of the government were found, when the minister for agriculture José Pacheco gave an interview in Brazil, during a business trip, stating that “Mozambique had land for Brazilian investors” (08/01/2015). According to the Folha de S. Paulo online newspaper, the exact words of the minister were these ones: “Brazilian farmers have accumulated experience that is very welcome,” and “we want to repeat in Mozambique what they managed to do in the Brazilian cerrado 30 years ago”1.

Drawing on these two stories from different stakeholders, I argue how different the same event can be reproduced, in this case to myself in the role of a 'new audience'. For the district's administrator, a business trip was portrayed as a pleasant visit to an “amazing country”. For the peasant associations and civil society groups, the overseas' visits of the Mozambican government are portrayed quite differently. Finding out about the ProSAVANA plans through a leak in the news was pointed out by the opposition blocks as primary reason to “doubt the intentions of the programme” (Abdul, 08/01/2015). In October 2012, peasant associations in Nampula, Zambézia, Niassa and Cabo Delgado, regional groups from UNAC, met in the city

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1 Refering to the PROCEDER programme.
of Nampula to discuss and analyse the ProSavana prospects. From this meeting emerged the ideology that defines the future trajectories of the opposition, particularly that “The ProSavana is the result of a top-down policy, without taking into consideration the demands, dreams and desires of the base, particularly the peasants of the Nacala Corridor.” (UNAC 2012; Via Campesina 2012).

Later on, the concerns of Mozambican civil society became so strongly mediatised that on the 28th May 2013, more than 20 civil society organisations and social movements, peasants, environmental, religious movements, and communities in the Nacala Corridor, signed and submitted the 'Open Letter for Immediate Suspension and Fundamental Review of the ProSavana programme', to the heads of the states of the three countries. The ProSavana programme was already target of worldwide attention at the time and the letter was signed by a number of up to 100 NGOs around the world. The Letter underlined the need of an open debate in a “process of great social relevance, economic and environmental, with high-potential impacts and direct harmful effects on the lives of millions of citizens and future generations.” (UNAC 2013). The achievements of this campaign have been more than symbolic: it has forced the government to greater transparency in the process and to the delayed release of the ProSavana Master Plan and, as my friends puts it, “the perverse manner in which it was original conceived”.

As such, at the time of this field-work the ProSavana discourse have changed in response to the opposition claims. Consider, for instance, the words of the director of the regional agriculture department:

“The ProSavana is a headache, because there is too much noise around it. There is too much negative intervention, too much negative interpretation. They [activists] say to the communities, to people who are interested in the program: ‘ProSavana will grab your lands, look at Brazil’s example.’ But we do not want to copy Brazil’s model! It is true that Brazil will be our partner in terms of technology transfer. But Mozambican government, having looked at the experience of Brazil, drew a ProSavana plan along the lines of Mozambique’s reality. Some people do not understand this... These are the people who give me a headache. We will not use the model, only the methods! We say, this program has space for everything, for the large companies and for the communities. It will not displace anyone.” (regional minister for agriculture: 25/02/2015)

At this point in time two important things had happened: first, the convergences and divergences aligned in two fronts and the debate became polarized (and simplified); second, the ProSavana official position shifted in an attempt to attain convergence with the other side. In the next sections I explore how these two fronts and their positionings are reproduced in the locality.

3.4. Reproduction: scale-make projects travel

To follow previous evidences, I argue that the two fronts (pro and against ProSavana) created dominant configurations of scale (of what land is and should it be used) not only in the context of the Nacala Corridor,
but also in Mozambique and for the world. I am arguing in this chapter that such scales, once created, urge to be reproduced. Tsing (2005, 13) clues us in, in this regard, that in order “to explore just how knowledge moves (…), it's important to learn about the collaborations through which knowledge is made and maintained (…) because through such collaborations “global (…) projects (…) gain their shape.” Evers cautions us that such knowledge is “never a neutral knowledge stream but a mediation coloured by political, ideological and particular interests of the messenger” (Evers 2012, 113). I am now going to move down the ladder, to the local end of such scale-making projects, to show how the information is travelling and impacting the locality.

For a better understanding of what this means, let me introduce a hand-picked cocktail of events.

**The re-making of local dreams: a question of language**

An easy way through which one can identify attempts of reproducing knowledge into new contexts is by looking at language. I mean it in the literal sense: to look at translation of ideas into different languages. They might provide us of clues as to who the audiences are, whom the projects of scale-making want to recruit. Two examples might illustrate this point better:

(One) “Eprokrama emossa y'o Mossampikhi enaakhaliherya attu oMossamphiki” (a programme of Mozambique for the Mozambicans).

“There is poster in Makhuwa at the entrance of the agriculture department in the district. Under the title 'ProSAVANA' there is a page of comic strips. At the top, one finds “Agriculture in the Nacala Corridor as it is today”: an image of a small house with the traditional thatch roof. Adults work on the land in front of the house, and a bicycle rides away carrying bags of goods down a dirt track. At the bottom, and throughout the cartoons, the situation evolves to the “Vision of ProSAVANA for agricultural development in the Nacala Corridor”: the same family present in the comic strip one, but now living in a better house (glass windows, a terrace, solar panels, a water collector container, a storage house, an antenna); people work the same land but this time with the organized lines of production, using machines and irrigation; there is a house for the animals in the distance and a motorcycle against the house wall; a truck is picking up the bags of goods.” (field-notes: 20/02/2015)

(Two) “Etthaya ahu ti muhakhu ahu” (our land, our treasure).

“There are some printed booklets handled from hand to hand among some community members in the district. They were compiled by the catholic diocese of Nacala to raise the awareness of the rights to land. I read through the first lines: “In the land we inherited from our ancestors we feel safe, because that is where our roots and story reside. Land is our only guarantee: in our land we grow our food, through her we dialogue with the spirits of our ancestors, in our land we find wood to build our houses, in our land our animals can eat, in our land we find the plants to cure ourselves, in our land we identify the origin of our
Some pages further, under the title of “ProSAVANA – fear and conflict”, the reader gets to know three things: that “ProSAVANA is a copy of the big project Proceder, developed in Brazil with the help of Japan to farm large crops of soya and other goods to export.”; that “ProSAVANA is a mega-project (a very big project) signed by the government of Mozambique, Brazil and Japan to explore an area of 14.5 million hectares, home to 5.5 million of peasants.”; and that “ProSAVANA is certainly going to grab the land of small scale farmers, leaving the people without means for their own subsistence.” (field-notes: 10/02/2015)

Both of these materials were created having the Nacala Corridor’s peasants as an audience and translated into their language. They present the ProSAVANA programme as being two different things. The gap between the two is so big that one cannot even recognize the programme when comparing them: they reproduce two ideas in opposition. When the ProSAVANA team conceived and printed the poster they did it so it would meet community dreams of development. In contrast, the booklet, by including in the same edition, neutral information on land legislation and biased political information on the ProSAVANA programme, transmits the political stance of the editors. ProSAVANA proponents, in trying to meet small-scale farmers dreams, switched their initial discourse of development from large-scale commercial production to small-scale production. NGOs have frozen their discourses in time, and chose to mediate the programme from a different stance.

