

# **Social movements, agrarian change and the contestation of ProSAVANA in Mozambique and Brazil**

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## Working Paper Series

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This Working Paper series emerges from the China and Brazil in African Agriculture (CBAA) programme of the Future Agricultures Consortium. This is supported by the UK Economic and Social Research Council's 'Rising Powers and Interdependent Futures' programme ([www.risingpowers.net](http://www.risingpowers.net)). We expect 24 papers to be published during 2015, each linked to short videos presented by the lead authors.

The CBAA team is based in Brazil (University of Brasilia, Gertulio Vargas Foundation, and Universidade Federal do ABC), China (China Agricultural University, Beijing), Ethiopia (Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute, Addis Ababa), Ghana (University of Ghana at Legon), Mozambique (Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos, Maputo), Zimbabwe (Research and Development Trust, Harare), the UK (the Institute of Development Studies, the International Institute for Environment and Development and the Overseas Development Institute).

The team includes 25 researchers coming from a range of disciplines including development studies, economics, international relations, political science, social anthropology and sociology, but all with a commitment to cross-disciplinary working. Most papers are thus the result of collaborative research, involving people from different countries and from different backgrounds. The papers are the preliminary results of this dialogue, debate, sharing and learning.

As Working Papers they are not final products, but each has been discussed in project workshops and reviewed by other team members. At this stage, we are keen to share the results so far in order to gain feedback, and also because there is massive interest in the role of Brazil and China in Africa. Much of the commentary on such engagements are inaccurate and misleading, or presented in broad-brush generalities. Our project aimed to get behind these simplistic representations and find out what was really happening on the ground, and how this is being shaped by wider political and policy processes.

The papers fall broadly into two groups, with many overlaps. The first is a set of papers looking at the political economy context in Brazil and China. We argue that historical experiences in agriculture and poverty programmes, combine with domestic political economy dynamics, involving different political, commercial and diplomatic interests, to shape development cooperation engagements in Africa. How such narratives of agriculture and development – about for example food security, appropriate technology, policy models and so on - travel to and from Africa is important in our analysis.

The second, larger set of papers focuses on case studies of development cooperation. They take a broadly-defined 'ethnographic' stance, looking at how such engagements unfold in detail, while setting this in an understanding of the wider political economy in the particular African settings. There are, for example, major contrasts between how Brazilian and Chinese engagements unfold in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, dependant on historical experiences with economic reform, agricultural sector restructuring, aid commitments, as well as national political priorities and stances. These contrasts come out strikingly when reading across the papers.

The cases also highlight the diversity of engagements grouped under 'development cooperation' in agriculture. Some focus on state-facilitated commercial investments; others are more akin to 'aid projects', but often with a business element; some focus on building platforms for developing capacity through a range of training centres and programmes; while others are 'below-the-radar' investments in agriculture by diaspora networks in Africa. The blurring of boundaries is a common theme, as is the complex relationships between state and business interests in new configurations.

This Working Paper series is one step in our research effort and collective analysis. Work is continuing, deepening and extending the cases, but also drawing out comparative and synthetic insights from the rich material presented in this series.

