Scenes of subjection: Extractive frontiers, symbolic violence, dispossession

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A B S T R A C T

This article discusses how, besides structural and direct modes of violence traditionally attributed to natural resource exploitation, extractive frontiers also unfold through material and affective registers of *symbolic violence*. This concerns the violence of capital that promises a "better life" whose actual realisation, directly implicated in circuits of "free" market economy, is constantly deferred to the future. Empirically grounded in experiences of dispossession and resettlement caused by coal extraction in Tete, Mozambique, the article employs *symbolic violence* as an analytic to understand subjectivation constituted by the failed promise of "development" of Tete's extractive frontier. This, the article argues, results in specific *scenes of subjection* – exposure to the symbolic violence of extractivism, as well as potential contestations of it, through which those dispossessed by mining come into being as subjects of power. These *scenes of subjection* are temporal: they transform – expand, flutter, retreat – reflecting broader, inherently unstable economies of extraction. As such, subjection to violence is not final but remains susceptible to contestation, mediation, or escalation. Nevertheless, the article shows how, in spite of this potentiality of change, until recently, in Tete *symbolic violence* had justified, reproduced, and sustained the power of extractivism, as well as of capital more broadly, even within the lifeworlds dispossessed, or otherwise laid to waste, by extractive frontiers of capital.

1. Introduction

1.1. Dispossession in Tete

In Mozambique, extractivism – exploitation via extraction of surplus value from physical environments and natural resources, through which capital as power sustains and perpetuates itself (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019, 38) – has been the main political technology of the central state-led agenda for national development (Castel-Branco 2010; 2014; Schubert, 2020). Since 2006, the province of Tete, in particular, has been the site of overlapping extractive frontiers opened by different overseas investors,[1] operating in line with the broader national context that, since Structural Adjustment, has favoured foreign private investment as the primary catalyst of economic growth (Hanlon and Smart, 2008). From today's perspective, however, the expectations for "development"[2] associated with coal extraction are a short-lived illusion. They dissipated

alongside the coal boom that burst in 2015 due to low coal prices in global commodity markets, overblown expectations, and inefficient coal transportation infrastructures in the region (Stoddard 2015; Wiegink 2018).

In 2006, however, the story was different. The announcement of the fifth largest global coal reserve in Tete (Bryceson and MacKinnon 2012), and the subsequent allocation of more than six million hectares of land (nearly 60 percent of the province) to several coal and other mineral mining projects, resulted in an unprecedented rush of global capital into the province to serve the nascent mining industry (Kirshner and Power 2015). Subsequently, in a span of only a few years, Tete – once a relatively marginal province,[3] primarily integrated into a regional capitalist system through a long history of extraction and commodification of labour (Isaacman 1997; Perez Nino, 2017; O'Laughlin 2013) – became what the country's national media called the *El Dorado* of Mozambique with unprecedented investment opportunities (Lesutis 2019a; Wiegink

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[1] This particularly concerns Vale, a Brazilian corporation engaged in mining and metal production. Vale won an international tender to explore coking and thermal coal in Tete in 2004, signed a concession agreement with the Mozambican government in 2007, started coal production in 2011, and commenced divestment and withdrawal in 2021. After concluding the sale of its assets, Vale officially left Tete in April 2022 (for details, see Tsuji and Otsuki 2022).

[2] In this article, I refer to "development", as well as a "better life", in quotation marks to underline their symbolic function (Ferguson 1990).

[3] Even if the existence of coal reserves in Tete had been known since the early 19th century, they were not sufficiently explored either due to the fragile colonial state's incapacity (Hatton and Fardell, 2011), or the political instability caused by independence and civil wars (Gerety 2013). Owing to this, Tete remained marginal within broader national configurations of economic and political power (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983).

2018).

Because Tete's landscapes are socially mediated topographies where local populations have little choice but to tether their livelihoods to the productivity of land, this extractive boom triggered large-scale dispossession. More than 10,000 people were forced to vacate the land they had worked in order to make room for open-cast coal mines.[4] Amongst them, the biggest group was small-scale farmers who had lived in peripheries of Moatize, the second largest urban area in Tete (see Fig. 1). In total, 750 families[5] were separated from their livelihoods dependent on access to land and *peri*-urban markets to sell agricultural produce, and subsequently moved to the resettlement site of Cateme built to house them (Lesutis 2019a; 2022).

Implemented between 2009 and 2010 by the Brazilian mining company Vale, with a supposed supervision of the Mozambican Government, Cateme was praised by the implementing actors as a long-awaited opportunity of "development" (Pedro 2017). This way, in spite of inevitable hardships that dispossession engenders as extensively documented across the Global South (e.g., Bebbington 2012; Horowitz et al., 2018; Kirsch 2014), Tete's extractive frontier simultaneously promised tenuous inclusion into the mining-induced economic boom. As part of the resettlement programme, Vale pledged to give the dispossessed people a "better life" – provide "modern" living conditions, community development projects, professional training centres, as well as formal employment in the mining sector. This promise of "development", however, was a short-lived reality: in the first years following the resettlement implementation, several civil society groups denounced the mandatory relocation for social, economic, and cultural harm that it had caused for the resettled groups (see CIP 2012; Human Rights Watch 2013; Lillywhite et al. 2015). In the shadow of the unprecedented, coal extraction-based economic growth in Tete, Cateme came to be known as ridden with ongoing problems of fertile land shortage, food and water insecurity, and a lack of viable livelihood opportunities or employment (see Mosca & Selemane 2011; Lesutis 2019a; 2019b; 2022; Wiegink 2018).

In these circumstances, the failed promise of a "better life" – frequently invoked by Cateme's residents to emphasise their everyday hardships, as well as a continuous hope for the promised "development" – was one of the affective tensions that I registered during eight months of research in Mozambique. Undertaken between January and August 2016, it included four months of ethnographic work in Cateme. In this period, I conducted 130 open-ended interviews with its residents whom I chose randomly whilst moving through the resettlement site on a motorbike. Subsequently, I met 35 of them for detailed follow-up conversations, in most instances on more than two occasions. These interviews and conversations focused on people's lives, their experiences of dispossession, and the everyday in and around Cateme. Additionally, I carried out participant observations at various community events, as well as accompanied residents' daily activities, with an aim of further nuancing their verbal accounts of dispossession and resettlement.

