

MIMESIS OF THE STATE

From Natural Disaster to Urban Citizenship on the Outskirts of Maputo, Mozambique

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Abstract: This article explores the generative effects of the flooding that hit Mozambique in 2000. Flood victims from the country's capital, Maputo, were resettled in Mulwene on the outskirts of the city. Although initially envisaged as a 'model neighborhood' based on a set of 'fixed urban norms', it soon became apparent that the Mozambican state was incapable of realizing the project. These failures notwithstanding, residents occupying land informally in the neighborhood have parceled out plots and built houses by imitating those norms. Based on a Deleuzian reading of 'situational analysis', introduced by the Manchester School, the article argues that the flooding constituted a generative moment that gave rise to new and potentially accessible futures in which hitherto illegal squatters were reconfigured as legitimate citizens.

Keywords: event, Mozambique, *parcelamento*, potentialities, situational analysis, urban planning, temporal rupture, virtual

In her analysis of 'temporal ruptures', Ann Game (1997: 117) describes the effects of catastrophes on everyday understandings of time: "The movement of living involves ruptures and disruptions to the future which thus disrupt time as we commonly understand it as consisting of a past-present-future." Rather than seeing time as a constant linear progression, in moments of temporal rupture we are brought "face to face with contingency." In other words, temporal ruptures open toward a world of possible futures that co-exist in the brief moments when linear time is dissolved (*ibid.*).

In this article, I explore the effects of a particular temporal rupture with a special emphasis on the potential production of 'possible futures', indicating novel temporal trajectories toward hitherto uncharted terrains. This will be done through an extensive situational analysis of the socio-economic and cultural



effects of the devastating floods that hit Mozambique in 2000. From January to March, more than 700 people died and over 550,000 lost their homes due to the heavy rains (Christie and Hanlon 2001: 37). In Maputo, the country's capital, the municipality faced the serious challenge of finding shelter for the afflicted families. After a series of intense political debates, it was decided that Mulwene, a peri-urban *bairro* (neighborhood) on the outskirts of the city, was the appropriate place to resettle what was initially thought to be 100 families from one urban *bairro*, an optimistic figure that soon proved to be a gross underestimate. At the end of 2000, a census taken at the conclusion of the resettlement process showed that 2,040 families from a total of eight different *bairros* had been resettled in Mulwene.¹ From the outset, state and municipal agencies declared that Mulwene was to be transformed into a *bairro modelo* (model neighborhood) with all the attributes of a modern urban neighborhood. However, given overall administrative weaknesses resulting from failed socialist schemes after Mozambican independence in 1975, followed by the more recent adoption of neo-liberal economic policies, Mozambique has proved completely incapable of realizing such ambitious visions. Thus, newcomers currently access land informally through local chiefs and civil servants who are bribed to parcel out plots irrespective of any legal basis to the property. Notwithstanding the failures of the Mozambican state in creating a *bairro modelo*, residents are taking this ambitious project into their own hands. Thus, where the state was incapable of urbanizing the area in accordance with predefined 'fixed urban norms', residents are using these as a basis for house-building projects despite the apparent illegality of their occupancy. As I will show, residents ultimately secure their occupancy as this 'mimesis of the state' positions them in a momentarily powerful position in relation to state agencies that are threatening them with forced resettlement. The copy, so to speak, has exposed the fragility of the original.

Before entering the local socio-cultural universe in Mulwene, however, I begin by outlining an analytical approach to the interlinkages between housing strategies in Mulwene and the broader processes surrounding the flooding. This takes us back to the work of researchers associated with the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) on social change and, subsequently, to more recent discussions centering on the work of Gilles Deleuze.

Back to the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute

At the outset, the analytical aim of the RLI researchers² was to capture a heterogeneous colonial environment in British Central Africa defined by conflicting belief systems and shifting modes of behavior (Gluckman [1940] 1958: 10). Based on a broad reading of historical Marxism, and in stark opposition to Malinowski's dominant idea of 'culture contact',³ RLI researchers proposed to see Africans and Europeans as members of a single system that was racially diverse and economically and socially interdependent (ibid.; see also Mitchell 1956: 30).⁴ As Gluckman argued, it was only by insisting on seeing the society

as a whole that people's modes of behavior could be properly understood as cultural variations conditioned by the particular situations in which interactions occurred (Macmillan 1995: 48). The decisive process to be analyzed was consequently social change, not oppositions between mutually incompatible systems (Gluckman 1949). In short, not only particular cultural practices but also broader normative understandings should be studied as processual rather than structural phenomena.

In order to capture the complexity and ambiguities inherent in socio-economic processes, the RLI researchers made use of the concept of 'situational analysis' (Gluckman [1940] 1958; Mitchell 1983). Rather than seeing local occurrences as merely 'apt illustrations' of fixed social configurations, the RLI researchers' meticulous analyses of particular situations revealed the tension-ridden and always emergent character of the relationship between individual acts and broader socio-economic and political structures (Long 1992: 162). Through the use of situational analysis, it was thus possible to unfold both the vagueness of enacted norms and the heterogeneous ways that they were being manipulated by agents pursuing different objectives (van Velsen 1967: 146).