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## List of acronyms

ABC	<i>Agência Brasileira de Cooperação</i> , Brazilian Cooperation Agency
ADECRU	<i>Ação Acadêmica para o Desenvolvimento das Comunidades Rurais</i> , Academic Action for the Development of Rural Communities (Mozambique)
BNDES	<i>Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social</i> , National Economic and Social Development Bank (Brazil)
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CONSEA	<i>Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional</i> , National Council on Food and Nutrition Security (Brazil)
CONTAG	<i>Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura</i> , National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Brazil)
CUT	<i>Central Única dos Trabalhadores</i> , Central Workers' Confederation (Brazil)
DUAT	<i>Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento de Terra</i> , land use permit (Mozambique)
Embrapa	<i>Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária</i> , Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation
Embrater	<i>Empresa Brasileira de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural</i> , Brazilian Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Corporation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FASE	<i>Federação de Órgãos de Assistência Social e Educacional</i> , Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (Brazil)
Fetraf	<i>Federação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura Familiar</i> , National Federation of Workers in Family Farming (Brazil)
FM	<i>Fórum Mulher</i> , Women's Forum (Mozambique)
Frelimo	<i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i> , Mozambique Liberation Front
GMD	<i>Grupo Moçambicano da Dívida</i> , Mozambican Debt Group
GR-RI	<i>Grupo de Reflexão sobre Relações Internacionais</i> , Reflection Group on International Relations (Brazil)
GV Agro	<i>Centro de Agronegócio da Fundação Getúlio Vargas</i> , Agribusiness Centre of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (Brazil)
IBASE	<i>Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas</i> , Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis
IESE	<i>Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos</i> , Institute for Social and Economic Research (Mozambique)
INESC	<i>Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos</i> , Institute for Socioeconomic Studies (Brazil)
JA	<i>Justiça Ambiental</i> , Environmental Justice (Mozambique)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LDH	<i>Liga dos Direitos Humanos</i> , Human Rights League (Mozambique)
MAPA	<i>Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento</i> , Ministry for Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (Brazil)

MCSC-CN	<i>Mecanismo de Coordenação da Sociedade Civil para o Desenvolvimento do Corredor de Nacala</i> , Civil Society Coordination Mechanism for the Development of the Nacala Corridor (Mozambique)
MDA	<i>Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário</i> , Ministry of Agrarian Development (Brazil)
MPA	<i>Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores</i> , Movement of Small Farmers (Brazil)
MST	<i>Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra</i> , Landless Rural Workers' Movement (Brazil)
ORAM	<i>Associação Rural de Ajuda Mútua</i> , Rural Association for Mutual Support (Mozambique)
PAA	<i>Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos</i> , Food Purchase Programme (Brazil) / Purchase from Africa for Africans (international)
PAEI	<i>Política Agrária e Estratégia de Implementação</i> , Agrarian Policy and Implementation Strategy (Mozambique)
PEDEC	<i>Projecto das Estratégias de Desenvolvimento Económico do Corredor de Nacala</i> , Project for Economic Development Strategies in the Nacala Corridor
PEDSA	<i>Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento do Sector Agrário</i> , Agrarian Sector Strategic Development Plan (Mozambique)
PNISA	<i>Plano Nacional de Investimento do Sector Agrário</i> , National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plan (Mozambique)
PPOSC-N	<i>Plataforma Provincial de Organizações da Sociedade Civil de Nampula</i> , Nampula Province Civil Society Platform (Mozambique)
PROAGRI	<i>Programa Nacional de Desenvolvimento Agrário</i> , National Programme of Agrarian Development (Mozambique)
Proálcool	<i>Programa Nacional do Alcool</i> , National Alcohol Programme (Brazil)
Prodecer	<i>Programa de Cooperação Nipo-Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento dos Cerrado</i> , Japan-Brazil Cooperation Programme for the Development of the Cerrado
Pronaf	<i>Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar</i> , National Programme to Strengthen Family Agriculture (Brazil)
ProSAVANA	Mozambique-Brazil-Japan Cooperation Programme for the Agricultural Development of the Savannah of Mozambique
ProSAVANA-PD	<i>Plano Diretor</i> , the 'Master Plan' component of ProSAVANA
ProSAVANA-PEM	<i>Projeto de Extensão e Modelos</i> , the 'model-based' agricultural extension component of ProSAVANA
ProSAVANA-PI	<i>Projeto de Investigação</i> , the agricultural research component of ProSAVANA
PT	<i>Partido dos Trabalhadores</i> , Workers' Party (Brazil)
Renamo	<i>Resistência Nacional Moçambicana</i> , Mozambique National Resistance
TAM	Transnational Agrarian Movement
TICAD	Tokyo International Conference on African Development (Japan)
UNAC	<i>União Nacional dos Camponeses</i> , National Peasants' Union (Mozambique)
WFP	World Food Programme
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