Epistemologically, I approach these accounts as contingent articulations of oneself and social life that come to being through an implicit negotiation process between a researcher and a research participant (Gallagher 2016; Elliot 2005; Riessman, 2008). In this sense, it is undeniable that my presence shaped the stories that were told to me, on which I reflect in detail elsewhere (see Lesutis 2022, 16-17, 133-141,

163-166). On the other hand, I approach these stories as embedded in broader socio-material relationalities of power that are narrated through people's words, regardless of a listener (Franzosi 1998). Acknowledging this interplay between the social and the spatial in a research encounter (Lesutis 2018), in this paper I explore how people are exposed to, as well as experience, the violence of extractivism. As a final note of methodological caution – herein I solely focus on experiences of men and their material and affective entanglements with economies of extraction. Women, in contrast, have been historically excluded from dreams of "development" that are instigated by state and corporate structures in mining sectors, and thus their experiences of extractivism merit research in their own right (e.g., Mususa 2010a; 2010b).

1.2. Extractivism as subjection

Grounded in this epistemology, in the article, I explore how extractivism unfolds through *scenes of subjection* – exposure to violence and domination, as well as potential resistance to it, through which human populations come into being as subjects of power (Foucault 1982). Rather than focusing on a *subject* per se that, containing and expressing multitudes of being, seeing, and acting, is radically unknowable (e.g., Martel 2017), with my analysis I instead foreground subjectivation – the unfolding of violence, as encroachment of power, to which people, as subjects-in-formation, are given over. In my reading of subjection, violence is an ontology of a subject. As Butler (2004; 2009) theorised, in the world manifested as a forced field of violence, there is no violence to which an already existing subject is exposed. Instead, the subject emerges through her subjection to socially and politically mediated harm. Specific subject groups, therefore, are not "a sociological given, since they are to some degree produced by their common exposure to injury and destruction" (Butler 2020, 17). In this sense, a subject comes into being within "a fraught field of social relationality" (ibid., 10). It is this relationality-qua-violence that I foreground as a scene of subjection.

Grammars of violence as subject's ontology are especially vivid in topographies of extractivism. Extractive economies of colonial capitalism, for instance, simultaneously functioned as violent modalities of subjectivation. As Yusoff (2021) argues, the very metaphysical-empirical concept of *human* was constituted through extraction: one of the overlaying rationales of colonial geographies was to extract profit from, and control, the surface and sub-surface of the earth (p. 663). These practices that injured earthly and bodily matter were legitimised by scientific racism that brought forth the sub-categorisation of *human* into *human*, *subhuman*, and *inhuman*, owing to which racialised subject groups came into being (Wynter 2003). In this sense, extractivism functioned as material praxis of colonial terra- and subject-forming (Clark and Yusoff 2017). In this matrix of power, land and bodies are intimately intertwined. Fanon (2008), for instance, alluded to this relationality in the very making of colonial subjectivity, with his account of the "wretched of the *earth*" gesturing at the intimate intersection between the earth – or materiality – and racialised abjection. The resultant epistemological and ontological separations between *human* and *inhuman/less human*, *life* and *nonlife*, are most visible in necropolitical constellations of the postcolony (Mbembe 2019), or settler colonies (Povinelli 2016), as contemporary social theory, for instance, highlights.

Certainly, different modalities of violence have already been attributed to contemporary extractive frontiers. Mining-induced dispossession unfolds as an effect of structural violence such as social and material exploitation, or environmental destruction (Çaylı 2021; Bebbington 2012; Bury 2005; Kirsch 2014), that constitute capital as an abstract form of social domination (Lefebvre 1991, 341, 404; Žižek 2008, 52). In many cases, these modes of harm-making are reinforced and sustained by direct, corporeal violence that accompany natural resource extraction (Harvey 2003; Jacka 2015; Watts 2005). These dynamics of harm have also been foregrounded in critical analyses of mining-induced dispossession in Tete that highlight multiple socio-economic and

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[4] According to Human Rights Watch (2013), the mining industry in Tete displaced around 2044 households (1365 by Vale; 679 by Rio Tinto). Because an average household size in Mozambique is 5.1 people per household, this number equals around 10,424 people. This number, however, only concerns the first stage of resettlement during project implementation in 2009. More displacement followed in subsequent years and is ongoing; in 2020, for instance, Vale acknowledged that 1,349 families still lived inside their mining concession areas in Moatize (see Tsuji and Otsuki 2022, 2).

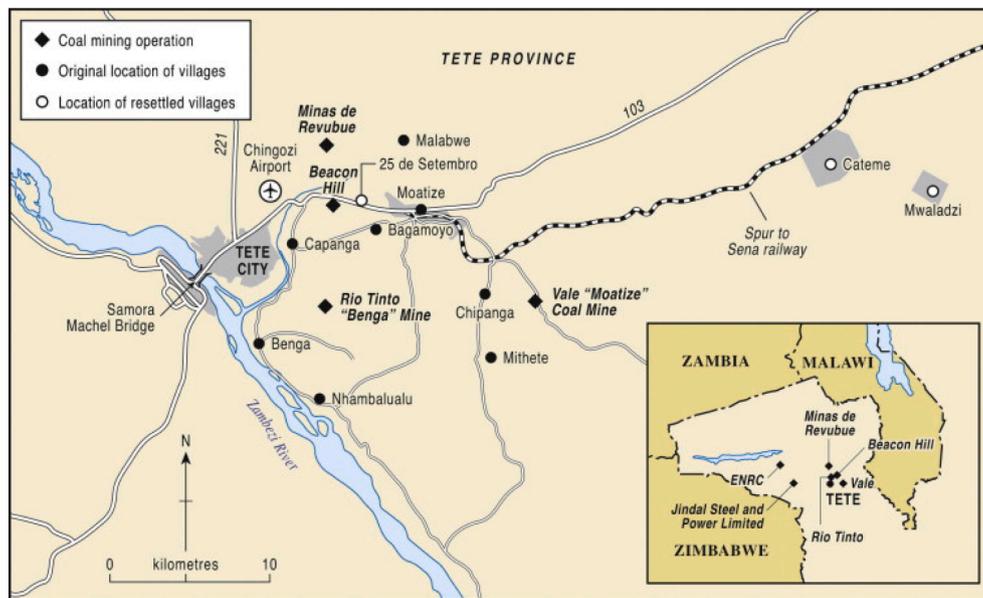[5] Approximately more than 3,800 people.

Fig. 1. Sites of original and resettlement villages in the province of Tete (Source: Kirshner and Power 2015).

ecological struggles caused by extractive practices in the region (e.g., Andrade & Sousa 2016; Lesutis 2019a; 2019b; 2021; Mosca & Selemane 2011; Wiegink 2018).