Local residents have then to choose between one of the two discourses to define their positions. Some representations stick better in the locality than others. The idea of ProSAVANA as a replica from PROCEDER at the time the field research took place seemed to stick much better than the idea of a “Mozambican programme design for the Mozambicans”. Why is this happening this way?

We might want to take a look at complementary ways in which the same ideas are travelling: through the power of imagination.
4. Imagination

“No longer mere fantasy (...), no longer simple escape (...), no longer elite pastime (...), and no longer mere contemplation (...), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (...), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility.” (Appadurai 1996, 31)

“There is no intermediality without imagination”. (Evers, pers. comm. 02/06/2015)

To begin with, it is relevant to ask: whose imagination I am discussing here? I speak here of imagination as a property of groups and not merely as a faculty of one single individual, as Appadurai points out in the opening quote of this chapter. As such, in the context of global cultural processes, imagination can be understood as a social practice: “The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order” (ibid., 31).

Local people become increasingly unsettled by the developments described in the previous chapters. Activists in the region tell stories about displacement in nearby areas and these narratives feed fears of imminent displacement. In such a context, their imagination is fostered by a cocktail of unrest and uncertainty, impacting their life trajectories directly.

An example of the work of imagination will allow for more concrete understandings.

4.1. We only trust the short-handled hoe

“Alima arrived from her family crop riding a bicycle, hands and feet covered with dirt. She excused herself for a rather long wash up, and reappeared afterwards wearing a wine coloured capulana (african fabric) dress. As we talk, in the front yard of her house, I cannot ignore her strong presence. Her vests are highly detailed, with frills on the end of her sleeves and fine, golden-orange flowers stitched along the neckline. A electric-blue fabric is tied up around her head with a big lace, the ends pending in the air. She is worried.

A: ProSAVANA creates malaria here in Mozambique. Only by pronouncing that name, you are not going to be well-welcomed. ProSAVANA opened the path for the 'mega-projects'.

Me: But do ProSAVANA projects already exist?

A: It does! It is there, in Agrimoz. They always show up with the promise of putting an end to our 'suffering', by bringing employment... But then, they have all the machinery for everything: sowing with machine, harvest with machine, bagging with machine... We don't want companies to bring us employment, we trust our short-handled hoe!”

Me: Can you tell me what happened to those farmers in Lioma [Agrimoz location]?

A: Some of them went to Lioma, others came here, other went to the mountains. (after a short break) They
come here to kill! (…) So, that name, we don't want to hear it! [For us] everything now is ProSAVANA. We are worried about that plan... An airplane came here, to research us. Before ProSAVANA, we didn't see any of this happening in Mozambique. Coming with an airplane... We see the airplane flying above us knowing nothing!

She explains that peasants need a lot of help, but in the form of “seeds and access to credit”. I ask about the episode with GAPI1.

A: Last year we asked credit from GAPI, to legalize the warehouse and to commercialize the association's products. Our warehouse is full and if we cannot sell them, everything will rot... But when they came here to formalize the application, we were very surprised to find out that they were staff from ProSAVANA! Now, we've given up on the credit and we're finding ways to pay back what we already used...

Me: Why would you do that, if the money is so important to invest in the selling of the maize you have stored there [I meant the warehouse, which she had shown to me]?

A: Because if we use that money and then we can't pay it back, ProSAVANA will come and ask for our lands in return.

Me: Did they really say that?

A: No! They wouldn't say a thing, as they never explain anything. But we know this is their way to charge us back.” (field notes: 05/02/2015)

4.2. Plays of imagination and insecurity: 'malawi '

This vignette is one example that helps to illustrate the imagination of small-scale farmers at work, regarding the ProSAVANA Programme in the district. I chose this excerpt among others because its highlights something that struck me during the time I spent among peasants in Nampula: keeping the access to land had become a great deal of these peoples lives, bringing along a lot of existential insecurity. Albeit the need of being careful with generalizations, I break my own rules by saying that, most worries about losing land were summarized in the standard anxiety: “If they take us from here, where are we going to live?”. By 'living', my informants meant to “pass life in a specific manner”.

The fear of not knowing whether or not they will be capable of producing their way of living in a future envision, seemed to generate lots of insecurity. In this mind-setting, people bring themselves to the encounter with the other in their imaginations, and when they identify with characteristics or personages of a story (e.g. the peasants of Lioma), they begin to judge that same story in light of their own fears and dreams. Based on these perceptions, I argue that this is how, through the work of imagination, the ProSAVANA became a 'malawi'. A malawi, in the local language, is the equivalent of a bad omen, and it is used when

1 GAPI is a financial institution, historically linked to the improvement of access conditions to financial services, especially in rural areas. Since 2011-2012, GAPI has become part of the Mozambican Agricultural Ministry and JICA to launch an initiative to promote investments with direct impact on the access that small-scale farmers have to new markets and technologies.

2 Other informants have made the same claims, example interview with C.E., 27/01/2015.
something is a sign that anticipates something very sad.

At the same time, the story shows how local residents developed an “awareness that is hyper-attentive to real and imaginary stimuli” (Vigh 2009, 422). Due to the unclear representations of the programme, individual and group actions are framed within predictions in relation to “present possibilities and envisioned trajectories” (ibid., 420), and take place in imaginary encounters between stakeholders. This is how Alima came to judge the possible outcome of the GAPI incident.

Another question is if and how gossip and rumours can be instrumentalised for intermediality purposes. “There is no intermediality without imagination”, Evers sentences. People receive information and manipulate it. In this process, imagination proves to be a powerful tool, as rumour goes hand in hand with the production of social and political alliances. Rumour produced parallel fears across continents and Mozambican peasants went overseas to meet in person their fellows in Brazil, displaced by PROCEDER policies. These are results of the collective imagination processes Appadurai (1996) warned us about, where groups are capable of moving from shared imagination to collective action.

Conclusions part I

In the first of this collection of chapters, I have presented the reader with an overview of what complex ideas such as development (in “We are open for business”) and use of land (in “Quest for empty landscapes...”) mean for different stakeholders. In the region of study, these ideas seem to be very much connected to the ProSAVANA discussion. In their representation of what ProSAVANA is, stakeholders actively draw on different elements and interpret the same concepts differently. Evers stresses this point as very relevant when stakeholders meet in a 'zone of intermediality': “although signs may have become interchangeable, with various actors using a common terminology, what is signified may be entirely different” (Evers 2012, 113). Mapping through these differences and similarities becomes essential in understanding why some representations of projects and concepts cause friction (in “Symptoms of contestation...”).