# 1 The ProSAVANA controversy and the research process

## 1.1 ProSAVANA

ProSAVANA, the Mozambique-Brazil-Japan Cooperation Programme for the Agricultural Development of the Savannah of Mozambique, is the most visible of Brazil's international agricultural cooperation projects. In the period since its launch in 2010 it has become a magnet for internationally-minded Brazilian agribusiness interests and a rallying-point for their domestic opponents. It was initially framed as the centrepiece of the Mozambican government's proclaimed strategy to promote an agrarian transformation of the 'Nacala Corridor' region, which includes some of the country's poorest, most populous and most politically contested rural areas. It has now become a key focus for contention between government and civil society in Mozambique, as well as a source of tensions between different parts of Mozambican civil society. The contestation process has led to major changes in the programme's focus and approach, and consultation is now under way on a 'Master Plan' for the Nacala Corridor that has little in common with the version initially outlined by the promoters of Brazilian agribusiness expansion to the region. At the same time, Brazil's engagement with ProSAVANA has been transformed by major changes in the country's own political and economic context. This paper traces the pathways that plans for ProSAVANA and transnational mobilisations against the programme have followed over the course of the half-decade since work on the 'Master Plan' began. It examines how different visions of agricultural development and different practices of social mobilisation have interacted within Brazil and Mozambique and travelled between the two countries, with the aim of drawing lessons for future studies of the South-South Cooperation initiatives that are increasingly connecting BRICS and other rising powers with African countries.

The initial contact that led to the establishment of ProSAVANA did not involve Mozambique. It was bilateral between Japan and Brazil, and followed the announcement at the 2008 L'Aquila G8 Summit of a new Japanese commitment to invest in African food production. In September 2009 Kenzo Oshima, the Vice President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Marco Farani, the Director of the *Agência Brasileira de Cooperação* (ABC, Brazilian Cooperation Agency) and Soares Bonhaza Nhaca, the Mozambican Agriculture Minister, signed the MoU that became the basis of ProSAVANA. The document was a materialisation of a convergence of interests of the Brazilian and Japanese governments, based on decades of Japan-Brazil agricultural cooperation, with the Mozambican government's plans to increase agricultural production and productivity. The primary point of reference for Japan-Brazil agricultural cooperation was the *Programa*

*de Cooperação Nipo-Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento dos Cerrado* (Prodecet, Japan-Brazil Cooperation Programme for the Development of the Cerrado), which in its initial form ran for two decades from 1979 and was instrumental both in opening up the Cerrado, the central Brazilian savannah belt, for soybean production and in establishing the *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária* (Embrapa, Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation) as a world leader in tropical agricultural research.

ProSAVANA consists of three components: agricultural research (known as ProSAVANA-PI); support for 'model-based' agricultural extension (ProSAVANA-PEM); and, most controversially, a 'Master Plan' (ProSAVANA-PD) intended to guide significant private-sector investment in commercial agriculture and agro-processing in its target region. This trilateral agricultural development programme has been highly contested by both existing and new domestic and international alliances which bring together development-oriented NGOs, green groups and peasant movements, as well as their allies in academia. Its critics argue that ProSAVANA brings huge risks for the Mozambican peasantry and for the natural environment, as well as for Brazil's credibility as a progressive actor in the field of South-South development cooperation. The increasingly vocal alliance between Mozambican, Brazilian and Japanese civil society groups opposed to ProSAVANA, amplified by the broader transnational networks to which these groups are connected, has helped to shift the dominant international narrative on Brazil's involvement in African agriculture from respect for its politically-driven solidarity to accusations of commercially-driven land-grabbing.

Despite the vaulting ambition of the declarations about its transformative potential that surrounded its launch in 2010, by late 2015 ProSAVANA faced a crisis of credibility, with fading support from the Brazilian government, disagreements among its three sponsor countries and financial uncertainty as a result of cutbacks in Brazil's development cooperation budget and of rapidly declining levels of private-sector investor interest, due at least in part to the slump in commodity prices seen during this period. On the ground, while progress had been made on the ProSAVANA-PI component dedicated to improving research and technology transfer capacity for agricultural development in the Nacala Corridor, a mid-term review of this component highlighted poor communication among the teams from the three partner countries (Jamal et al. 2012; Jaintilal 2013; Cabral and Leite 2015). ProSAVANA-PEM, which seeks to promote the establishment of 'agricultural development models' with improvement of rural extension service activities at community level, has struggled to get off the ground (Mosca and Bruna 2015). Meanwhile, successive deadlines for the finalisation and publication of the ProSAVANA-PD Master Plan were missed in 2013 and 2014. A draft version of the Master Plan was leaked in 2013, and rapidly seized upon by social movements as proof that the programme had decided to promote a substantial component of large-scale commercial farming linked to foreign (presumably