Whilst forming a part of this collective effort to reflect on politics of extractivism in Mozambique and beyond, I position this article differently. Instead of explicitly focusing on structural or direct violence of extractivism, I highlight how extractive frontiers and forms of subjectivation that they engender unfold through symbolic violence. In this way, I follow Frederiksen and Himley's (2019) invitation to analytically reflect on quieter, more diverse forms of power in the extractive frontier. This symbolic violence concerns the violence of capital's development that promises a "better life", whose actual realisation, directly implicated in circuits of "free" market economy, for most, particularly those dispossessed by mining, is constantly deferred to the future. This unrealisability of a "better life" results in suffering – a form of harm and affective injury. Berlant (2011), for instance, understood this sociopolitical effect of contemporary capitalism as "cruel optimism" that is sustained through continuous aspirations for, and affective reinvestments in, the collectively shared imaginary of a "good life": a stable job, middle class home, and promises of upward mobility as guaranteed, meritocratic rewards for hard work. For most people, however, these promises are unrealisable, and, as such, they become foundations of persistent precarity, struggle, and despair (Ahmed 2010; Berardi 2015; Lorey 2015).

Echoing these insights about affective attachments to promises of a "good life", however implausible their realisation might be, in this article, I highlight how symbolic violence provides a fitting analytic for understanding subjectivation constituted by the failed promises of "development" of the extractive frontier in Tete. This subjectivation of the dispossessed groups of people specifically results from a materially grounded affective confluence of hope and anxiety, dreaming and suffering. This, I argue, constitutes specific *scenes of subjection* that, in spite of hardships that such developments bring, engender tenuous hopes to be included into spaces of extractivism. These scenes are temporal, for they transform – expand, flutter, retreat – reflecting broader, inherently unstable economies of extraction. As such, violence projected through them is not final but, as I explore below, remains susceptible to contestation, mediation, or escalation.

Grounded in the case of Cateme, the article outlines three scenes of subjection to symbolic violence of extractivism. First, it discusses how the dispossession of the most vulnerable populations from Tete's

extractive frontier was justified as an opportunity of a "better life". Second, it analyses how these dreams of "development" are experienced as affective attachments to the space of extraction characterised by anxiety and struggle. Third, the article highlights how, at the intersection of these materially grounded affective states of hope and anxiety, dreaming and suffering, the scenes of symbolic violence-as-subjection transform through temporal economies of extraction.

2. Hopes for "Development"

In the post-Fordist contexts across the Global North, symbolic violence of capital has manifested as a constant attachment to an idea of personal progress that, once promised by agents of capitalist development (most prominently a welfare state), can no longer be realised in the face of multiplying daily insecurities. It is the promise of a "good life" as a key pledge of capitalism – particularly in the heyday of the Fordist era – achievable or unattainable, real or imagined, that, suturing ruptures of increasingly unstable everyday life with hopes of progress, have played a crucial role in entrenching precarity as a key feature of contemporary social life (Lorey 2015). These expressions of permanent insecurity, unfolding within the socially mediated material world (Butler 2009), are conditioned by the production of capitalist social space (Lesutis 2022). Such spatiality invokes a specific type of rationality, as well as symbolism of power, that subject heterogeneous lifeworlds to the dominance of exchange value (Lefebvre 1991, 289, 420). Within this space, for a proletarian-consumer subject, a "good life" is supposed to be achieved through continuous purchase of items and experiences, which is mediated through the money-commodity. The appeal of a "good life" pledged by capital, therefore, is essentially a promise of personal fulfilment – even a pseudo-messianic salvation from finitudes of a corporeal life (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000) – by one's participation in a fully commodified social reality. These dynamics of a "good life", as a normative telos of capitalism, however, conceal an erasure of, or unceasing attempts to obliterate, qualitatively different lifeworlds that capitalist development inherently inscribes in space (Gordillo 2014).

The imaginaries of a "good life" that mask capital's modes of injury are noticeably different in such contexts as Tete. In contrast to the Global North where the dreams of progress and happiness once promised by capitalism are increasingly shattered by the unforgiving nature of neoliberal austerity (Lorey 2015), as well as by the realisation of the impossibility to separate *the natural* from *the social* (Povinelli 2016), a

"good life" has never been materially present in the postcolony. On the contrary, at the turn of the century, Mozambique, emerged as ridden with staggering and daily horrors of the independence and civil wars, and Structural Adjustment (Hanlon 1996; 2004). Nevertheless, across the continent of Africa, symbolic violence sustained by imaginaries of a "good life" – particularly wrapped in a discourse of "development" – has been present since the US President Truman's speech in 1949, in which he emphasised "aspirations for a *better life*" and a need to transform "underdeveloped" countries under the image of life in "advanced" Western societies (quoted in Escobar 1995, 3-4). Following this, geopolitics have been influenced by material and discursive practices of "development". Different authors have analysed this global industry as an intentional and quasi-theological practice of dominance (Cowen and Shenton 1995; 1996), an arbitrary cultural and historical specificity (Sachs 1992), a technique of historically singular knowledge and power (Escobar 1995; Rist 1997), often concealed under the "truths" of economic growth or "creeds and doctrines of good change" (Power 2003, 6-7), or the supposedly undisputed universality of liberal democracy (Abrahamsen 2000).

The global development industry that has extended the influence of Western states and financial institutions over "beneficiary" states – this way obscuring complex histories and geographies of poverty and exploitation with an ideological cloak of technical solutions (Ferguson 1990) – has also dominated socio-political landscapes of Mozambique. Since the late 1980 s, with its gradual integration into the global neoliberal system, Mozambique received various development interventions in governance, education, health, and agriculture sectors (Sabaratnam 2017). As Hanlon (2004) argued, is most cases, these forms of social engineering based on "free" market-friendly policies had entrenched national elite power, thus sustaining rampant corruption. Regardless of this, however, until recently,[6] Mozambique was known as one of the World Bank's few success stories in Africa (see Hanlon and Smart, 2008).

Reflecting these pre-existing global dynamics of "development" and its symbolic and material interventions, in Tete, at the start of the resettlement process, a "good life" also figured as a possibility and promise of "progress", in this way contingently concealing the violence of extractivism. The resettlement process indeed mutilated the existing *peri*-urban space (see Lesutis 2021): as I discussed in the introduction, it dispossessed the most vulnerable populations from the urban peripheries of Moatize, separating them from their means of subsistence. This further accelerated already existing class differences, thus articulating new forms of spatial exclusion and marginalisation (Lesutis 2019a; 2019b). These dynamics, as Kirshner et al. (2020) argue, define social and political landscapes of Mozambique, where state-supported development initiatives heighten spatial (urban, rural, or subnational) and class divisions.