Stakeholders are not monolithic groups, they are shaped by people with different experiences and aspirations. However, I have shown how diverse stakeholders are able to engage with each other in campaigns to promote particular configurations of scale. These attempts can be “both imperial schemes to control the world and liberatory mobilizations for justice and empowerment.” (Tsing 2005, 9). The variations within these aligned scale-making projects confront one another, but processes of negotiation allow emerging networks to find a common ground for action. In their journey from conception to mediation, scale-making projects (of what land is and how it should be used, and not be used) created homogeneous audiences. As a consequence local aspirations and dreams might not fit totally inside these packages. Some are ruled out. Where are, for instance, the voices of those peasants who said they would produce soya, in the global claims for land-rights justice of the campaigns against ProSAVANA? As I said before in my considerations about the potential and perversity of scale-making, not all the ideas can be reproduced and incorporated.
In the two last chapters (“Reproduction...” and “Imagination”), I explored precisely how the scales of these campaigns are being mediated and incorporated in discourses and practices which travel beyond the setting where they are born, as part of stakeholders' attempts of gaining supporters for their projects. The intermediality approach (Evers 2012) tells us to look for signs of mediated symbols acting as 'connectors'. A connector is a concept that is mediated by a particular group into new contexts. “These symbols are building blocks of structure considered fundamentally cognitive and (potentially) social in nature – histories, experiences, beliefs, interests.” (Carley and Kaufer, in Evers, 8). They give form in which ideas can travel across scales and audiences. I have looked into two specifics attempts of mediating a particular configuration of scale (the ProSAVANA poster and the NGO booklet). Whether they are images, morals or stories, these attempts can travel when mediated in such a way that become meaningful for people in a new setting. In this way, the story Alima tells (of the displaced peasants in Lioma) became meaningful once it was effectively integrated in peoples imaginations. And the role of imagination within political projects isn't trivial: it can tie human beings together across continents.
PART II
Large-scale land acquisitions in practice

(Or: where I bring into discussion not interactions happening between stakeholders’ imaginations – that was the main concern in the second part of the thesis, but factual interactions happening on real ground.)
5. Are localized attempts of access 'local'?

The setting of the case study is a rural district in the Nampula province spread over approximately 5000km² of miombo woodlands and impressively-shaped granite mountains. In the slopes of these mountains and in the low lands of the river banks, live generations of communities of Makhuwa lineage. Subsistence agriculture is the activity that occupies the greatest part of their lives. Peasants work on small pieces of familial-owned land (sizing from one to two hectares) and farm it for nourishment; the main crops are maize, cassava, sorghum, lackeyed peas, groundnuts and rice. Cultivation of other products (tomato, peppers, onion, sesame and tobacco) is done largely as a surplus for sale. The district features amongst the province's higher rates of production. Its favourable climate, fertile soils and abundance of water are the reasons that sustain such a reality. But others reasons might well play a decisive role. Since its construction in the colonial times, the railway linking the village to Nampula and Cuamba has become very important as a means to circulation of farmers and their products. Moreover, many of the villages along the Nacala corridor are linked both to Nampula city and Nacala port by a tarmac road built very recently. These features seem to also explain the mediation of such places as prime sites for large-scale agricultural investments. On the ground, stakeholders are vying for land and resource-competition is on the agenda of local, national and international news.

At the time of this research, I found only one company occupying (at least part) of the land that was assigned for it in the region. Yet, the resource-competition seemed to be ferocious.

5.1. Unexpected riots, uprisings and revolutions

When SoyMOZ planned to start its activities in June 2013, its director could not anticipate the wave of protests that would follow two years later. The company was funded as a transnational joint venture between two European companies, one of them a Portuguese company historically linked to the production of cotton in the region, especially through contract farming in the province of Niassa. In 2007, Joaquim, the Director-Manager had came to Mozambique with the mission of relaunching the agricultural operations of the whole business group to which SoyMOZ belongs to. He looked at the area in the district and saw a "very nice property (…) with a river near by, people around, the railway next door" (04/03/2015).

Plans were made in view of launching a pilot project to produce soya and cotton: it would begin with an area of 2000 ha inside the district, and gradually increase to 20,000 ha elsewhere. The company had secured the availability of these lands, through acquiring the rights to explore the former lands of a Portuguese settler. After gaining independence, the government nationalized these in a cooperative but this cooperative was later shut down because of the civil war. The government lacked the funds for investment and privatized the land again. The business group seized at this opportunity and acquired the property. At the time this happened, since none of the formal owners occupied the land intensively, many local residents had

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1 At the time I was mostly following data bases as the farmlandgrab.org.
already moved to the area in question.

During the 2013 season, SoyMOZ cultivated soy-beans, sesame and cotton on a small area of 200 ha. In its second season, the company expanded the area to 400 ha. Local peasants' associations account for ten families that were displaced in the process (28/01/2015). The director and employees claimed to have complied with the law by consulting the communities in advance, securing a legal notice period and offering a fair restitution to the families. The value of the landscape is in Mozambique labelled by law in material terms and it does not take into account the ontological aspects of land as a heritage. The government brought a table of prices defining the value for each three; the value of the houses was defined by the families, in accordance with the characteristics of its construction and size. Nonetheless, the company left intact the tombs of the villagers' ancestors, which stand right in the middle of their plantation as a dark green, forested spot. The displaced families now live along the flanks of the soya hills, only a few meters from the growing plants. A small track, carved in the middle of the fields by regular footsteps, denounce the irony of their new location. People living in this new area were very disturbed during our meetings: “We now live like savages! This land is not fertile, it is a swamp. The good area was on the other side.” (15/02/2015)

These were the circumstances when, in 2014, SoyMOZ manifested its intentions of occupying more of the land assigned in their DUAT. Informants from both the company and the government said that some peasants were willing to cooperate in the deal: they had received the notes of relocation and compensation. Then, suddenly, something happened. “People started returning us the papers, all together, everybody in the community” (Luciano, company's engineer 03/02/2015). The company held a meeting to clarify the situation. Various people present at this meeting were described it as quite fierce. Remarking on this event, Joaquim pulled the words out quickly: “It was a horror! You cannot imagine! I was shaking when I left. They even pulled out our landmarkers and threw them inside the pickup.” (04/03/2015). An old peasant confirmed the nature of the atmosphere: “It wasn't good. I am not going to say that there weren't pushes. There were pushes. And in the end we took their landmarkers and told them: take them back to your company”. (12/02/2015).

Landmarkers are often symbols of property rights and physically push people away and/or restrict access (Ribot and Peluso 165). The rejection of the landmarkers became then a very strong symbol in this land dispute and a figurative way of looking at the escalating conflict. In the aftermath of these tensions and of this key-event, two types of emergent arguments to legitimise access to land could be distilled and compared among the stakeholders. The first argument in use was precisely the existence of a legal right to land (a land-title, in the case of the company, and the right by long-standing occupancy in case of the communities):

“*The population took land from our DUAT! And we need the area of our DUAT to increase the crops. We own a DUAT for a land that is occupied and we pay for this DUAT every year.*” (Luciano, 03/02/2015).