Brazilian) investment, while the programme's managers denied that any such decision had been taken. Only in April 2015 did dissemination and consultation begin on a new 'Zero Draft' Master Plan that was substantially different in emphasis from the version leaked in 2013 (Ibid). This consultation process soon stalled, amid rising political tensions within Mozambique. In 2016 it was re-launched, along with ambitious plans for a formally-structured mechanism for civil society participation in redesigning ProSAVANA. However, the programme remains mired in controversy, and its future has been called into question by a rapid deterioration in political and economic conditions in both Mozambique and Brazil.

## 1.2 Research questions, methodology and process

In this study, we set out to examine three interrelated questions: To what extent has Brazilian cooperation in the agriculture sector contributed to agrarian transformation in Mozambique? How has Mozambican civil society, and in particular the *União Nacional dos Camponeses* (UNAC, National Peasants' Union), responded to the prospect of Brazilian agribusiness investments in the Nacala Corridor? And what effects has Brazilian-Mozambican agricultural development cooperation had on the existing relations among Brazilian and Mozambican rural social movements, in particular UNAC and Brazil's *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra* (MST, Landless Rural Workers' Movement) and *Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores* (MPA, Movement of Small Farmers), as well as between these movements and other civil society groups?

Our data collection approach combined a review of print and audio-visual materials with key informant interviews conducted in Mozambique and Brazil between mid-2013 and mid-2016. We constructed an archive and timeline of the programme's development and the contestation process, using government and civil society documents and statements to the media and in public meetings. We also interviewed peasants in the Nacala Corridor and took note of statements they made during ProSAVANA-related public meetings and debates in the media. Following our initial research in Brasília, São Paulo and Maputo (see Cabral et al., 2013; Chichava et al. 2013), in August and September 2013 we visited Nampula city in Nampula province; Lichinga city and Cuamba, Mandimba and Majune districts in Niassa province; and Gurué district in Zambezia province. In Lichinga and Maputo we attended UNAC-convened meetings where ProSAVANA was to be discussed, and we also participated in public meetings in the three countries in which Mozambican, Brazilian and Japanese civil society actors debated their response to ProSAVANA. After an initial synthesis phase, we carried out two brief periods of follow-up fieldwork in Maputo and Nampula in June and August 2015 to observe civil society responses to the consultation process on the Zero Draft Master Plan. We presented our findings at a seminar organised by 'China and Brazil in African Agriculture' project partner *Instituto*

*de Estudos Sociais e Económicos* (IESE, Institute for Social and Economic Research) in Maputo in December 2015, after which we made further revisions to the draft of this paper and to the *World Development* articles in which we presented some of our research findings (Cabral et al. 2016; Shankland and Gonçalves 2016).<sup>1</sup> This version of the paper reflects a final round of revisions carried out in the second half of 2016, drawing on follow-up interviews and on discussions with our IESE and IDS colleagues in the editorial group of the forthcoming IESE book on ProSAVANA. Throughout this process we have remained in direct contact with key figures in Mozambican and Brazilian civil society, as well as accompanying media coverage and online debates on ProSAVANA.