As the modern state and its allies depict "development" as a normative process of "progress" whose supposed benefits will not be undermined by the costs borne by the most vulnerable, a systemic disregard for people who find themselves in zones of extraction is predominantly recast as an inevitability of national improvement that ought to be bracketed. This, as Yusoff (2021) argued, has been central to extractive geographies of colonialisation that unfolded through affectual and geophysical relationalities, inscribing inhumanity of the racialised other. Simultaneously, however, as Rao (2013) observed, "the state is well aware that acknowledgement of the large-scale ruin-making required by the project of modernisation is not enough to justify these processes. Other, more calculated projects <…> are in fact required to supplement and substantiate the necessity of development" (p. 309). The mining-induced dispossession in Tete starkly illustrates this

intersection between structural and symbolic forms of violence. As the displaced population was mobilised to accept the mandatory resettlement process, the rural resettlement of Cateme was portrayed as "modern": it was going to have a health centre, a mobile ambulance, primary and secondary schools, an agricultural training centre, and a market space. To substitute the lost livelihoods, Vale also promised to implement several development projects, including small-scale business of poultry production or agriculture, as well as provide formal employment opportunities either in mines or wide-ranging services of mechanical, catering, and administrative work that facilitate the mining industry. "It was going to be a great development for the [resettled] community, that's what we were told, and this was the message we took to the community to convince them to accept the resettlement", noted one former Vale social development officer (Maputo, June 2017).

In this way – reflecting broader trends of extractive industries that, in spite of apprehension, incite "expectations of modernity" (Ferguson 1999; also see Frederiksen 2019; Himley 2010) – in Cateme, the "affirmative aesthetics of extractivism" (Çayli 2021) created an affective intersection between the dispossessed people's lives and the mining enclave. This specifically intertwined hopes for a "better life" with the emerging space of extraction. "You will be the first ones to become rich in Moatize – this is what they told us", I would often hear these words in Cateme articulated by its residents, emphasising how their resettlement was promoted by Vale's representatives and local government officers as a long-awaited opportunity of a "good life" and "development".

These narratives reflect Vale's stance on its corporate social responsibility. Like many other extractive industry investors across the Global South that rely on a range of seemingly non-coercive technics in order to stabilise their investments in spite of their profoundly damaging effects (Frederiksen and Himley 2020), the company presented its resettlement projects in Tete as an exemplary practice of corporate social responsibility. On its website, for instance, it provides the following information about Cateme; "for Vale, the people and the communities are a priority. We support their sustainable development through projects of professional qualification, infrastructure, economic and technological development, culture, sport and agriculture" (Vale 2016). Therefore, resonating with dominant global development discourses that advocate for the integration of rural livelihoods into marketised relations of exchange – ostensibly supposed to address the problems of rural poverty and underdevelopment (e.g., Collier 2007; Sachs 2005) – Cateme was depicted as an example of "progress" that Vale was to facilitate.

Reworking these representational dynamics, in a local political discourse Cateme was projected as an integral part of broader national development strategies. As one representative of the Municipality of Moatize explained, "in Mozambique, the effective use of natural resource is central for its national development. The resettlement of Cateme was going to be an example of how the resource industry can bring development to local communities" (Moatize, July 2016). Depicted as an opportunity of "development", the resettlement projects in Moatize, therefore, were politically useful for the ruling Frelimo party. According to several local civil society groups, Frelimo approached the resettlement process as an opportunity to justify the party's credibility as bringing "development" to the country, thereby further consolidating its power. As one civil activist observed,

> when [Vale] arrived and said that they would construct 700 houses or would employ 5000 people from the province [of Tete], the government focused on the potential political gains of this resettlement. The rationale behind this was that the local population would see them as doing good. They ignored other very important details and did not think about the future, they were only interested in the momentary gain (Tete, May 2016).

To facilitate people's relocation, Frelimo used its own party structures at the villages that were to be resettled; it mobilised local party secretaries to convince the affected populations to accept the

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[6] This changed with the national debt crisis in 2016 triggered by the discovery of previously undisclosed government debts (for details, see Hanlon 2017).

resettlement as a long-awaited opportunity of "development". In parallel, the relocated villages were depicted as stricken with absolute poverty. These negative representations – a general feature of extractive industry that aims to justify its activities as improving "backward" local communities (Barry 2013; Bebbington 2012; Welker, 2009) – are prominent in socio-environmental assessments for Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) undertaken by several private consultancies hired by Vale. In the pictures provided in the RAP reports, for instance, poor housing conditions and the lack of essential living infrastructures such as electricity are particularly noticeable (see Fig. 2). This bleak portrayal of the resettled villages coincides with elements of the political discourse on the resettlement process that also focuses on poverty. One representative of the Municipality of Moatize speaking about the resettled villages, for instance, noted that, "these [resettled] people did not have good living conditions, they lived like their ancestors used to, stuck in time. So this resettlement gave them an opportunity to change that. It gave them a better life" (Moatize, June 2016).

Evaluating Cateme's infrastructures, the resettlement site might indeed be seen as a place of development: it has what appear to be durable houses (see Fig. 3), essential infrastructures of water and electricity provision, a market space, a health centre, as well as primary and secondary schools that were handed over to the provincial and district government authorities for administration and management. These characteristics indicate spatial transformations that diverge from predominant rural dynamics across Mozambique. According to Meneses et al. (2014), Cateme, despite having been produced through the spatial exclusion of the most vulnerable populations from Tete, could be understood as a form of urbanisation that emerges in a rural environment. This idea of urbanisation was implicitly observed by former Vale's social development officers who pointed out that Cateme was promoted as a place of economic growth and knowledge. Alongside the primary and secondary schools, the agricultural training centre called "Model Farm" was supposed to regularly run technical training courses for the resettled and local populations, and thus attract people from the wider area. Cateme, therefore, was meant to function as a population nucleus within the rural setting where it was built. These views were also reflected by Cateme's residents who on several occasions noted how they initially perceived the resettlement site as urban. As one of them observed, "it was like a town in the middle of nowhere. It had a primary and a secondary school, a market, even a health centre. We thought it was going to be a good place" (Cateme, June 2016).