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1 Later on, my own observations in the field confirmed these numbers.
2 The incident was even incorporated in discourses as one of the 'legends' of the opposition mobilization.
“We have the right to this land because we've lived here for more than 10 years. Our population has permanent DUAT, by which these trees are our cemeteries.” (community meeting: 14/02/2015)

“The company is inside the municipal area. That shouldn't be possible. The district needs to grow. They must go out and the population must stay inside the village. It's wrong if they are allowed to stay in the village and the population is pushed out!” (community meeting: 16/02/2015)

The second set of arguments comprehends an appeal to historical ownership. The director of the company legitimised access drawing on arguments of connection with the territory and fruitful bonds with its people; along similar lines, the affected communities in the area, claim land in terms of heritage (access to ancestral land and cemeteries):

“Our Group is the most ancient and the most significant investment in Mozambique. We have been in Mozambique since 114 years! We've never left Mozambique, we went through all the crises. Even during the war we had a police squad buying cotton in the bush! (...) We have a very strong presence and contact with the population! In Niassa, we fund 40 000 producers. We have 40 000 producers that take, in credit, half a million dollars per year! (...) If you got to Niassa and got to ask people, who we are... People know [us], we are here since 114 years!” (Joaquim: 04/03/2015)

“The embryo of a group of companies that have generated wealth over 100 years and whose history is mistaken as the country's itself.” (in the corporation's website, when referring to the larger business group)

“Get out of here? We have no other place where to go! We are living in tribes and the tribes have their own boundaries. If we are forced to leave from here, all the other areas are occupied by people in the same situation as we here. Our strength resides in this: we are from here. Our ancestors were born here, lived here and died here. They passed this land out to our grandparents and our parents, and so on.” (community meeting: 16/02/2015)

Some weeks later, a common effort united the regional peasant associations with the communities in the area and a petition was delivered to the government of the province. A copy of it ended up in my hands: one page typed with an argument and many others filled with signatures. This gesture was apparently taken seriously. The President from the district himself came to visit the community to ensure that nobody else would be displaced. At that time, politicians and local government were already sucked into the debate. The whole thing happened during the electoral campaign, in the last semester of 2014, and for that, Luciano (03/02/2015) accused the local government of not filling its role as facilitator of the deal, trying instead to buy the electorate sympathies. As a matter of fact, the district government seemed to recognize the legitimacy of the communities legal rights over the company, and promised to find a different area for the
investment to take place.

I present the original arguments to show how deeply historic/cultural/socio-economic trajectories are connected to contemporary land access and uses patterns and claims (Roymans et. al 2009). Stakeholders actively construct and deconstruct the narratives of the past and pick out the legal rights that better complement these narratives in view of securing their access to territory. The context of these interplays is rooted in particular histories. For the community, land is intimately connected with the history of a chiefdom, the ruling chief and the spirits of the ancestors who inhabited it before. Territorial systems of governance did not exist in Mozambique before the Portuguese colonization, instead customary authorities relied on social systems based on alliances between rural families. In this particular historical charter, time perspective starts with the history of the arrival of the ancestors in the region, and it is very different from the perspective used by the the company which roots the whole project in its own particular historic moment (the fixation of their business corporation in Mozambique a hundred years ago).

Ultimately, the Mozambican state has control: locals and investors might gain and maintain access through the regulatory role of the state (Ribot and Peluso, 159). The government is this case seemed divided in their discourses over land distribution. The rights associated with law, custom, and convention are not always the same, permitting overlapping webs of claims which are equally valid (legally speaking). So, the outcome has a lot more to do with questions of 'position' than with the formal rights that individuals might possess (ibid., 158). In a context where access rights are plural, and people can make claim of several (and often contradictory) rights, other factors necessarily come into play in order to legitimize the rights claimed.

As such, the events do not resume to this. More informative events were about to come onto the scene. By the time the dust had settle, UNAC and GRAIN were working together in a joint report to account for all the cases of 'land grab' in the Nacala corridor. This report came out in February 2015, suggestively named “the land grabbers of the Nacala Corridor”. A friend called me from Portugal: the affair had reached Portuguese television news. The case of the company was mediated in bold headlines: “Portuguese colonialism is back” (UNAC and GRAIN 2015); the “colonial-style scramble for Africa's farm lands” (ibid.) exploiting the fact that a Portuguese company was trying to re-establish itself in former colonial lands. The report mentioned that “several thousand more [people] will lose their lands if the company is allowed to expand to 20,000 ha”.

These numbers naturally drew the attention of international NGOs, which already had their eyes set on the corridor for its ProSAVANA mediatization.

5.2. From Europe to Africa and back

The visit of an international NGO to a community setting forces two cultural life-worlds to interact with each-other. To discuss the potential of this encounter one must track down how it is actually caused to happen and what actually happens inside the space of this new interactive context. In this section I show activism in its constructive and pervasive effects and how can it be at the same time disconnected from the local momentum, and still an incentive for collective action and individual opportunism.
Let me begin with the day Jay took me to a meeting between community members and an international NGO. We walked outside the village to the meeting point where a modern pick-up was waiting for us. Inside, a blond woman was accompanied by two male members of UPCN. With the addition of Jay and myself the car was filled and we began our journey to the community where I had been several times before. The activist was a well-educated French woman and Portuguese speaker (with a strong Brazilian accent), living in England. She worked with a challenging schedule: in the morning with this community, in the afternoon a different one and on the next day a flight to Malawi for a conference. She made the best of her time, skipping lunch, and stopping instead at the side of the road to buy African fabrics. Our male companions seemed restless and worried. The community was waiting us. Everybody helped in making the transaction of the fabrics as quick as possible.

A group of peasants convened for the meeting. The arrival of the activist was received with much enthusiasm, and when the formalities were over, she came straight to the point: “I'm to amplify your resistance. Let's resist together.” Her task was to write an article about what has been going on in the last year between the community and the investor company. For the next hour she focused on gathering very precise information: “How many hectares now? How many more to come? How have they pretended to lay claim to that area exactly?”. The peasants were restless and spread their discontentment all over the place, some speaking of things that had little to do with these questions. But artfully, the activist kept it all on track, bringing uniformity to these complains into what she called a “bad model of production”. A model of production that “we already had in our countries in Europe a long time ago and we got the effects from it”, she says and enumerates, “latifúndio, environmental polution, loss of land fertility, and our peasants also don't have land to farm anymore.” The locals seem confused: they probably are not sure why the struggles in England are brought into the discussion. They ask more about it. She then told them about food sovereignty. She explained that there is another model of production: the companies can buy from the peasants. The audience approved. After-all, their biggest struggle is not the production but the access to markets.

Fortunately, she came with a plan: “I think that it's essential to gather all the neighbouring communities. It could be a letter”. All the communities in Nampula would sign: “we are against the model the government want to impose on us”. Her audience became enthusiastic with the idea and promptly expressed its readiness to make it come true. They wanted to gather everyone in the next days so the visit could explain what they should do. At this moment it was time for the activist to became trapped in the misunderstanding. She was not doing this for herself, she explained, and she could not stay anyway, she needed to fly the next day. The community members seemed disappointed. They wanted a different solution, for a letter they had already written never got an official reply, they explained. What they wanted was to have an official response to their letter... Nevertheless, Jay and his retinue from Nampula were charged with sending the letter to UNAC in Maputo, which in its turn would send the final product to the NGO in Europe. They must to, since UNAC receives funding from this NGO on a regular basis. In the end, the activist asked for volunteers to shoot a short video in the middle of the waving maize field. She wanted to publish it together with the article. Jay told me this is what people in the community want, someone who comes to
bring them hope.