Although it might be argued that the work of the RLI researchers invariably got caught up in the structural functionalist paradigm of their time,⁵ it is now possible to elaborate on their ground-breaking studies in the light of more recent philosophical and anthropological work. By doing this, I suggest, it becomes possible to see how situational analysis also enables broader understandings of the still unrealized potentials inherent in particular events. In a sense, we are thus returning to the opening idea of coming face to face with contingency through temporal ruptures (Game 1997).

Events as Potentialities

For Max Gluckman, the notion of the 'situation' referred to a "total context of crisis, not just contradictory and conflicting processes but a particular tension or turning, a point of potentiality and of multiple possibility," as Bruce Kapferer (2005: 89) sees it. According to Kapferer, when everything is in process, it makes no sense to try to determine whether a situation aspires to be an apt illustration or not since "[e]verything is in some way or another different and potentially unique" (ibid.: 100). Perceived from this analytical perspective, there is always a certain emergent potentiality to the situation that reaches beyond its immediate temporal perimeters. In order to grasp fully the significance of these potentialities, I briefly turn to the concept of the 'event' in the work of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze.

In Deleuze's (1997: 5) view, an event is neither a decisive rupture nor a new beginning. Rather, it is essentially the introduction of change and variation into already existing structures. As James Williams (2008: 1) argues, it is "a change in waves" resonating through the environment that causes series of elements to interact in novel ways.⁶ In such instances, the occurrence of the change is predicated on its capacity to affect many interconnected processes that gradually

alter their structure as a consequence of the introduced variation. Any element, whether temporal or spatial, has certain properties that can be determined (DeLanda 2006: 10, 20). A given occurrence can be fixed to a precise temporal moment, while a physical object, such as a hammer, has a certain texture and weight. At the same time, different elements also exhibit particular capacities to interact and become affected by other elements. Given the appropriate association with a particular temporal occurrence, a tool might come to manifest a particular idea or ideology. It is precisely such associations that the event affords. As Deleuze (2006) argues, the introduction of variation in a structural configuration instantiates a constant enfolding, unfolding, and refolding of matter, time, and space (cf. Fraser 2006: 131), whereby constellations of heterogeneous elements come together in “areas of more and less clarity and obscurity” (Williams 2003: 76). According to George Mead (1959: 52), we might therefore see the event as “the occurrence of something which is more than the processes that have led up to it and which, by its change, continuance, or disappearance, adds to later passages a content they would not otherwise have possessed.” This “creative excess” (Ansell Pearson 2002: 70) that the event exhibits finds its impetus in the virtual nature of interlinked elements.

According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the word ‘virtual’ is defined as “that which is almost or nearly as described, but not completely or according to strict definition.”⁷ Its lack of physicality notwithstanding, Deleuze (2004: 260) emphasizes that the virtual is fully real, as it is constantly being actualized through events.⁸ An apt example of a strictly virtual phenomenon might be risks as analyzed by Ulrich Beck (1986, 1998). Although risks are held to pertain to the future, they have such a huge influence on our present that they come to exist ‘in practice’. Beck (1998: 11) thus argues that “risks are a kind of virtual, yet real, reality.” Virtuality is consequently the capacity of each element to be actualized as a singular, concrete object when connected with other elements. It is, in other words, the latent potentialities inherent in individual elements that, by themselves, are “confused, inchoate, and undetermined” (Ansell Pearson 2002: 104), as such constituting an unrepresentable composite of overlapping tendencies. The virtual potentialities of individual elements are thus known only by their effects, that is, as particular realizations arising with the event (Hallward 2006: 41). In order to grasp this process, Deleuze (2004: 264, emphasis added) suggests that we see the event as “a task to be performed or a *problem* to be solved.” As the event connects hitherto detached virtual elements, it comes to orient series of processes by imposing a certain degree of systematicity in the ways that agents relate to the problems arising out of the event (Boundas 1996: 88). The event, seen as a problem, thus expresses a particular tendency that “orientates, conditions and engenders solutions” (Deleuze 2004: 264).⁹

In the following, I approach the flooding that hit Mozambique in 2000 as a ‘Deleuzian event’ and will consequently explore how it ‘reverberated’ with its socio-economic environment in particular ways whereby hitherto detached elements were connected. Through a detailed situational analysis, I explore how the process produced imageries of alternative futures in the vicinity of the state.¹⁰

The Emergence of a 'Model Neighborhood'

Until 2000, Mulwene was inhabited only by *nativos* (natives),¹¹ living off the produce of small-scale agricultural farming, and a group of newcomers building houses in the southern part of the area.¹² In 2000, the situation changed almost overnight when flooding victims were resettled in the area. When the victims first came to Mulwene, they were installed in military tents in a section of the *bairro* later known as Matendene.¹³ Other than a few scattered huts and houses belonging to local *nativos*, this section of Mulwene was uninhabited and thus lacked basic infrastructure in the form of public roads, electricity, and a functioning water system. Given the obvious opportunity to create an urban neighborhood from scratch, the Maputo municipality soon decided that Mulwene should be a 'model neighborhood' (*bairro modelo*), with all the "requirements that constitute adequate habitation,"¹⁴ that is, parceling should follow a fixed set of urban norms according to which individual plots had to be 15x30 meters, with houses located 3 meters from the boundary lines to the street (Nielsen 2008). Before long, Matendene had indeed been parceled out in evenly sized plots that were allocated to the homeless flood victims, many of whom were installed in small cement houses built by international donor organizations working in collaboration with the Maputo municipality. Furthermore, realizing that the rapid influx of people necessitated a strengthened administrative framework, Mulwene was established as a municipal neighborhood in 2001.¹⁵ Soon afterward, it was constituted as an operational municipal entity and subdivided into 56 quarters, each consisting of approximately 80 to 120 households headed by individual *chefes de quarteirões* (quarter chiefs) and subordinate block chiefs. Although initially projected for only 100 families (in addition to the *nativos* and newcomers already living in the area), a census carried out by the neighborhood administration in 2005 showed that there were 30,813 residents occupying an area of 6.8 square kilometers.¹⁶