In his now classic account of state-led grandiose projects, Scott (1998) approached these forms of social engineering as "state simplifications" that are imposed by an authoritarian state, through which (even if predominantly unsuccessfully) deliberate attempts are made to shape and control, by homogenisation and standardisation, the lives of different population groups. This indeed was the case with the villagisation programmes during the socialist period in Mozambique, with Frelimo attempting to incorporate the national peasantry that it feared would destabilise the planned socialist development (see Clarence-Smith 1989). However, as I explore in the following section, in contrast to this, Vale did not actually attempt to include the dispossessed people into circuits of production. As Hanlon and Smart (2008) observed, the provision of material symbols of "progress" such as bicycles had not actually equalled "development" across Mozambique. Echoing this, the settlement site of Cateme is a place of symbolic violence of extractivism that is experienced as a continually failing promise of a "better life".

3. Anxieties of "Development"

Alongside the promotion of the resettlement site as a place of "development" with "modern" living conditions, Cateme's population was also promised formal employment with either Vale or other companies subcontracted by it. "They told us that our children would have employment for life. Because of this, we were expecting *a better life*", was one of the phrases that I often heard in Cateme. This reflects broader

regional tendencies of extractivism, wherein the promise of jobs in the mining sector overshadows concerns about social and environmental impacts of the industry (e.g., Fraser 2010). In spite of these promises of employment, however, the possibility of this "better life" was only fleeting: the employment was temporary and, depending on one's position, only lasted from six months to three years. In Cateme, on numerous occasions I was told that at the employment peak around 2011 there were two 65-seater buses that used to fetch Vale workers in the morning and transport them back in the evening. Five years later, in the resettlement area I would often see one empty bus coming back to Cateme in a glinting late afternoon light. Three men would leave the bus and walk into different directions. As I approached them one afternoon, they did not engage in my attempted conversation – "I know who you are, and I cannot risk my employment with Vale. It's God's blessing to have it", one of them cut me off abruptly (Cateme, June 2016).

This formulation of employment as "God's blessing" strongly echoes the everyday anxieties triggered by the mining-induced dispossession that had tethered hopes for a "better life" to the extractive frontier. As Vale promised lifelong employment – which some suspected was unlikely – it created a hope that this promise might nonetheless come true. For instance, as one group of men, sitting in the shadow of a resettlement house, explained to me, "we knew [that] it was not going to last for more than a few years. <…> But we *hoped* that maybe it [would] change. After all, when Vale and the government came to Chipanga, they told us that we [would] have employment for 35 years. And that our children [would have employment] for the rest of their lives" (Cateme, July 2016). In this group, men in their early- to mid-40s, some of them still wearing uniforms with name-logos of the companies that they had once worked for, spoke of their work with Vale (including land cleaning and preparation, or construction of mining infrastructures) as a life changing opportunity. Despite its exploitative nature – particularly epitomised by the lack of protective equipment, long working hours, or what they deemed to be an insufficient pay – none of these men complained about the work being too demanding.

From today's perspective, the most pressing concern is that most workers had been made redundant. Vale, therefore, is not different to most capital-intensive extractive enterprises that, based on technologically advanced operations, does not need labour of local populations dispossessed by mining (see Himley 2013; Jacka 2015; Perreault 2013). In this group of men, the house owner worked as a shift supervisor in a company named Odebrecht that was contracted by Vale to complete land-cleaning works before the start of the mining activities. Repeatedly pointing to his employment certificate, he explained the benefits of formal employment, "in this area without any good land it is difficult to live off agriculture. So it was good to have this position. Thanks to my job, I managed to buy some better land. I was also thinking about getting a driving license. I was *hoping* that the employment [would] continue" (Cateme, July 2016).

Similar situations occurred on multiple occasions during my stay in Cateme: local men, now jobless, would show me their carefully guarded certificates as symbols of a "good life" that they had experienced for a short period of time. The resettlement site, therefore, is not a place where the vulnerable populations have always been excluded from a "good life" promised by extractive capitalism. Instead, in the case of temporary employment in the mining industry, *some* people had a fleeting sense of it. "It was a short period, we only worked for two years. But it made *such a difference* to my life", emphasised the same man, indicating the benefits of stable income such as being able to pay children's school fees, or save money for future investments like buying land or upgrading housing infrastructures (Cateme, July 2016).

This dynamic of episodic inclusion into the production of extractive frontiers – or capital accumulation more broadly – of course, is not unique to Cateme. Contemporary development is characterised by uneven capital flows that, depending on structural dynamics of production, temporarily include marginalised labour force into regimes of accumulation (Ferguson 1999). In such contexts, vulnerable populations often

Fig. 2. Type of common housing before the resettlement, as presented by Vale (Source: Austral e Impacto (2006, 24–25), as in Pedro 2011, 39).

Fig. 3. New types of housing in Cateme (author data).

perceive exclusion from regimes of accumulation (or from labour exploitation) as more dreadful than the exploitation itself (Mezzadri 2017; in the case of Mozambique, see Baptista, 2015). However, despite reflecting these dynamics, Cateme's case is also different, primarily because its people, outside the fleeting possibility of the temporary work, were never included into the process of accumulation – it is only their land that was integrated into the extractive frontier. Even so, the accounts of social life in Cateme demonstrate that, despite this exclusion from the spaces of "development", the imaginaries of a "good life" continue to shape affective textures of the everyday. Even though a "good life" has failed to materialise in Cateme, it is currently unfolding in the concession area – or at least it is imagined so – by the resettled people. The narrative accounts of Cateme's men, now made redundant, were noticeably characterised by a tension between the hardship of life in the resettlement site and the idea of a "good life" of, and in, the mining enclave.

This affective friction between one's actual life situation and the failed promise of prosperity is particularly ignited by stories shared by former mining industry workers. One man, for instance, who was employed as a shift supervisor and thus often needed to go to Vale's offices, recounted how, "the offices of Vale are [a] really beautiful thing. I have been there, and I felt like I was in a different world, you would not believe it how beautiful it is. It might be more beautiful than your England" (Cateme, July 2016). As he spoke, other men were nodding heads

and murmuring to each other in Nnungwi. "Have you been there as well?", I asked them. "No, but it is [a] sin that they have everything and we have to live like this. Like animals in these fucking conditions. Have you not seen our suffering?" (Cateme, July 2016), replied one of them, indicating how the imaginaries of a "good life", as well as the anger triggered by them, are shared inter-subjectively within the resettled population. "They are becoming rich because of our misery. These *maputekos*[7] coming to Moatize, eating what is ours, building big houses, whilst we live in these shitty houses that are falling apart" (Cateme, July 2016), added another man, referring to the ongoing developments across Tete that became an epicentre of economic activity, attracting various populations in search for work in the extractive industry (for details, see Lesutis 2021).