Over the course of the study it became clear that there was a significant contrast between the limited amount of visible ProSAVANA activity on the ground in the Nacala Corridor and the very significant changes in national and transnational political and social relations that were taking place as a result of the contestation over the programme. Our approach therefore began to focus on official rhetoric, anti-ProSAVANA discourses and the ways the programme produced a space of contestation with effects beyond the agrarian transformation that it intends to produce. Drawing on Tambiah's (1985) performative approach to rituals, we decided to explore ProSAVANA as a construct that has gained materiality through the very actions of its conceptualisation and contestation. As Tambiah notes, in its constitutive features ritual action is performative in three senses:

...in the Austinian sense of performative, wherein saying something is also doing something as a conventional act; in the quite different sense of a staged performance that uses multiple media by which the participants experience the event intensively; and in the sense of indexical values [...] being attached to and inferred by actors during the performance. (Tambiah 1985, 128)

In our analysis, like Tambiah's ritual action, ProSAVANA has produced effects that go beyond the intentions declared by its proponents as well as its critics. Our findings highlight the transformative effects of ProSAVANA on a particular view of agrarian development in Mozambique and in the relations between state and civil society organisations in both Mozambique and Brazil. Furthermore, we show that the process of contestation of ProSAVANA has not only activated a transnational network of social movements but also introduced new dynamics within and between civil society organisations in Mozambique.

In the next section we briefly review agricultural policies and agrarian change in Mozambique and Brazil in order to highlight what historical conditions made possible both ProSAVANA and its contestation. We examine the paths taken by the different rural social movements that have come to contest the increasingly dominant role of *agronegócio*, which can be literally translated as 'agribusiness', but is used in the Brazilian

context to refer to large-scale capital-intensive commercial farming. Next, we turn to the analysis of the leaked ProSAVANA Master Plan, the related Concept Note and the subsequent official Zero Draft Master Plan to unpack the ways the programme was presented in official rhetoric from conceptualisation to dissemination. Then, we look at the strategies deployed by a transnational coalition of civil society organisations and social movements as they articulated a critique of ProSAVANA. Here we show the confluence of the ideological trajectories of Brazil's MST and its sister organisation, MPA, with Mozambique's UNAC. We end with an examination of the effects of ProSAVANA on the dynamics within Mozambican civil society organisations and the ways that the articulation of a transnational critique of the programme has influenced Brazilian and Mozambican approaches to South-South cooperation and agrarian change in Mozambique.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Agricultural policy and agrarian change in Brazil and Mozambique

In both Brazil and Mozambique social movements have sought to influence policies and the direction of agrarian change in order to protect the interests of smallholder farmers. In this section, we look at the policy context in these countries and the ways in which social movements have contributed to agrarian change. The aim is to highlight the agricultural policy background out of which ProSAVANA emerged.

### 2.1 Agrarian change in Brazil and the origins of the exported 'models'

Brazilian agricultural policy and agrarian change has a two-dimensional profile: the first dimension is based on highly mechanised large farms and the second is composed of smallholder agriculture. Institutionally, it has been characterised in recent years by the coexistence of two ministries for agriculture. On the one hand, the *Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento* (MAPA, Ministry for Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply) focuses on large scale development and is linked to the renowned agricultural research institution Embrapa. Embrapa, the main symbol of Brazilian agricultural modernisation, also plays a prominent role in the design and implementation of ProSAVANA as lead Brazilian agency for the PI component. On the other hand, until its abolition in 2016 the *Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário* (MDA, Ministry of Agrarian Development) was responsible for agricultural policies and programmes to support family farming, notably the *Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar* (Pronaf, National Programme to Strengthen Family Agriculture), which has been in place for over twenty years. In addition to Pronaf, the main policy instrument in this sector, the MDA was also responsible for more recent programmes which are now being exported to Africa, such as the More Food programme.<sup>3</sup>

In principle, family farming could complement large-scale agricultural development, but farmers' social movements and environmental organisations see them as two clearly distinct and conflicting approaches (CONTAG 2014). The large-scale approach has its origins in the period of dictatorship that Brazil experienced between 1964 and the mid-1980s. Among the drivers of the 1964 military coup was an attempt to stop the land reform that had been included in the 'basic reforms' programme presented by the deposed president, João Goulart. In its place the military government undertook an ambitious 'conservative modernisation' project which, while maintaining land concentration, was able to trigger a profound technological modernisation of the agricultural sector that, in a period of forty years, turned Brazil from a food production deficit country into one of the world's leading agricultural exporters. This project of 'conservative modernisation' of Brazilian agriculture was based on three interlinked vectors (Sorj 1980).