The episode I reconstructed here is informative in several ways. First, 'local' claims are made 'global' and vice-versa through uneven encounters shaped through mediation of misunderstandings and dreams. The activist and the community members shared their worries and goals, which do not seem to align justly at first. The community members mistrust the government and would like to posses documentation which confirms that the lands they live on are not going to be taken away in the future. The NGO's goal is to mobilize an international campaign for food sovereignty against a liberal market-oriented model of production. Along the way, such mobilisation also happens to help the peasants in securing rights to access land. These are two essentially different things, but both find convergence in the practical means stakeholders want to achieve in the short term: the locals want support for their claims, and the NGO wants to produce a letter and a video to share on their website. In this sense, the outcome of such encounters seems to be productive, as allows for “regional causes [to] found their own transnational resources” (Tsing 2005, 227), by giving local communities access to a form of authority. In this regard, Ribot and Peluso (2003, 170) warn us that privileged access to authority can strongly influence who benefits from a resource. In a contest where communities can do little due to the cost of communication with agents and authorities (lack of lexicon, lack of means), access to international pressure opens new ways of legitimizing rights for these peoples. In turn, the activist walks way with fresh material to support her NGO's agenda.

Second, by focusing on such interactions we might distil a very clear example of intermediality. By speaking of 'global commons' of justice, what international NGOs and activists are doing is reproducing “categories of knowledge” (Ribot and Peluso 2003, 169) and legitimising their interventions around the world by hooking up to environmental and human rights discourses. By all means, essencializing the reality on the ground seems to make these categories of knowledge travel a lot more easily and effectively. NGOs and human rights associations created a scale where the struggles of peasants for their access to land is represented through an emotional distortion of the complexities of the context where they exist (the NGO activist during her visit focused mainly on two things: how many hectares the company wanted, and how many people are going to be/were displaced; in GRAIN/UNAC’s report the activists equalised contemporary land deals to a historical past of colonial oppression). In the process, local peoples are given voice at the same time that their voices become fuzzy and their dreams diluted.

Conclusions: on rights and legitimacy

“Discourse and the ability to shape discursive terms deeply influence entire frameworks of access” (Ribot and Peluso 2003, 169).

“Heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of power” (Tsing 2005, 5)
Let me take these quotes as fuel for the discussion of this chapter. The events surrounding SoyMOZ can be used as case study to understand how varied stakeholders are accessing land in the Nacala Corridor, through the legitimization of their access claims in a context where diverse conceptualizations of land-use and development dreams intersect. As such, the setting of the case study is very special, for there was evidence of these intersections happening at different moments of time, before and after the land conflict. Mediation of development dreams and awareness of land rights was brought to the local setting, as a result of the parallel mobilization of resources to reject the ProSA VANA programme (e.g. land law booklet). One can observe the local appropriation of this knowledge in the way it was turned into arguments (such as the ten-years long-standing occupation). On the other hand, such intersections happening after the conflict secured community members' rights by scaling the conflict to wider audiences (e.g. through the visit of NGOs and the publication of the report).

It becomes clear that the matter of access concerns more than the existence of legal rights, especially in the case where overlap of tenure systems and tenure histories can be found. In the case study, both company and local communities had the legal right to gain or maintain access to land. Ribot and Peluso (2003, 163), call attention to the fact that within a setting of plural reasoning actors can enhance their own benefits, “by choosing the forum in which to claim their rights.”

Something happened in the months between the first casualty (the displacement of ten families) and the polemics of resistance that followed. The balance of power seemed to tip on the side of local level groups. They have aligned themselves to avoid suffering the adverse effects of land deals with other regional, national and international stakeholders. I had already clarified the very nature of these alliances in the Nacala Corridor land's debate, where several players against ProSavana were able to group up in a vertical chain to mediate their claims. Hence, what seems to be determinant for the SoyMOZ case-study was the very pre-existence of this chain where some actors of this chapter could just hook in. At the same time, the company was unable to link with the usual chains: the local government had been drawn into a severe mobilization against land investments at a sensitive time (the coming of elections). As a result of this dynamic, and by the time this field-work took place, the majority of the local residents were still living inside the area targeted by the company.

In this precise case, and against the odds, communities have managed to secure their tenure over land. It was mainly the ability of engaging in processes of vertical intermediality (i.e. with regional, national and international stakeholders) that ultimately served to legitimize access over resources for the stakeholders on the ground. In this process, some key-stakeholders seem to have a prominent role. In the next chapter I follow the stakeholders who connect the nodes of the vertical chain at the local level's end.
6. The middle-men in cultural engagement

Now that the stage is ready with all its adornments, its time for me to introduce a figure likely to influence the results of the show. This chapter explores how individuals who, due to their assets, have a special position in land debates navigate its cultural interactions. Intermediality and navigation are concepts explored all throughout this story, but here I will be particularly concerned with deconstructing particular strategies of intermediality to show how these key-stakeholders navigate the convergence and divergences in land projects and debates. I argued of their 'ability' (Ribot and Peluso 2003) to position themselves in the 'intermediality zones' (Evers 2012) and to 'navigate' there (Vigh 2009). They have learned the ways to move in a culturally diverse ground and they possess effective skills to mediate ideologies and practices from divergent life-worlds in order to accomplish things int the interest of the group they represent (and in their own interest).

I want to give strategies of navigation in these land debates a central-role, so I present the stories first: the analyses come after.

6.1. Brokers portrayals

Jay, the story-teller.

Jay is a talented peasant working for UPCN. In his own words there was no land conflict in the district where he was not present “to sit with the people, with the government and with the company” (28/02/2015). Accordingly, when asked about any issue regarding the past land deals, Jay would pull out his A5 notebook and calmly flip through the pages until finding the desired meeting description. He could give details about who gained a concession of how many hectares where, where and if community consultation had taken place, who where the authorities present and could draw a map better than any other on the location of all the places mentioned in the land acquisition discussions. In sum, he knew land debates 'on the ground'.

He was from a peasant background, born in one of the most isolated communities in the region but had long left his land to come to the city. Outside his village some people nod in recognition of his name and status as “a great farmer”. Being a 'farmer', in the context of the region, can been seen as a distinction of status. Just some years ago he had finished secondary school (in the context of the district this represents quite an achievement), and participated in various courses (to develop competencies in general) offered by NGOs in the field of civic rights and advocacy.

“You have got to hear this!”, was his way of approaching me many times. Jay liked to tell stories and he was a born speaker. He, himself, recognized this gift. When I told him: “Jay, you know how to speak!”; he

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1 I had a hard time writing the stories that figure in this section. Moving between the desire of telling these tales with rich details to bring the personages alive to the reader, and the need to protect their identities, I kept some facts in very abstract terms. Albeit for this reason, the brokers' stories lack the depth they could have, I hope that their characteristics as both brokers and human beings remained untouched.
laughed, “that's exactly what I'm known for in the district”. Building on different episodes, I came to the conclusion that he was the teller of some of the 'opposition stories' travelling around in the district. In one of those episodes¹, we were in his own village. It was a sunny and hot Saturday morning, when a group of 65 men and 25 women gathered inside one of the classrooms. Some of them sat on the ground, soft, orange sand. Jay was out of tone for the very first time. He started, “In the other places I don't speak like this, but here is my home!” And he told them a story. He started with the peasants in Lioma, displaced by the large-scale project of Agrimoz. He told them how their 'brothers and sisters' were pushed away from their lands, after accepting an agreement that the company did not fulfil. The agitation in the room was settled after that moment. Jay went on; his list of grievances was extensive. The peasants from Lioma separated from each other to try to find new land, some asking for land in neighbouring communities, others moving to marginal locations were they do not have access to clean water. No to speak of the pesticides used by the company contaminated the new crops and the newborn babies were not healthy. All these were concerns serious enough to touch everybody gathered in the classroom.