Cateme's residents, therefore, are aware of, as well as imagine, the "good life" associated with coal extraction in the areas where they once lived. Despite their exclusion from this space, the idea of "development" becomes a point of reference against which they narrate their hardships. For instance, one man who currently needs to travel nearly-three hours to reach his land due to newly built mining-concession fences that block roads used by the locals, explained to me, "this fence, it irritates me so much. Every time I go past it, I think of [those] who work there [in the mines], and how they are filling their big bellies with money that they get from [the] wealth of our lands. They are becoming fat,[8] whilst my children are crying before they fall asleep. I do not have enough food to feed them" (Cateme, July 2016).

These narrative elements demonstrate an affective entanglement between the rural resettlement and the extractive frontier. They highlight that Cateme is experienced not only as the place of spatial exclusion constituted through dispossession (Mosca & Selemane 2011; Andrade & Sousa 2016; Wiegink 2018). These dynamics, in the context of industrialisation across Africa, have been analysed through the language of "abjection" and being "thrown aside, expelled" (Ferguson 1999) or "made unnecessary" and "discardable" (Mbembe 2001). However, in Cateme, resulting from the symbolic violence of capitalist development that invokes the imaginary of a "good life", the resettlement site is also experienced as a place of hope and a dream of inclusion, however

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[7] A colloquial derogatory term used across the province of Tete to refer to Mozambicans from more economically advanced southern provinces of Mozambique.

[8] A local euphemism that refers to the process of acquiring financial wealth.

unlikely their realisation might be. These states of longing, as scenes of subjection to symbolic violence of extractivism, do not end with the coming and going of economic booms and resource extraction that Ferguson (1999), for instance, analysed. Instead, they continue within the resettlement site as an affective attachment to the mining enclave and the imaginary of "development".

Within broader literature on precarity as symbolic violence of capital, these subjective dispositions have been analysed as states of permanent anxiousness, or even neurosis, that entrench the heightened precarity of life. For a subject that seeks to realise her hopes and aspirations, these very affective attachments to the idea of "progress" are the root causes of this subject's despair (Berlant 2011; Berardi 2015). In Cateme, this subjective disposition about one's unstable present, uncertain future, and continuation of unrealisable dreams stems from the temporary, fragmented inclusion into the labour regime of the extractive frontier. As the resettled men talk about the activities of the mining enclave that they would like to be a part of, they explicitly identify that it is unfair that they themselves have not been given any of these opportunities. These experiences of the resettlement site, therefore, are constituted by, and thus are narrated in relation to, the extractive space that they are no longer, even if temporarily, included. It is, therefore, the symbolic violence of the extractive frontier in Tete – expressed in the imaginary of a "good life" – that, having failed to materialise in the resettlement area, activates this affective register of their subjection.

These modalities of symbolic violence are important for they further reinforce the hardship of dispossession. Structurally, the production of the mining enclave first obliterated the lived spaces of the dispossessed populations by destroying people's farms and including their land into the extractive enclave. Simultaneously, due to the need of labour force to prepare this land for open-cast coal mining, some of those who had been subjected to the dispossession were temporarily included into the unfolding space of natural resource extraction. However, as the production of the mining enclave reached momentum and the low-skilled labour was no longer needed in the machine intensive excavation of coal, the temporary inclusion into the labour regime of the extractive frontier was undone, thereby completing the spatial exclusion initiated with the resettlement process. As one man who worked with Vale for two years asked, without expecting the answer, "why did they promise this better life to us? They promised us all these things so we would agree to be moved. And some of us really believed in it. And now we are here without nothing, left like animals to die of starvation" (Cateme, June 2016).

At the same time, whilst the extractive frontier is constituted through dispossession, this space is perceived as an opportunity of "development". "I have a training certificate, I have a driving license, so I go to Vale every month to see if there is work", explained one man to me (Cateme, August 2016). Therefore, symbolic violence of extractivism is pervasive to the extent that it precludes different imaginaries of life that would oppose this very disposition of violence – the "good life" promised by capitalism is perceived as the primary pathway to "development". In Cateme, not aiming nor desiring to produce a differential space of their own, the resettled men instead long for the abstract, quantified space of extractivism that they are excluded from, which would enable the realisation of a "good life". Therefore, within the resettlement site, the unfolding of the mining enclave is not seen as a problem in itself. On the contrary, Cateme's men, now made jobless, long for their inclusion into the extractive space that they favour to subsistence livelihoods. Today, the main livelihood activities consist of small-scale agriculture in and around Cateme, or looking for casual work in Moatize, none of which compares with the regular income once provided by the mining industry.

This anxiety to be included into the space of extractivism resonates with a number of global hegemonic discourses of "development" that, based on depeasantisation and modernisation theories, advocate for an integration of peasant economies into global commodity circuits and an increasing financialisation of peasant livelihoods (e.g., Collier 2007;

Sachs 2005). These forms of rural livelihood incorporation into circuits of global economy, however, result in multiple socio-material formations of precarity within rural areas as extensively demonstrated in other contexts (e.g., Mohanty 2005; Shacks 2012; Walker 2008). Therefore, I do not argue that the symbolic violence of dispossession in Tete could be mediated by fully integrating the resettled populations into capitalist relations of exchange underpinned by structural and symbolic violence. Instead, my analyses highlight how the extractive frontier unfolds through subjection to symbolic violence. It inscribes and enforces the logics of capitalist development desired as the sole pathway to a "better life".

4. Non-finality of violence

This discussion about symbolic violence of dispossession highlights how everyday life in Cateme unfolds through the dialectic of dreams and anxiety, hope and despair. Engendered and sustained by the unrealisable hope for "development", this constitutes a specific modality of subjection to the power of extractivism, as well as of capital more broadly. This occurs at the intersection of materiality and affect. Land dispossession and systematic exclusion of the most vulnerable constitute the spatiality of Cateme that profoundly limits conditions of possibility for the dispossessed and resettled people. Simultaneously, this subjectivation is affective: it results in collectively shared modes of feeling – hopes for "development" – as indeterminate, subjective positions of sociality. However, this hope, as "a force of existing" (Povinelli 2011, 9), is neither realised nor can ever become materially realisable in the resettlement site. In this sense, this conjoining of structural violence (that dispossesses) with symbolic violence (that legitimises this dispossession) unfolds as subjectivation.