The first vector was the promotion of a state-sponsored research and technological diffusion component, which led to the creation of Embrapa and of an elaborate system of technical assistance and rural extension led by the *Empresa Brasileira de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural* (Embrater, the Brazilian Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Corporation). This also involved similar state-level agencies in ensuring that the solutions found by innovative research quickly reached farmers. A generation of agronomists was also trained in the USA.

The second vector was deployment of capital through a National System of Rural Credit to finance the transition from the old estates to technology-intensive agricultural enterprises capable of absorbing the new technologies generated and disseminated by the research and technical assistance components. In some of the most dynamic sectors of agricultural production, conditions were gradually created to integrate agricultural, industrial and financial capital into agribusiness ventures. Through this process there was a strong capitalisation of the sector, development of a modern business sector and the integration of dynamic circuits of production and distribution. Moreover, there was also a gradual increase in the production of capital goods for agriculture (machinery and equipment), inputs (fertilisers and pesticides) and services (financial and technical), forming part of what in the literature is referred to as the intersectoral agroindustrial complex.

Third, there were external conditions that favoured this expansion. There were fiscal and trade measures and a strong process of urbanisation and industrialisation which ensured that within one generation the rural and urban population shares were inverted, with three-quarters of Brazilians living in cities by the end of the 1980s. The whole process also allowed the integration into the cities of a significant proportion of the farmers who had lost their land to technological modernisation and the expansion of the agricultural frontier.

One initiative that gave form to the 'conservative modernisation' model was Prodecet, the

Japanese-Brazilian Cooperation Program for the Development of the Cerrado. Following an agreement between the Brazilian and Japanese governments in 1974, the programme's main objectives included increasing the supply of agricultural products, especially soybeans, and stimulating the development of the Cerrado, the central Brazilian savannah belt that at the time was the country's agricultural frontier. The agreement involved the creation of a holding company in Japan and one in Brazil, which together formed a company responsible for programme implementation. Embrapa's role was to adapt crops to lower latitudes and more acidic soils, which enabled the huge expansion of Cerrado farming.

The programme is now in its third phase, and its coverage area has reached the northern part of the country, with the expansion of soy growing into the edges of Southern and Eastern Amazonia. The main beneficiaries of its investments have been medium and large scale farmers who have gone through an intense process of capitalisation and technification. For this reason, the Cerrado is currently the region with the highest concentration of land ownership in Brazil, and labour use density rates (on average one person for every 200ha of planted area) are lower than those for any other area of Brazil, except for those dominated by extensive livestock rearing. Much of the soy produced travels 2,000km to the ports in the southeast and south of Brazil, where the beans are exported for processing overseas.

This increasing dominance of modern Brazilian agribusiness triggered contestation focused on the social and environmental costs of these models. The 1970s and 1980s saw an explosion in the number of land conflicts. The Cerrado's forest cover was practically annihilated and a significant number of indigenous peoples found themselves facing expropriation of their land.

The *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura* (CONTAG, National Confederation of Agricultural Workers) had been created in the 1960s, but began to step up its mobilisation efforts in the context of the democratic opening of the 1980s. The Catholic Church's Pastoral Land Commission, created in 1975, influenced a wide range of rural workers' unions which participated in the creation of the *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (CUT, Central Workers' Confederation), Brazil's most important workers' organisation, in 1983. In 1985 MST was created, focusing on the occupation of land as a strategy for demanding the creation of agrarian reform settlements. At the turn of the 1990s, with the increasing prominence of environmental issues, several green organisations also began to criticize the prevailing dual approach in Brazilian agriculture.

Together, these organisations were responsible for forcing the Brazilian government to continue to develop policies and programmes aimed at supporting small farmers, even while it maintained its support to large scale agricultural projects. The strongest expression of this mobilisation came in the mid-1990s with a movement called *Grito da Terra Brasil* (Cry of the Land Brazil), which

demanded the creation of a specific programme for family farming, later established as the Pronaf. Taking advantage of a moment of crisis within the sector, coupled with state funding difficulties, these organisations skilfully built an alliance with sectors of the government bureaucracy, academia and donor agencies to formulate a proposal for segmentation of Brazilian agriculture and support for family farming in particular. The argument was that a significant part of this segment was about to enter or had already entered modern productive circuits, and thus had gained legitimacy to access public funds in the same way as the large-scale sector.