When the narrative was at its peak, he related the incident where members of a community nearby pulled the landmarkers from the company as a protest, during the community consultation (I have described this incident in chapter 6). At last, people set still in their seats as Jay introduced the final episode: The visit of the governor to a group of communities hundreds kilometres far away. “When this company went there to find areas for their DUAT, the first thing to come in was the police car. Brothers and sisters, I said to them, hold your hearts in place. The police was there, surrounding the people and we had no fear. And they said NO to the governor: We know that the Mr. governor sold out our land. Japan has machines, Brazil has techniques and Mozambique has not occupied land. So I say, we, peasants together, can always win!”. As a final note, he turned against the leadership, condemning it for selling out (he meant, accepting the deals) its people and their land to the government. “Be careful and remember that the people here elected you”. The leaders found themselves suddenly in question, their authority being challenged in public. And Jay ended his speech amidst much applause.

I have heard Jay telling this sort of narrative many times, to me, and to different groups. His actuation in the district was already noticed by the local authorities. “The governor in the district looks down on me. But, all I'm trying to do is to bring justice for the people.” (24/02/2015). Maybe because of it, he was starting to be more careful. In one occasion, on our way to meet a peasant's association, I notice he was wearing a bright yellow FRELIMO t-shirt. Knowing about his political convictions, I teased him. His answer surprised me, even if I was prepared to look exactly at this sort of behaviour! Because on that day we would most probably need to report ourselves formally in the local government office, he explained, the government t-shirt was a sign of 'good faith', for our presence to be more readily accepted.

It was not only in the midst of the stakeholders in the district that Jay appears as an important figure. On the occasion of the NGO visit (in “From Europe to Africa and back”), I observe how Jay became visibly anxious. The NGO had come without a proper notification, and his chore was challenging: he needed to

¹ I tell of a meeting held on 28/02/2015.
make sure that a group of community members would be present to meet with the activist. I watched him running errands, asking several peasants to call their relatives for the session. In the end, he managed to gather the people and the get-together was a success; the NGO was satisfied. He got generously paid (35 euros per half day of work is the standard payment UNAC members ask for a day of assistance). From this meeting was born a petition to organize villagers and community members in the Province with the intent of writing a common protest letter. The letter should denounce situations of abuse, fears and opposition in relation to national land governance plans, and be sent to the NGO in the UK. At the time we said goodbye to each other, Jay was busy with making this wish come to fruition.

Joaquim, the 'different Portuguese'

Joaquim has been in Mozambique for almost a decade, as the general manager of one successful cotton company, located in the province of Niassa, and, since 2013, he has supervised SoyMOZ enterprise (described in chapter 6). He proudly tells me how he got to this place. After losing local municipality elections in a small city in the centre of Portugal, he had seen a job application for Mozambique in the newspaper. The position was of high rank inside an agrarian company. “I did study agronomic engineering... I decided to apply and I was selected among hundreds!”

Since he started as general manager, the cotton business profits improved immensely. “We built up the new factory in five months!”, he tells me while showing the facilities. Outside the office, in the main wall of the building, there is the prize the company won for its civic and environmental responsibility. At the same time, Joaquim has also been awarded other type of prizes, as symbolic community prizes for initiatives as the construction of four classrooms for the municipality, or the offer of school material for the municipality’s schools. He shows me a book, autographed by two school teachers as a symbolic gesture of acknowledgement. The company has also performed some localized initiatives, what he described as “mobile units”. These units support the local authorities in campaigns to vaccinate children, in distributing mosquito nets and, in cases of cholera outbreaks, in distributing water purifiers.

In his office, pictures of cotton crops and smiling peasants are in display along a cork cardboard. The sunlight from outside guides my eyes to a painting of bright colours. It assembles a Gauguin. “Do you like it? It's from a local artist. All of them actually from the same artist.” His finger moves my head around. Two more paintings hang on the white walls. The motives they represent are all the same, cotton fields and blue hills of grotesque shapes on the background. Cotton seems to be Joaquim passion: “When the cotton is flourishing there is nothing more beautiful than these white fields.” (11/03/2015).

During all these years, he learnt enough of the local language to be polite, present himself and ask if peasants want to become cotton farmers. He also likes to maintain a close relationship with the farmers working for the company. He created a group where field teams can share pictures online in real time of their daily activities. Joaquim scrolls down the application in his phone and dozens of pictures appear on the screen: farmers, farmers with their families, cotton fields, Joaquim himself crossing a river with mud until

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1 For example, this initiative: http://www.unicef.org/mozambique/media_9065.html
his knees. “We have a prize for the best picture, so everybody is sharing lots of picture. This makes all the team closer.” (11/03/2015).

Some of the pictures are also uploaded on his facebook page. There I find hundreds of photographs of peasants in cotton fields, as well as detailed information of several accomplishments of the company, ranging from updates on the crop’s success to the inauguration of the classrooms in the municipality. Joaquim appears as a man of multiple bonds: there are photos of him shaking hands with local leaders and the former president Mr. Guebuza. Joaquim recognised himself the importance of social relations in the context of rural Mozambique. “If you don't cause a good impression, if you don't relate to people, all your intentions are undermined”, he explained.

One night, we went out for dinner with three of his friends in the village: one from Zimbabwe, one from Mozambique and the other from Nigeria. The Nigerian told me: “Joaquim is not like the other Portuguese who come here. He sits with us, Africans, and we laugh. We came here all together to laugh out our lungs. Because we love to laugh. And Joaquim can sit with you, can sit with us and can sit well with peasants, he is not stressed about things, he has the Mozambican notion of time.” (12/03/2014).

6.2. Brokers compared

The stories of the two brokers are different, yet they have aspects in common that might help to the formulation of some common features for a discussion of cultural brokerage. I consider two works to introduce relevant framework about brokers. First, the book of Lewis and Mosse (2006) on the role of brokers in social development contexts. The authors argue that within a framework of brokerage, the task of the ethnographer is to show how heterogeneous actors are “constantly engaged in creating order through political acts of composition (…) [where] people, ideas, interests, events and objects (seeds, engineered structures, pumps, vehicles, computers, fax machines or databases) are tied together by translation of one kind or another into the material and conceptual order of a successful project”. The authors position themselves from an actor-oriented approach which allows them to emphasize the question of the ’intermediary broker’, brokers who operate at the zones where different world-views and knowledge systems meet (ibid., 10).

The second work I would like to introduce is that of James (2011), which resumes the history of anthropology of brokerage from the ’60s and ’70s. Using a well documented case study from the South African land reform legislation, the author provides a framework of analysis of the role of brokers in contemporary African societies. The broker is presented in his work as concept that merits revival in settings of rapid pace of change (ibid, 318), as those characteristic of Vigh’s social navigation contexts (2009). Brokers do not merely negotiate between fixed positions of state-market forces and people, they fluidly “embody and bring into being socio-economic positions and identities: drawing on notions of consensus, they embody the local concerns of ordinary people; drawing on ideas of free choice and enterprise, they embody ‘the market’; simultaneously, they endorse and embody some of the bureaucratic characteristics of
'the state', which provide them with a legitimate place to merge these (often contradictory) frameworks (James 2011, 319).