Structural violence is indeed an integral part of how resource extraction is realised and sustained (Bebbington 2012; Bury 2005; Çayli 2021). It conditions dispossession of the most vulnerable from their "social means of subsistence and production" (Marx 1990, 668). This is fundamental to capital's development logics (Harvey 2003, 149) that determine that "places (or their resources) are useful, but the people are not" (Li 2010, 69). As Arboleda (2020) demonstrates, contemporary planetary intensification of extractive capitalism subjects historically marginalised regions and their populations to plunder and exploitation. As a result, expanding webs of infrastructure, global finance, and labour regimes that drive resource-based industries, through systematic dispossession, spatial exclusion, and social effacement, amplify daily hardships of people rendered unnecessary (and thus discardable) to extraction-based modalities of surplus value production. As I discussed above, this was the case with the small-scale landholders in Tete dispossessed from the areas allocated for coal exploitation.

However, these structural modalities of violence that separate marginalised groups from their means of subsistence, or direct, corporeal violence that might enforce it (Harvey 2003; Jacka 2015; Watts 2005), only explain a part of subjectivation through which the extractive frontier unfolds as a mode of power. Put differently, even if dispossession is a form of structural violence that, resulting in hardship and neglect, pushes the most vulnerable into the margins of extractive frontiers (Bebbington 2012; Kirsch 2014), this dispossession is lived as a possibility of, and a hope for, "development", however unlikely. The way these forms of violence coalesce within social textures of everyday life demonstrates how the extractive frontier engenders specific modalities of subjectivation that subsume hopes and desires of, and for, the future to the power of extractivism, as well as of capital more broadly. Whilst the extractive frontier subjects everyday life to suffering and anxiety, the inclusion into this frontier and its labour regimes – so that the dispossessed population could more directly appropriate extractive industry's benefits – continues to be perceived as the only pathway to overcoming this precarity. However, this desired inclusion is no escape from hardship. As one of Cateme's residents described everyday life in Cateme, "this is not living, it's suffering" (Cateme, May 2016), this way

highlighting how symbolic violence sustains and reinforces everyday hardships within the resettlement site.

People, nevertheless, are not passive subjects that wilfully accept repeated exposures to violence. Subjection, therefore, does not preclude all intended social transformation by the subjected but can be interrupted through practices of resistance (Butler 1990). In this sense, frontiers of extraction are sites of contestation where "heroic endurances and poetics" refute enclosure (Yusoff 2021, 670). Mineworkers, for instance, organise collectively to challenge what they perceive as injustice (Burawoy 1972). As Larmer (2006a; 2010) showed in the case of Zambia, mineworkers actively participate in industrial and community-based activism to contest exploitative labour conditions, racial and class inequalities, or unequal distribution of the revenue generated by copper mining industry. At times, they challenge political leadership of their trade unions themselves (Larmer 2006b). Resistance, albeit in less confrontational registers, is also enacted by women, historically excluded from formal employment in the mining sector. Mususa (2010a; 2010b), for instance, foregrounded how, with declining formal permanent employment opportunities in the Zambian Copper Belt, women mine illegally in areas abandoned by mining operators, thus operating outside the legal frameworks set by the state.

Contestation and resistance also took place in Cateme. As I discuss in detail elsewhere (see Lesutis 2019b), its population – feeling abandoned by both the mining investors and government authorities – openly confronted Vale. It organised railway blockades to stop coal transportation and demanded meaningful implementation of Vale's corporate social responsibility programmes. These actions, however, were met with police brutality that crushed the protest, as well as deterring future contestations (Lesutis 2022). This direct violence unleashed by the state coincides with broader national dynamics of increasing authoritarianism, particularly exemplified by state violence with impunity (Pitcher 2020), increasing political pressures on, and limitations of, independent media freedom (Patinkin 2021), or undemocratic imposition of large-scale development projects by the state (Monjane and Bruna 2020). Nevertheless, in spite of this increasing authoritarianism, symbolic violence that re-iterates the legitimacy of the state, capital, and "development" does not cease to be present. As Wiegink (2020) notes, the failure to achieve official resettlement objectives in Cateme has been used as "learning lessons practices" by the Mozambican state elites. Exercises of public participation bring together government actors, extractive companies, and civil society groups as they ostensibly seek to improve national practices of resettlement. However, these modes of co-option – as the development industry at large (Ferguson 1990; Li 2007) – de-politicise dispossession and create consensus, in this way legitimising megaproject-induced resettlement as unavoidable (Wiegink 2020).

The sideling of multiple hardships brought by the resettlement programme has also been further facilitated by shifting temporalities of extractive frontiers. The inevitability of booms and busts associated with extractivism makes them profoundly unstable (e.g., Fraser 2010; Saunders and Caramento 2018). This recently became apparent in Tete. Having faced increasingly volatile global commodity markets, as well as continuous criticism from civil society in both Brazil and Mozambique (Cezne 2019), in early 2021, Vale announced its plans to withdraw from Mozambique. It alleged to implement "sustainability transition" that, addressing climate change, would end coal production (Cezne and Hönke 2022). On 25 April 2022, Vale concluded the sale of its assets in Tete to Vulcan Minerals, a subsidiary of India's Jindal Group, for US $270 million (Further Africa 2022).

These developments immediately raised civil society concerns that Vale left Tete without having effectively addressed multiple environmental and social challenges it had brought to the region (OMR 2022; Zitamar News 2022), as well as to what extent the new investor will transform extractivist practices in the region (Tsuji and Otsuki 2022). In Tete, with the changing investors and faltering or uncompleted resettlement programmes (Wiegink 2018), it remains unclear how long mining companies remain responsible for livelihoods of resettled populations (Wiegink and García 2022). However, because the new investor Jindal already has a poor record of adhering to corporate social responsibility standards in the region,[9] it is unlikely that Jindal will effectively address social and environmental problems created by Vale's resettlement programmes (Cezne and Hönke, 2022, 10). In this volatile context, the possibilities of a "better life" promised by the extractive frontier appear but an empty spectacle of extractivism-qua-"development". Following Vale's divestment from Tete, my former fieldwork assistant expressed his profound disillusionment: "when Vale was here, we still had *some hope* that one day we will receive what [had been] promised to us. But with them gone, we have *no hope* left that our situation will change" (May 2022, personal communication). Therefore, the violence of dispossession, no longer masked by the promise of "development", is made bare – the hope for a "better life", however precarious, can no longer be sustained.