During my first months in Mulwene, I was continually struck by the homogeneity of the area, with its evenly structured blocks, each consisting of sixteen 15x30 meter plots that were laid out in a uniform grid and separated by straight, 10 meter-wide roads. I supposed that the physical environment reflected the Maputo municipality's initially stated ideal of creating a *bairro modelo* that adhered to a set of fixed urban norms.¹⁷ I was therefore quite surprised to learn that the greater part of the *bairro* had never been parceled out by the formal administrative authorities (see fig. 1). As I would come to find out, the structured appearance emerged through overlapping processes of informal parceling carried out by municipal land surveyors and architects, acting either on their own or in collaboration with local chiefs, with the intention of selling individual plots to needy newcomers in the initial post-resettlement process (Nielsen 2007b).¹⁸ Indeed, as transport facilities and basic infrastructure were gradually improved, people who were in no position to obtain land closer to the city center took advantage of the opportunity to acquire a plot in the emerging *bairro*. Through informal transactions with either local leaders or *nativos*,¹⁹ these newcomers were able to buy plots in Mulwene that, although



FIGURE 1 Overview of the officially parceled sections in Mulwene

informally parceled out by corrupt civil servants, nevertheless imitated the fixed urban norms associated with the *bairro modelo*.

Given the initially high-profile political ambitions of creating a formally structured area where legitimate residents would acquire legal use rights to evenly parceled-out plots, the difference between ideal and reality in Mulwene is striking in a peculiar way. Although the physical landscape appears to be ordered in accordance with an overall urban plan, this is clearly not the case. In order to understand the particular co-existence of urban ideals and actual parceling practices, we first turn to a brief discussion about urban governance in Maputo before unpacking a unique case of parceling in Mulwene.

Muddled Ideals

In considering access to land in Maputo (whether formal or informal), the importance of *parcelamento* (parceling out) cannot be underestimated, for it is not until a plot is parceled out and allocated a registration number that occupancy

is officially recognized. As I discovered, however, urban planning initiatives in peri-urban areas of Maputo generally lack a legal basis. Although operational land laws and regulations stipulate that individual processes of *parcelamento* need to be rooted in comprehensive urban plans,²⁰ these are rarely drawn up, as neither state nor municipal agencies have the financial or human capital to realize such ambitious initiatives. During conversations with municipal civil servants, architects, and land surveyors, I discovered that planning initiatives in peri-urban areas were guided mostly by what is known locally as ‘ad hoc administration’ (*gestão ad hoc*), with the goal of securing a minimum of ‘urban order’. As I was told by a former department head of the Direção Municipal de Construção e Urbanização (DMCU, Municipal Department for Construction and Urbanization), the municipality was not at all interested in how a person gained access to a plot. The only decisive factor was whether the occupancy was at odds with ongoing projects: if not, the occupant remained. In most instances, then, *parcelamento* constituted a practical means of achieving what can best be defined as the pragmatic legitimization of illegal occupancy.

The current weaknesses of urban governance structures need to be seen in their historical context. At independence in 1975, the ruling socialist party, the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo), inherited what was already a poorly equipped and badly functioning bureaucratic system. With no attempt being made to strengthen administrative capacities, the government’s shortcomings dramatically increased in the following decades (Alexander 1997: 2). These weaknesses were particularly aggravated starting in the late 1980s, when Mozambique, sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), made its ‘turn toward the West’ and agreed to implement a series of structural adjustment programs (Devereux and Palmero 1999: 3). At the time, the country had been brought to its knees by a severe 14-year civil war between Frelimo and the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo).²¹ When Mozambique was then hit by the worst drought in decades, the need for urgent aid was evident. Before giving its financial support, however, the IMF made it a condition that government spending had to be drastically reduced, and salaries were cut by two-thirds (Hanlon 2002: 7). As a consequence, civil servants, including architects and land surveyors, began to moonlight in order to secure a viable level of subsistence for themselves. Today, the effects of a weak state apparatus are apparent everywhere. Dilapidated public buildings are occupied by civil servants who lack the necessary qualifications to manage a state administration that is incapable of carrying out even the simplest tasks and services (Nielsen 2007a). Illicit activities are endemic in all sectors to such an extent that we might speak of an ‘inversion of values’, as it is frequently considered immoral *not* to steal from the state, given that one’s primary responsibility is to support one’s own family (Hanlon 1996: 2).

Urban management in Maputo is a particularly salient reflection of this development. Despite rapid population growth in the years following independence,²² the neglect of the urban population that transpired during the colonial period was reproduced. Of all the houses built from 1980 to 1997, only 7 percent were supplied by state or private sector agencies (Jenkins 1999: 23–24). Without a

functioning system of urban governance, people have found alternative ways of accessing land. According to Paul Jenkins (2000a: 214; 2000b: 145), 75 percent of land acquisition occurs informally, that is, through local leaders or civil servants illegally parceling out plots that are later sold informally.