Joaquim is a good example of this sort of embodiment. He is seen both by the business sector (business awards), by the local resident community (local initiatives of appreciation towards him) and by the government (visits from government officials) as a valuable contribution. He is a “skilled broker who read the meaning of a project into the different institutional languages of its stakeholders (Mosse 2006, 16)”, by embodying in his project divergent notions of development and making them emerge successfully. For this reason, I argue that Joaquim is an intermediary broker, operating mainly at the horizontal level (mediating intersections among groups part of the same setting: the village where the company has its headquarters, for example).

The role of Jay differs from Joaquim for the most part in terms of audience. Jay seems to operate mainly at the vertical level (mediating intersections between groups that do not belong to the same setting, but to a chain of regional to international links). It is his function to get outsiders in contact with local residents and, in turn, to get them in contact with opportunities to achieve political voice in audiences beyond the village setting. His role is the one of an access facilitator and for this reason, I argue that he is primarily an access broker.

6.3. Brokerage and intermediality

When theorizing about brokerage, the concept of code switching might bring additional and useful insights to the discussion. The concept of ‘cross-cultural code-switching’ was coined by Molinsky (2007) in the field of management research. He defines it as “the act of purposefully modifying one’s behaviour, in a specific interaction in a foreign setting, to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviour” (ibid., 623). Despite Molinsky's theory being born within a business-oriented environment, looking for signs of code-switching in stakeholders' encounters can provide an important understanding into how cultural brokers change their physical appearance, their practices and discourses across different socio-cultural settings to interact with the 'other'.

Mosse (2006) touches briefly upon the discussion of broker's competencies, merely by categorizing them in linguistic, presentational and relational terms. The intermediality approach offers additional insights by preventing the ways in which people “use words, images, text, modern media, practices, ect. to interact with a perpetually changing audience” Evers (2012, 113), and suggesting that intermediality as such has different levels of expression.

Inspired by the work of Mosse (2006) on brokerage, Evers on intermediality (2012), Ribot and Peluso on access (2003) and Molinsky on code-switching (2007), I propose my own interpretation of how brokers engage in these different expressions of intermediality:

Discursive intermediality (looks at what brokers say and how they say it). Both of my brokers seem very
skilled at transmitting messages to their audiences. One example of this can be the existence of an advantage in the form of access to knowledge, which can be the “access to privileged information, higher education, and specialized training or apprenticeship” (ibid., 169). As a matter of fact, it seems that the possession of an expert status carries authority to manipulate other's beliefs of resource allocation and use (Ribot and Peluso 2003, 169). Jay is a vivid example. He holds a privileged education and has benefited several times from training on specific skills. Control over knowledge has direct benefits for his role as a broker. Through extensive knowledge of the land conflicts in the region, he gained an expert-status which allows him to share selectively the information to the community. He also uses his geographical knowledge of the area to justify the importance of his position when outsiders come. Jay, having the community as an audience, tells the stories that fit his political tendencies. In contrast, Joaquim highlights throughout his discourse the importance of his position for the community. He not only verbalises it, but also mediates it to larger audiences regularly, through the selection of contents on his facebook page. Language knowledge also seems determinant in the two cases. Language is a prime requisite for mediation. Joaquim recognised the importance of learning the local language to better engage with local residents; Jay had a prominent position for his strong bilingual competencies.

Physical intermediality (sees as physical signs the bodies or spaces used by brokers). In this regard, Mosse (2006, 14) calls attention to the fact that “both human and non-human actants, such as artefacts and devices, are related through a series of negotiations”. Both brokers seem to be physically active in their intermediality pursues. Joaquim mediates his position through the production of an environment which in consistent with his words: he displays pictures of peasants and local artist paintings in his office or shows me a note of acknowledgement two teachers left him, for example. In a different context, Jay used a FRELIMO t-shirt to mediate his camaraderie with the government.

Behavioural intermediality (looks at practices). Joaquim speaks of how important is to be actively connected to the community. In order to make his position coherent, he developed many activities that even the most sceptical activists would recognize as beneficial for the local residents. He can do this because he has access to resources as capital, in the form of finances and equipment that the communities do not have.

To conclude, I argue that brokerage is at its best when brokers are able to mobilize resources in order to accomplish something within all these dimensions. Physical intermediality complements discourses and practices, resulting in a consistent portrayal that meet the eyes of the viewer and turns brokerage into a successful enterprise.

6.4. Brokerage: altruistic or selfish enterprise?

One last thing, started to intriguing me: at the same time Jay and Joaquim broker to accomplish what its perceived as a common goal between uneven groups, they also seem to gain something for themselves. In the
end, is brokerage an altruistic or selfish enterprise?

James also ponders this question when considering that brokers act “partly opportunistically and partly in response to his constituent's demands” (335). Mosse (1994, 510) offers a possible answer: that of brokers are well aware of the benefits of projecting private interests as public ones. In doing so they are to benefit the group to whom they belong, allowing access to the resources at stake, at the same time that they too achieve particular benefits. In this process new opportunities emerge as a consequence of their intermedial positions. In the case of Jay the rewards that arose are evident: through his position as a broker, he gains access to a privileged income, extends his network and affirms his status (remember that he was able to criticize the community leadership in a public meeting). In the case of Joaquim, the reward seems to come in form of the maintenance of a social reality and a social identity (Mosse 2006, 16).

Conclusions: on those who navigate large-scale land debates

By using part of two informants life-stories and observed interactions, I build them into the concept of 'broker' and explore concrete examples of intermediality in action. This a relevant theoretical point because the understanding of the potential and the limitations of brokerage might help to explain why some stakeholders are so successful at mediating in between divergent scale-making worlds. Moreover, and moving the discussion away from 'land', it is possible to theorise that access to resources and the ability to use them, turn brokers into intermediality agents, which in turn allows them to gain access to other resources. And this finding is an example of successful navigation in land debates: a suggestion of the creative outcomes researchers can find when studying LSA.
Chapter 7. Final conclusions.

For an ethnography of the creative outcomes of large-scale debates

This thesis examined how various stakeholders in the Nacala corridor (e.g. 'local' Mozambican people living in various settings, the government of Mozambique at various levels, international and national NGOs activists and investors companies employees) legitimise their access to land and mediate their access claims vis-a-vis the polemic ProSAVANA land debate. I have argued from the beginning that the mystery of such phenomena might reside in what happens in the interconnected zones, where these stakeholders come together and convey a particular representation of reality. An intermediality approach allowed for the study of such relationships through their manifested and imaginary new interactive contexts. Intermediality looks at the moment of interaction and distils potential elements of convergence and divergence within it.

Each chapters of this thesis represents an attempt to approach the study of the new forms of engagement emerging from such encounters. First, I generated empirical knowledge in how the process of large-scale land acquisitions' confronts different meanings of land relations and use within and between stakeholders to land. Second, I analysed the convergence and divergence of stakeholders discourses, ideologies and practices, and identified the areas of contestation and collaboration which shaped the contemporary attempts of accessing land in the area of study. Third, I followed key-stakeholders who, by benefiting from some resources, have a prominent role within stakeholders encounters allowing convergence, and its projects of scale, to work.