In the 2000s, during the first term of President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, the internationalisation of Brazilian agribusiness began. On the one hand, a new foreign policy started to take shape, with greater emphasis on South-South cooperation, and engagement with Africa was made a priority. On the other hand, agri-food sector businesses became a key part of the coalition supporting the government led by Lula's *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT, Workers' Party). In a decade the Brazilian economy went through a process of 're-primarisation', with the primary sector quadrupling its share of GDP. Today over 80 percent of Brazilian exports are either primary or processed primary products.

In this context, Africa began to be thought of as a possible destination to which 'Brazilian style' modernisation could be exported. African savannahs began to be seen as a new agricultural frontier in the face of pressure for conservation of the Amazon biome. This was reinforced by the perceived similarities in the comparative advantages of the African continent today and the Brazil of a generation ago. Africa's greater proximity to Asia, a major consumer market, its lower cost of the factors of production (land and labour) and its lighter legal restrictions (that is, looser environmental and labour regulations) were also identified as attractions. All these factors together were seen as presenting a huge opportunity to export a technology-based business model, along with the expansion of Brazil's political and economic influence.

What was not in the script of this export plan was that, given that conflict was an integral part of the Brazilian model, it would also be present on the other side of the Atlantic. Just as in Brazil, this would lead to the narrative of complementarity being deployed in Africa in counterpoint to the narrative of conflict between two social forms of production in agriculture.

## **2.2 Mozambique: a history of extroverted agricultural policy**

Since independence in 1975, successive governments led by the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo, the Mozambique Liberation Front), have declared that agriculture would be the basis for the country's development. In the years that followed independence, the view was that large state farms combined with

peasants' collective production organised in cooperatives would provide the necessary impetus for subsequent industrial development (Mosca 2008; Castel-Branco 1994). This double strategy required that part of the peasantry would be transformed into proletarians working on state farms while others settled in communal villages where they would engage in collective production and benefit from state provision of social services (Borges Coelho 1998; Araújo 1988).

Internal and external factors contributed to the collapse of this agricultural development plan. Among the internal factors, economist João Mosca points to the replacement of a market logic with one based on planning, excessive centralisation and the gulf between what centralised planning was able to offer and peasants' expectations (Mosca 2008). These factors were exacerbated by a civil war that quickly expanded to most of the country's rural areas within the first decade after independence. Externally, political and economic instability in Southern Africa and changing global geopolitics undermined the financial support Frelimo had expected from the socialist bloc, contributing to the downfall of the state farms and cooperatives project.

Under the political and economic reforms that came with the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Plan in 1987, a process of privatisation of state farms began. Peasants received portions of land and were eligible to buy state farms (Pitcher 2008). However, in the context of the civil war this was seen as furthering the government's military strategy to co-opt and control the part of the peasantry that supported the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo, Mozambique National Resistance), rather than as an effective process of agrarian change (Pereira 1996; Roesch 1992; Geffray 1991).

From the mid-1990s Mozambique began to draw up sector-specific policies for agriculture, but for a mix of structural and institutional reasons no sustained progress has been achieved in incorporating smallholder farmers into the agrarian change process. In 1995, the *Política Agrária e Estratégia de Implementação* (PAEI, Agrarian Policy and Implementation Strategy) was conceived as a means of articulating activities in the agricultural sector of a country under post-war reconstruction. As such, its objectives of increasing production and productivity and conducting institutional reforms were broadly defined. Four years later, in 1999, the *Programa Nacional de Desenvolvimento Agrário* (PROAGRI, National Programme of Agrarian Development) was adopted, followed by a second phase initiated in 2006. In addition, between 1987 and 2014 Mozambique produced four Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, a Green Revolution Strategy, a Rural Development Strategy, an Action Plan for Food Production and a National Development Strategy. All these documents have provided inputs to the agricultural sector, but the weak articulation between different policy documents has not supported the implementation of significant sustained projects.