This temporality of failed promises and extinguished hopes, however, is not the end of the story about the violence of extractivism, subjectivation, and precarity in Mozambique's extractive frontiers. Whilst the promises made to the people resettled to Cateme – and the inherent violence of these promises, as I argue in this paper – might have been sidelined in the postcolony, profound and multi-layered violence of extractivism is currently on most vivid display in Cabo Delgado. Since 2010, this province in Northern Mozambique has become an epicentre of Liquid Natural Gas mega-projects undertaken by several global oil companies, including Anadarko, ENI, ExxonMobil, and Total. Population resettlement in Cabo Delgado – in spite of the lessons "learnt" in Tete (Wiegink 2020) – has brought similar challenges: dissatisfaction with unrealised promises of employment, missing financial compensations for relocation, and resettlement programmes themselves (Symons, 2016). This has triggered social and political contestations about already existing inequalities in the province that are further deepened by inter-community conflict and mistrust about intentions of the state and the incoming investors (Namaganda et al. 2022).

The profound futility of the promises of "development" to be realised through extractivism is made even more vivid by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Cabo Delgado that was triggered by a violent militant insurgency associated with armed jihadism and the Islamic state (Morier-Genoud 2020). Commencing in 2017, following the multi-billion natural resource investments in the province, this insurgency is currently sweeping over northern Mozambique, with more than 700,000 people displaced as a result (Hanlon 2021). This has had drastic effects in the wider region; whilst not captured by media overly focused on the rubrics of extractivism and humanitarian crisis, this insurgency is drastically impacting vast networks of production and reproduction that sustain the whole region (Stevano and Perez Niño 2021). There is a growing consensus that the insurgency's roots and the intensification of violence result from the continuing government's neglect to address poverty in the region, particularly in the context of Mozambique's extractive mega-project momentum (e.g., Namaganda et al. 2022). These projects perpetuate and intensify pre-existing inequalities, severely disadvantaging the poor who tend to be excluded from economic opportunities presented by mega-projects (Cezne and Wethal 2022). As several analysts explain, the fundamental lack of sustained investment in local jobs and development programmes have resulted in multiple grievances (Hanlon 2021). In this context, insurgents – with their various social, political, and fundamentalist objectives (see Morier-Genoud 2020) – capitalise on these grievances, particularly the feeling of exclusion and the lack of opportunity to participate in economic developments associated with extractive industries or construction sectors that accompany it (Feijó 2021).

These dynamics demonstrate the temporal, shifting nature of

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[9] Jindal has been operating Chirodzi mine in Tete since 2016; however, to date, it has not resettled several hundred families that continue to live within this mine (Wiegink 2018).

subjection to the violence of extractivism sustained through structural, symbolic, and direct modes of injury. Different modalities of harm-making, as scenes of subjection of the dispossessed to the power of capital and the state, might invoke a fundamentally violent response from "the wretched of the earth". For these subject groups, as Fanon (2004) suggested, violence might be the only available means of overcoming their exposure to hardship and injustice. In this sense, scenes of subjection that unfold through the violence of extractive frontiers are temporalities susceptible to contestation.

5. Conclusion

This article, grounded in everyday experiences of coal mining induced dispossession in Tete, Mozambique, outlined several scenes of subjection to violence of extractivism, as well as of capital more broadly. Instead of explicitly focusing on structural (e.g., Çayli 2021; Bebbington 2012; Bury 2005; Kirsch 2014), or direct expressions (e.g., Harvey 2003; Jacka 2015; Watts 2005) of this violence analysed in the literature, in the article I highlighted how extractive frontiers also unfold through symbolic violence. This concerns the violence of capital's development that promises a "better life", whose actual realisation, directly implicated in circuits of "free" market economy, is constantly deferred to the future, or is even impossible for the most marginalised. Certainly, in the shadows of Tete's extractive frontier, through dispossession and mandatory resettlement, the displaced populations are exposed to spatial exclusion, social effacement, physical harm, and state violence as direct effects of extractivism. Simultaneously, however, having been given a promise of "development", as well as having fleetingly experienced benefits of temporary employment in the mining industry, these groups form affective attachments to spaces of coal extraction. Put differently, they long for the "good life" symbolically associated with extractivism that cannot be achieved in the margins of Tete's extractive frontier.

These dynamics of mining induced dispossession, the article argued, unfold as specific *scenes of subjection* – exposure to the symbolic violence of extractivism, as well as potential contestations of it, through which those dispossessed by mining come into being as subjects of power. As modalities of subjectivation, these scenes of subjection expose the dispossessed to the unrealisable hope for "a better life", as well as to the relentless anxiety about their uncertain future. These are shaped by the promise of "development" that has failed, and continues to fail, at both material and affective registers of the everyday. As a result, this desired inclusion into spaces of extractive capital accumulation becomes fetishised: for the men whose accounts of dispossession and resettlement I sketched out in the article, their long-term, sustained incorporation into labour regimes of the extractive frontier becomes the only imaginable pathway to a liveable life that would overcome their suffering constituted by dispossession.

Nevertheless, discussing the shifting nature of extractivism across topographies of Mozambique, in the article, I also highlighted how these scenes of subjection unfold as temporalities susceptible to change and contestation. They expand, flutter, or retreat, this way reflecting broader, inherently unstable economies of extraction. Violence of extractivism and how it is expressed across space and in one's life, therefore, is never final. And neither are affective dispositions of the dispossessed that are constituted within spatial sedimentations of extractivism, violence, and heightened precarity. Although during the timeframe of my research I predominantly witnessed longing for the promised "better life" and the resulting suffering, anxiety, and despair, in the article, I also outlined how these subjective dispositions might be reworked, directly reflecting unstable temporal economies of natural resource extraction. In this sense, people dispossessed by mining, and their lives that are precariously rebuilt in the shadows of extractive frontiers, cannot be rendered fully knowable. Their multiplicity – modes of being, seeing, acting (Martel 2017) – can only be approximated through verbal accounts of the everyday within the four walls of this or other texts (see Lesutis 2022). Nevertheless, even if only an approximation, my account of symbolic violence provides a critical reading of injustice and everyday struggles that shape the everyday in extractive frontiers. In this sense, the foregrounding of symbolic violence and scenes of subjection that this violence constitutes is also a political project – it highlights modalities of harm, struggle, and despair that are not necessarily immediately recognisable as violence within spatial economies of extraction.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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