In sum, as an effect of overall weak administrative capacities at both the state and municipal levels, informal occupancy is pragmatically legitimized, provided that it is not at odds with ongoing projects. As we shall see next, the overall ambition of simply creating ad hoc administration has particular consequences when it occurs in a setting initially imagined as a *bairro modelo*. Indeed, the lack of formality with regard to the parceling-out process and the acquisition of individual plots notwithstanding, for the residents of Mulwene, a cement house in a 15x30 meter parceled-out plot has come to constitute a viable way of becoming legitimate members of both the local community and the wider society.

The Commercial Zone

I first heard about the parceling out of the commercial zone on 25 April 2005 while accompanying Magalhães, the *secretário de bairro* (neighborhood leader) in Mulwene, and Samuel, the land chief, to a meeting with Marta Simango, a local resident, regarding a particular dispute over land. When we got to her plot, the elegantly dressed Simango was already waiting with Boavida Wate, a former *chefe de quarteirão*. According to Simango, she acquired a plot prior to the 2000 floods when the area had still not been parceled out. After the parceling-out, she was allocated a 15x30 meter plot, but as she did not close it off with *espinhosa* (thorny bushes), her neighbor Magaia usurped parts of it, which he attached to his own plot and closed off with *espinhosa* before selling the entire property to an unidentified buyer. Wate then intervened: “The problem started when we opened the streets. This *senhora* was caught by the street, so we had to cut off some of her land and some of old Massango’s land.” “So, you know what parts you cut off from her plot, then?” Samuel wanted to know. “Yes,” Wate confirmed. “And it is this smaller plot, which, according to Simango, is too small because it is not like it used to be.” Simango interrupted: “Well, it’s not exactly like that. I know that I can’t get a plot like the one I used to have. It’s just that the one I have now is really small (*pequeno mesmo*).” She turned to Wate, “And it was Magaia who was caught by the street, not me!”

Simango’s plot was located in a section of Mulwene known as the ‘Teachers’ Zone’ because it had been formally parceled out by the Ministry of Education and allocated to needy primary school teachers in the late 1990s. As can be seen from figure 2, when DMCU allocated the area for the Teachers’ Zone, they also envisaged the creation of three *zonas de comércio* (commercial zones) intended for local residents to establish small shops.²³ However, fulfilling this objective was impeded from the outset. When DMCU made the first blueprint of the Teachers’ Zone, the area was already partially inhabited by *nativos*, and as the neighborhood was gradually parceled out after the flooding in 2000,

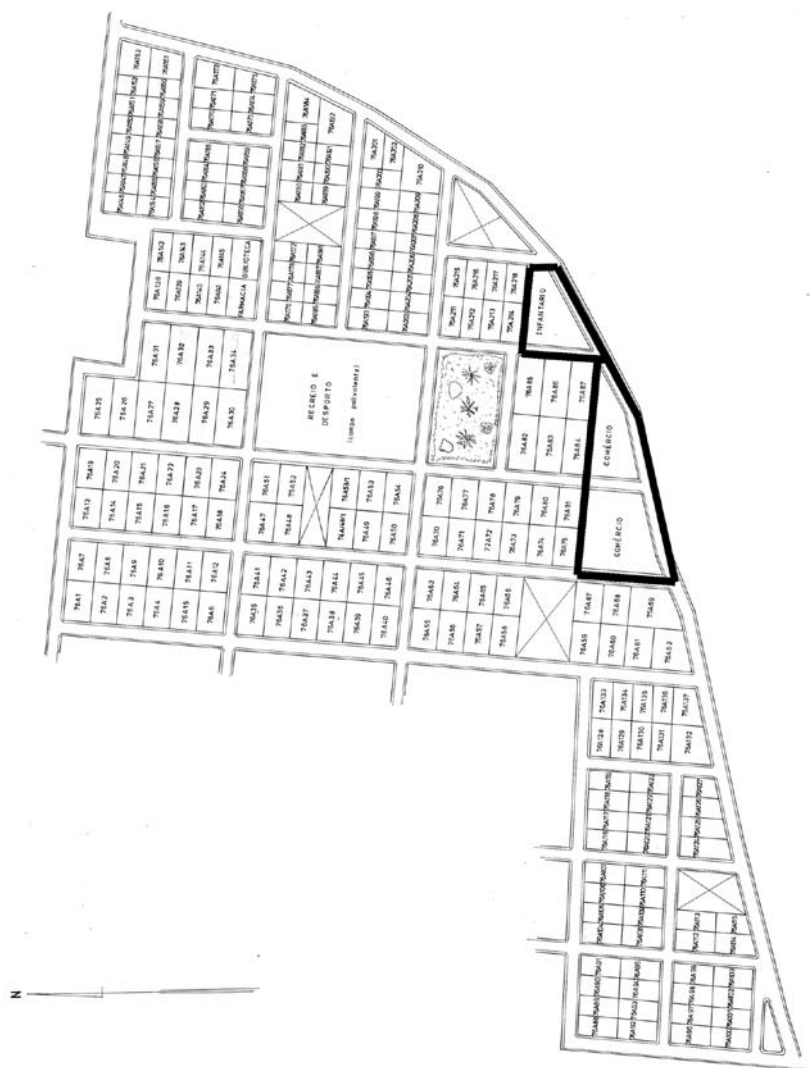


FIGURE 2 Original DMCU blueprint of the Teachers' Zone

more and more newcomers acquired land in the zones through local quarter chiefs and former plot owners. Thus, by the end of 2000, the commercial zones had been totally occupied.