Along this journey, I have disclosed that in the context of Nacala Corridor's large-scale acquisitions there is no such thing as a static stakeholder configuration. Stakeholders move in a complex chain of connections at different scales and new stakeholders can be introduce any time, as part of various strategies to claim and secure rights to land. In a context where access regimes proved to be ambiguous, access was secured by the ones who had the 'ability' of mobilizing their claims (Access Theory). Access to some resources, as media (websites), partnerships with NGOs (networks and funds) allowed for endeavours of vertically intermediality which untimely seemed to privilege some claims above others. These endeavours represented altruistic and selfish attempts of stakeholders to embrace resilience by actively navigating their social networks and working towards mobilizing their resources, amid constrains in their environments. By researching the agency of these stakeholders I offered a realistic alternative to story where 'local' people are portrayed as victims of a neoliberal order. Within these possibilities of agency, might rest the hope for more creative outcomes of large-scale land deals.

By selecting some pieces of text and leaving some episodes out of this piece and the context of the analysis, I have created scale myself. At the same time, I tried to deconstruction it: my solution was not to avoid it, but to try to show its potential and perverse effects. As a final word, this research aimed to suggest
different ways in which anthropologists may attempt to approach the mysteries of large-scale land acquisitions scenarios. So far, the habit of looking at opposites has potentially obscured our knowledge.
Academic references


Evers, S. J. T. M. 2012b. “Zones of intermediality as analytical and theoretical tool to examine large scale land acquisitions.” Access provided by the author.

Evers, S., Seagle, C. and Krijtenburg, F. 2013. “Introduction: Contested Landscapes – analysing the role of the state, land reforms and privatization in foreign lad deals in Africa.” In *Africa for Sale*, Evers, S.,


Funada-Classen, Sayaka. 2013a. “Analysis of the Discourse and Background of the ProSavana Programme in Mozambique, focusing on Japan’s role.” Access provided by the author.


Non-academic sources

Reports by Governmental and Inter-governmental Organisations:


Reports by Non governmental Organizations:


News clips


Others


Land Matrix Project. accessed in 14 June 2015.


Long March to Rome project. Access November 2014

Appendix A: Comprehensive table of methodology strategies

**Research question:** How do stakeholders to land in the Nacala Corridor (northern Mozambique) legitimize their access to land and mediate their world-views against the backdrop of large-scale land acquisition in the region?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies sorted by stakeholder group</th>
<th>Methodology and data sources</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investors</strong></td>
<td>1. Document analysis:</td>
<td>1. analysis of the discourses and how they are transmitted</td>
<td>I hope to analyse: - what are precisely the stakes of these groups - how are ideas as 'development', 'empty land' described - how the three major players (Japanese agency, Brazilian agency and Mozambican government) within the investors group mediate their knowledge. - changes over time (from preliminary research I came across some indicators that the discourses of the ProSavana stakeholder group has been changing over time, in reaction to different events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- official documents</td>
<td>2. analyse of the meaning of land and development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- projects promotion websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- political agendas (where do meetings take place, when and how are they mediated)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. mapping geographical place (how do they talk about 'place' in official documents, what is consider to be 'land for investment')</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. structured interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NGO's and social civic movements</strong></td>
<td>1. Participant observation:</td>
<td>1/2. analysis of the discourses and how they are transmitted</td>
<td>I hope to analyse: - what are precisely the stakes of these groups - what ideas as 'development', 'empty land' means. - where these groups draw information from? - how they mediated the information to the world (global media, internet), to Mozambican civil society and to local communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- during meetings</td>
<td>3. what are the experiences ('motivations') of these people/these groups?; how they relate themselves to the cause?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- in the setting of the organisation</td>
<td>4. why do these movements exist? What are their stakes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Document analysis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- agenda (where and when they meet? who is invited?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- how they share information to broader public (ex. Reports, blogs)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Semi-structure interviews (exploratory interviews at the beginning of the field research phase; discussion of findings interviews at the end of the field research phase)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Historical analysis (through interviews, official websites)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Villagers/ community members</strong></td>
<td>1. Participant observation</td>
<td>1. differences in practices produce differences in meaning (Evers 2012): looking at meaning of land/land use requires looking to what people do everyday.</td>
<td>I hope to analyse: - what are precisely the stakes of these groups - what ideas as 'development', 'empty land' means. - use of land as part of daily life; observe differences on the use of land from different individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Oral stories (Sunstein &amp; Chiseri-Strater 2007: 272)</td>
<td>2. how do people relate themselves with land; which kind of narratives they tell; how they perceived the impacts of the land rush and what are their envisions for the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. 'Landscape biography' (Roymans et al. 2009)</td>
<td>3/4. how people move/ occupy the 'place'/space.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Artefacts (directly mentioned in this thesis)
VAMOS ILUMINAR A NOSSA VIDA

MALARIA
WAMIMONO
LALELO
RAERE
AÇIOU

VAMOS APRENDER A LER E ESCRIVER
PARA MELHOR DEFENDERMOS OS
NOSSOS DIREITOS

Comissão de Justiça e Paz
Década de Vozes

Em parceria com
CAFOD

O Pro Savana certamente vai arrancar as terras aos pequenos agricultores, deixando as populações que vivem da agricultura familiar sem meios de sobrevivência.
A revogação do direito ao título de uso e aproveitamento da terra (DUAT) às comunidades locais tem como objetivo facilitar a ocupação das terras pelos investidores.
Mamã de Nacololo, Distrito de Monapo, chora sua terra arrancada pela empresa:

"Para arrancar as terras oferecem dinheiro e garantia de emprego, assim nós, os donos da terra, ficamos como empregados de estrangeiros, sem terra na nossa própria terra. Igual ao tempo colonial, ou pior!

PARA O NOSSO CONHECIMENTO

As Organizações e Movimentos Sociais Moçambicanos, em Maio de 2013, dirigiram uma carta aberta aos Presidentes de Moçambique, Brasil e Primeiro-Ministro do Japão, com o objectivo de travar a lógica de intervenção do Programa ProSavana que trará consequências negativas para as famílias camponesas que terão suas terras usurpadas.
A carta aponta ilegalidades ocorridas na implementação do mesmo projeto:

"A amplidade e grandeza do Programa ProSavana contrastam com o incomprometimento da lei e total ausência de um debate público profundo, amplo, transparente e democrático, impedindo-nos (camponeses e camponesas, famílias e a população), desta forma, de exercer nosso direito constitucional de acessar à informação, consulta, participação e consentimento informado sobre um assunto de grande relevância social, económica e ambiental com efeitos diretos nas nossas vidas."

VAMOS CONVERSAR
1. Alguém já ouviu falar do ProSavana?
- O que ouviu sobre este projeto?
2. O ProSavana ocupará uma área de 14,5 milhões de hectares da terra do povo moçambicano, terras herdadas dos nossos antepassados.
- Que leis estão a ser desrespeitadas pelo governo ao entregar esta terra aos nossos terras?"