For people living in the Teachers' Zone (but outside the commercial zones), the process turned out to be beneficial, as it brought *parcelamento* to their area, which ensured their ongoing occupation of it. In other words, irrespective of whether or not they were in fact teachers, residents in the area were allocated 15x30 meter plots. For people living within the commercial zones, the situation was somewhat different. Obviously, they were prevented from being allocated formally parceled 15x30 meter plots, as their area was not intended for housing. When the area was parceled out as the Teachers' Zone, their status was transformed from informal residence to illegal squatting, with the implicit threat of being forcibly resettled to the remotest part of Mulwene. Without a doubt, this would have had serious consequences for people's ability to maintain a viable household income. Not only would they have to start new and costly house-building projects, but the doubling of transport costs to go to the city center would have ruined most household economies. No wonder, then, that residents living in the commercial zones were eager to find a way to remain where they were.

Marta Simango was one of the unfortunate newcomers who had acquired a plot in the commercial zone from Obadias, a now deceased *nativo*. In contrast to other residents in the area, however, she had not immediately occupied her plot.²⁴ After acquiring the land in 1995, she moved to Tete with her husband. Until her return to Maputo in 2004, she had allowed her uncle, Américo Gomes, to live in the plot in a two-room *casa de caniço* (reed hut). During her absence, however, the overall spatial configuration of the commercial zone had changed radically.

Although the Teachers' Zone was not directly part of the resettlement area for flood victims, the increased influx of people also affected housing dynamics in this section of the neighborhood. As previously described, given the opportunity to acquire relatively cheap land in an urban region with improved infrastructure and housing conditions, more people moved into the area and started building houses in accordance with the fixed urban norms associated with the *bairro modelo*. However, within the commercial zone, residents continued to inhabit irregular pieces of land that lacked the orderly structure of the surrounding areas. Moreover, due to the fear of forced relocation, piles of cement blocks continued to lie unused on the plots of prospective but still inactive house-builders.

During the first months of 2001, residents in the commercial zone grew increasingly frustrated, as the situation was becoming more untenable. Headed by Magaia, Américo, Belmira, and Massango, who had all lived locally for some years, a first attempt was made to restructure the area so that the parceling out would adhere to general urban norms. According to the agents involved, this *comissão de parcelamento* (parceling committee), as it was soon called, placed wooden plot markers in the ground throughout the area so that it followed the road traversing the Teachers' Zone. However, when it reached the far end of the area, it was clear that not all the current residents would be allocated plots if 15x30 meters was going to be the norm, since there was simply not enough land for this. Realizing the potential for an increase in disputes between residents,

members of the commission therefore turned to Boavida Wate, the former *chefe de quarteirão* in the area, and Munguambe, who currently held the position in Quarter 18 and who had functioned as Wate's informally appointed notary when the latter had been *chefe de quarteirão*. Although initially skeptical, Wate agreed to lead a second parceling-out process. "Wate told them that we were not the DMCU," Munguambe later explained. "We agreed to do it, but we emphasized that it wasn't *parcelamento*. Actually, the initial intention was to make 15x30 meter plots, but we realized that problems would arise, because if we made them 15x30 meters, there wouldn't be enough space for everyone. In the end, we made plots of approximately 14x20 meters."

"It was at the time of the flooding," Wate remembered, when we finally sat down to discuss the parceling out of the commercial zone. "That's why we managed to open the streets." As Wate told me, the parceling out of the neighboring areas made people realize the need for similar urban norms within the commercial zone as well. This assumption was confirmed by Leonardo, the land chief in the neighboring Quarter 19: "The residents agreed to help Wate and Munguambe take the measurements, because in here there was a confusion of houses. So they said, 'We're a family' and began to subdivide the area so that all plots became equal." I asked Magaia, who was part of the commission working with Wate and Munguambe, how they had decided to use 15x30 meters as the dimensions. He replied: "We liked (*gostar*) using 15x30 meters because it's the norm for a land plot here in Mozambique." This opinion was widely shared among residents in the commercial zone. Sobusa, Magaia's neighbor, summed up the overall view: "This zone is very beautiful now, whereas before it only had narrow paths (*becos*). Now, there are streets, street lights ... But back then it was different. The snakes (*cobras*) managed to invade the area in all kinds of ways. But now, as we are already accustomed to the *aldeias* (villages),²⁵ a lot of old things have changed. Now, I see more advantages in comparison to the life of the old ones (*antigos*)."

The overall agreement on the advantages of parceling notwithstanding, the conversion of the irregular pieces of land within the commercial zone into properly parceled-out plots mimicking the surrounding areas was anything but easy. According to the current residents, all landowners had to cede parts of their land, especially those who lost land to the street traversing the area. In this regard, Marta Simango and her neighbor Magaia were particularly unfortunate, as their plots were almost entirely taken for the street. As neither had erected cement houses, they were relocated to significantly smaller 14x20 meter plots. It was at this point that Simango erred by not fencing off her property with *espinhosa*, as is the norm among residents in Mulwene.

Inverse Governmentality

In order to understand the relatively unproblematic overall acceptance of the initial decision to parcel out the commercial zone, we must see it in the context of the increasing possibilities for those involved to become legitimate urban

residents by building houses that adhered to the norms associated with the *bairro modelo*. Although several residents had already built small, one-room cement houses in the area, the *chefes de quarteirões* refused to allocate the land occupation cards (*fichas de ocupação de terreno*)—which documented the names and ages of all the inhabitants of the individual plots—to residents with cement houses, as this would represent the formal acceptance of their illegal occupancy. However, with the parceling out of the (still illegally occupied) commercial zone, local quarter chiefs accepted the building of cement houses and consequently allocated land occupation cards both to residents already living in the area and to newcomers starting house-building projects.

As was made clear above, urban norms of 15x30 meter plots with cement houses 3 meters from the boundaries were the aesthetic norm that both leaders and residents aspired to achieve. Hence, when later praising the work of the parceling committee in allocating a parceled plot to a resident who had previously lived on a diminutive triangular plot of less than 30 meters, Magalhães, the neighborhood leader, argued, “This is not Chamanculo [an urban neighborhood], you know. In Chamanculo, the triangle would be a huge area—but certainly not here! We don’t allow anyone to live in a plot like that because here plots are 15x30 meters or even 20x25 meters ... So a plot which is not even 10x10 meters ... not even 10x5 meters ... we don’t allow people to live like that.” In other words, according to Magalhães, the stated aspirations to create a *bairro modelo*, as realized by the parceling committee, were perceived as a complete contrast to the disorganized neighborhood of Chamanculo. According to local residents such as Sobusa, the result of the parceling out was a “beautiful zone” without unwanted invasions of capricious beings, including the dangerous *cobras*.

In her analysis of low-income model communities in Cape Town, South Africa, Fiona Ross (2005) brilliantly unpacks the intricate ways in which residents conceptualize linkages between new housing forms and ideals about becoming ‘decent people’. Although they considered it to be an essential feature of what it is to be human, residents felt that decency (*ordentlikheid*) was being eroded by environmental factors. Whereas attractive gardens were a sign of *ordentlikheid*, it was generally assumed that slum conditions gave rise to “indecent behaviour” (ibid.: 639–640). What Ross’s study shows, in other words, are the intricate interlinkages between housing forms and “moral structures” (ibid.: 636) that emerge when residents attempt to concretize sanctioned social forms. Hence, *ordentlikheid* crystallized the “approved forms of sociality as these are made apparent in appearances and interaction: both in recognition by others and in self-projection” (ibid.: 640).

Like the peri-urban community described by Ross, then, residents in the commercial zone were collectively attempting to make manifest similarly approbated social forms, which implied a partial imitation of the state. By building a house according to fixed urban norms introduced with the flooding in 2000, residents were therefore not merely copying the state; they were, so to speak, partially becoming the state by appropriating certain key aesthetic elements associated with state-authored urban planning. It is therefore clear that

parceling and house building within the commercial zone did not openly contain the potential for contesting existing social orders. Rather than transforming social structures, these processes aimed to secure a stable position for the house-builders within the urban fabric by becoming partially visible through the appropriation of state-defined urban norms. In order to elucidate this partial visibility, let me turn briefly to the relationship between local house-builders in the commercial zone and outside forces, such as central state agencies.

During colonial rule, the African population was allowed to occupy urban land only on a temporary basis, so permanent housing was considered illegal by definition (Bryceson and Potts 2006: 15). However, as African migrants began to see the city as a place of more promising opportunities (Jenkins 2006: 125), the need for durable housing increased. According to my friends in Mulwene, residents in these areas therefore built cement houses inside the more unstable huts made of clay and reed. When they reached the roof, the surrounding hut was demolished and corrugated iron sheets were rapidly put in place for the roof of the hitherto concealed building. Realizing that a cement house had been erected, the local chief fined the house-builder, but the latter was nevertheless allowed to continue to reside there, given the 'urban look' of the new house.

In light of the discussion so far, we might argue that these previous housing practices were, to some extent, being reproduced by residents in the commercial zone. In both instances, possibilities emerging from the building process afforded house-builders a unique position from which to avoid further involvement with official agencies, given the aesthetic norms used for parceling and house construction. Indeed, as was the case during colonial rule, the parameters for accessing land could continue to be defined in terms of kinship-based or communitarian normative codes because building practices began to occur in accordance with urban norms defined by the Portuguese rulers. Similarly, in Mulwene, the apparent illegality of residents' occupancy was pragmatically legitimized because they built according to the fixed urban norms associated with the *bairro modelo*. Following James Ferguson (2006: 157), we might argue that these processes reflect a form of alterity that refuses to be other. Rather than distancing itself from the locus of power, it seeks to be (partially) visibly recognized, given the imagined affordances emanating from such a position (Nielsen 2010).

Surely, house building in the commercial zone was neither a condition for nor a rejection of urban governmentality, that is, institutional attempts to reform not only socio-economic environments but also peoples' desires and expectations, so that the operations of both are in conformity (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991; Foucault 1991; cf. Li 2007; Osborne and Rose 1999; Outtes 1994; Rose and Miller 1992: 188; Scott 1998).²⁶ Rather, we might perhaps argue that parceling and house building in the commercial zone reflected a form of 'inverse governmentality' in which local agents actually strove to be partially met by the ordering gaze of power. In confronting the state with an imitation of those urban norms that the state was incapable of actualizing and subsequently feeding them back into the formal urban governance system, the activities of the house-builders created the ordering gaze of power by which they ought to

be illuminated. The gaze radiated, as it were, back from the object toward the source. Let me briefly expand on this assumption.

Several recent academic works on peri-urban housing in sub-Saharan Africa focus on insurgent struggles waged by poor residents for improved urban rights (Bryant 2008; Cain 2007; Gatabaki-Kamau and Karirah-Gitau 2004; Gibson 2008; Miraftab and Willis 2005; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004; Mosoetsa 2005; Pithouse 2008; Skuse and Cousins 2007). Without neglecting to analyze intra-group disputes arising out of socio-political processes of asserting rights to the city, these works might be said to highlight the productive powers of collective oppositions. An example is Richard Pithouse's (2008: 85) study of the Durban-based shack dwellers' movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo, which "democratized the governance of settlements" through its collective opposition to forced evictions.

As is clearly apparent, the circumstances in Mulwene are radically different from these situations of overt opposition. Like some adept spiritual experts in the northern regions of Mozambique, who are capable of manipulating competing ethereal forces in both the visible and invisible realms (West 2001, 2005), residents in the commercial zone attempted to balance forces in their surrounding world without aspiring to circumvent existing structures of power. Still, as we saw above, local acts of house building might reverberate in different ways that end up strengthening the position of the residents without the need for overt opposition. Rather, in a peculiarly inverse way, the realization of alleged state-derived norms potentially becomes the covert medium of opposition that forces state and municipal agencies to acknowledge the continuing occupancy of otherwise illegal squatters. Lacking any aspirations to circumvent the existing political governance system, this approach nonetheless challenged current distributions of rights to residents in peri-urban areas such as Mulwene. By appropriating urban norms and thus partially becoming the state, residents in the area were able to advance their claims to become legitimate residents like those in surrounding areas.²⁷

The effects of these covert oppositional practices become manifest when one explores the current urban planning tools used in Mulwene. As can be seen on the recently updated map of the Teachers' Zone (fig. 3), the block that was previously parceled out as six formal plots has now been extended into the commercial zone by the addition of six additional plots. Needless to say, this does not indicate a full formalization of the whole area. Indeed, the map was probably drawn up by a DMCU architect who is not even aware that the parceling out has occurred. It does, however, suggest that the parceling out of the commercial zone successfully transformed the status and localization of residents in the area.

Conclusion: One Situation, Multiple Futures

Through an analysis of the interlinkages between the flooding that hit Mozambique in 2000 and the subsequent resettlement process in the neighborhood of Mulwene, I have tried to show how particular events come to reverberate

In other words, the flooding (as an event) came to constitute a generative moment that gave rise to new and potentially accessible futures in which residents have been reconfigured as legitimate citizens within the urban fabric.

Researchers associated with the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute have shown us how the subjects of our inquiries are always “engaged within the changing forces of history” (Kapferer 2005: 89). Now, more than 50 years after the RLI’s heyday, we are perhaps equipped to grasp properly the full magnitude of these crucial insights, which, at the time, were enfolded in an overly rigid structural functionalism. In this article, I have thus tried to show how a contemporary elaboration of work emanating from the Manchester School makes possible a more nuanced understanding of the potentials inherent in temporal ruptures such as natural disasters in Mozambique.²⁸

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Notes

1. *Relatório anual ano 2001* (6 March 2002). Document in municipal archive in Mulwene.
2. In 1937, the RLI was set up in Livingstone, in what was then Northern Rhodesia, and it continued as such until 1964, when it was transformed into the Institute for Social Research of the new University of Zambia in connection with the founding of independent Zambia (Hannerz 1980: 119). The most prominent RLI researcher was undoubtedly Max Gluckman, the director at the institute from 1942–1947 (Colson 1977: 47). After a two-year lectureship at Oxford, Gluckman became the first holder of the chair of social anthropology at the University of Manchester in 1949 (Brown 1979: 539). Gluckman retained great influence over the development and research personnel of the RLI during the next 15 years. Given his huge influence, later generations have referred to RLI researchers as members of the Manchester School (known as such after Gluckman’s move to Manchester in 1949).
3. Gluckman argued that Malinowski’s idea of culture contact buttressed a policy of racial segregation (Schumaker 2001: 79). It obscured the fact that colonialism in Africa was not a matter of one culture influencing another; rather, “it was a matter of the forced incorporation of Africans into a wholly new social and economic system” (Ferguson 1999: 26).

4. In "The Seven-Year Research Plan of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute of Social Studies in British Central Africa," Gluckman (1945: 9) stated the overall assumption that would guide future empirical research: "(T)here is a Central African Society of heterogeneous culture-groups of Europeans and Africans, with a defined social structure and norms of behaviour, though it has many conflicts and maladjustments."
5. As an apt illustration, we might take Turner's (1957) seminal monograph, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*. Although emphasizing the normative variations inherent in the situations being studied, it nevertheless reflects an overall emphasis on the reproduction of existing socio-cultural structures. This is, I suggest, apparent even from the way that the monograph is structured.
6. Apt examples of Deleuzian events could be "a set of animals altering course due to climatic change, or politically disinterested citizens woken from apathy by events, or the slow silting of a river strangling a port and its estuary into decay" (Williams 2008: 2).
7. Everyday examples of the virtual might be dreams or vivid memories, which are real without displaying immediate tangible compositions.
8. Paraphrasing Proust, Deleuze (2004: 260) thus claims that the virtual is "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract."
9. It is important to emphasize, however, that the problem is never completely actualized in a given solution. We might speak of the problem of communication prior to any language structure or the problem of political community as expressed in the idea of a social contract, both of which continue to produce series of dissimilar solutions. Following Paul Patton (1997: 15), we might therefore argue that "[s]pecification is necessary for the production of particular solutions, but the problem-event is not thereby dissolved or exhausted since there always remains the possibility of other specifications and other solutions." As it were, the event continues to assert its 'creative excess', as agents produce momentary solutions to the virtual problem.
10. This article is based on 13 months of fieldwork in Mulwene on the outskirts of Maputo, from September 2004 to August 2005, and again from mid-October 2006 to mid-November 2006. Whereas during the first period I lived for part of the time in Mulwene and part of the time in the city center with my family, I lived entirely in Mulwene during the second period of fieldwork. Throughout my stay in Mulwene, I focused on making extended case studies of particular disputes over land, which then guided my choice of informants and methodological approaches. Hence, in order to understand the historical trajectories of the disputes, my assistant Cândido Jeque and I undertook extensive archival research in Mulwene and at the administration offices in Urban District 5. These crucial insights were augmented through lengthy and ongoing interviews with all of the parties involved and as a result of participant observation, for example, at meetings and various informal gatherings. Finally, we carried out a household survey with all the household heads in a *quartirão* (quarter) in Mulwene (a total of 131 interviews).
11. *Nativo* is the locally used designation for a resident who is believed to have been born in Mulwene.
12. Given the scarce habitation of the area, it served as the only remaining 'urban expansion zone' for which the Maputo municipality envisaged wide-ranging urban planning initiatives. According to the 1985 urban structure plan for Maputo, urban expansion zones are peripheral areas of the city where no formal occupation was envisaged until 2010 (Secretaria de Estado do Planeamento Físico 1985).
13. Matendene is the proper name used to describe the section of Mulwene where flooding victims were resettled. The word is essentially a mixture of Portuguese and xiChangana (xiTsonga), the language spoken by the Tsonga people. With the plural xiChangana prefix 'ma' attached to 'tendas' (Portuguese for 'tents'), Matendene means 'the area of the tents'.
14. *República de Moçambique: 1 Draft do Projecto de Reassentamento das Populações em Mulwene* (April 2000). Document in municipal archive, Mulwene.
15. Município de Maputo, Resolução No. 36/2001 (29 August 2001).

16. *Breve historial do Bairro Mulwene* (26 May 2005). Document in municipal archive, Mulwene.
17. When comparing Mulwene to peri-urban neighborhoods in Mozambique and other sub-Saharan states, the differences are striking. The new *bairro* is in many ways the antithesis of the many unplanned communities on the outskirts of African cities, which lack everything from basic infrastructure and sanitation to functional housing mechanisms.
18. With the nationalization of land at independence in 1975, monetary transactions in land were formally banned (Garvey 1998).
19. *Nativos* who were forced to cede their *machambas* (cultivated fields) to the flood victims were subsequently compensated with 15x30 meter plots for each family member above the age of 18. In many instances, these plots were later sold to the newcomers.
20. These stipulations are described particularly in Article 3 of the Territorial Ordering Regulations and in Article 19 of the Land Law Regulations accompanying the 1997 Land Law.
21. Primarily defined by its opposition to Frelimo, Renamo was initially a rebel movement. However, after the peace treaty in 1992, it was transformed into a political party (Carbone 2005; Vines 1996) that was supported first by Rhodesia and later South Africa.
22. In 1980, five years after independence, the population of Maputo numbered 775,000. This constituted a 97 percent increase over 10 years (Jenkins 2000a: 209). The city's rapid growth was caused primarily by the civil war, as well as by the lack of resources for family agriculture in the rural areas (Jenkins 2006: 119).
23. In fact, although most of the blocks shown on the blueprint have been parceled out, the commercial zones make up a much larger area than that indicated on the map. Thus, the middle block, which, on the map, is tied to six parceled-out plots, actually constitutes eight 15x30 meter plots.
24. Letter from Marta Isabel Simango to the administrative structure in Mulwene (27 April 2005). Document in municipal archive in Mulwene.
25. Sobusa is referring here to the communal villages (*aldeias comunais*) created by the Frelimo government during the 'villagization' process, which also functioned as secure safe havens during the civil war between Frelimo and Renamo (Dinerman 2006: 51, 56; Egerö 1990).
26. According to Foucault (1991: 100), this particular form of governance emerges when the "population comes to appear above all else as the ultimate end of government ... it is the population itself on which government will act either directly through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions of activities, etc."
27. Since the first parceling out, several residents have submitted requests for legal building permits, irrespective of the initial illegality of their residence.
28. Although I emphasize the temporal potentials of the flooding, it is not my intention to disregard its devastating consequences for thousands of Mozambicans. Still, in order to perceive current realities as the effects of intricately interwoven forces of different scales, it is important to understand how emerging temporal and ideational horizons are interlinked with broader socio-political processes and thereby produce new potentials.

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