Research on both phases of PROAGRI has concluded that the programme largely neglected smallholder agriculture. For example, Cabral et al. (2007: 7) note that PROAGRI I 'focused too much on building (planning and financial management) systems and capacity in the ministry and much less on ensuring that this improved capacity actually generated more effective service delivery at the field level'. Cunguara and Garrett (2011: 19) add that it 'focused only on production while commercialisation, credit and rural infrastructure received little consideration'. The same authors note that during PROAGRI II, 'access to agricultural services (for example, access to rural extension work and prices of agricultural products), use of technology and agricultural productivity decreased' (Ibid). In 2011 the Ministry of Agriculture launched the *Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento do Sector Agrário* (PEDSA, Agrarian Sector Strategic Development Plan), a policy document that brings together the objectives espoused by all its predecessors. However, operationalising PEDSA has required the development of further specific guiding documents, such as the *Plano Nacional de Investimento do Sector Agrário* (PNISA, National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plan) adopted in 2013.

When put into historical perspective, agricultural policy in Mozambique is still a long way from leading agrarian change and fulfilling the promise of development. As Cabral et al. (2012: 17) note, 'when it comes to agriculture, Mozambique's story is largely one of unfulfilled promises, uneven performance and untapped potential'. Cunguara et al. (2011: 3) also note that 'genuine economic transformation is stagnant, since the agricultural sector is still waiting for more investments and higher quality in the markets and technologies for small farmers, the removal of constraints imposed by financial and land markets, a more efficient public sector and the emergence of a more dynamic private sector'.

While the government has been tinkering with agricultural policy, civil society organisations have focused their efforts on ensuring that neoliberal policies do not lead to the expropriation of land in a country where more than 80 percent of the population practices agriculture. When in mid-1995 the government established an inter-ministerial Land Commission to draft the new Land Law, civil society organisations engaged effectively in a policy dialogue that resulted in the passing of a Land Law according to which individual titling is not the only legal form of access to land. This law recognises occupation rights and that proof of rights in land can be provided by oral testimony. However, the implementation of the law has not been without issues.

Recent years have seen the escalation of civil society contestation of existing and planned investments in agribusiness. The promised benefits for rural dwellers and smallholder farmers have been denounced as strategies to trick local communities and facilitate the expropriation of land (for documented examples see Hanlon 2011; 2002; Åkesson et al. 2009). Other rural

development activities and the exploitation of natural resources have also put pressure on land, particularly where development projects have led to population resettlements. Issues related to soil impoverishment and its implications for smallholder farming have been raised throughout the country (e.g. Deininger and Byerlee 2011; Mosca and Selemene 2011).

In the last few years, the Mozambican ruling elite has increasingly been advocating for technology- and capital-intensive agribusiness as the best approach to the promotion of a dynamic rural sector. This has increased the symbolic and practical attraction of Brazil's experience. Mozambique has sought to obtain the necessary capital and technology from any source willing to provide it, from North or South. South African, European and Malaysian investors have responded to the opportunities signalled by the Mozambican government, and Chinese investors have become active in other 'development corridors' in the south and centre of Mozambique, especially irrigation zones such as the Lower Limpopo (Chichava et al. 2013). However, Brazil's role as a development partner has become increasingly visible in recent years.

### 2.3 Brazil in Mozambique

The Brazilian presence in Mozambique has increased significantly in the last decade, but in itself it is by no means a new phenomenon (Rossi 2015). Links between the two countries began while both were under Portuguese colonial rule, as the 'South Atlantic System' of slave trading extended into an incipient process of the 'Atlanticization of Mozambique' (Alencastro 2007: 147). By the 1830s trade was accompanied by intense cultural and political exchanges, especially between Rio de Janeiro, now the capital of an independent 'Brazilian Empire', and the northern Mozambican port city of Quelimane (Caldwell de Farias 2014). With the ending of the slave trade the intensity of exchange declined, but links were kept alive into the second half of the twentieth century by a tradition of 'Africanism' within Brazil's diplomatic corps (D'Avila 2010). In the 1960s and early 1970s a number of exiles fleeing Brazil's military dictatorship took refuge in Mozambique (Massena 2009). They were joined by increasing numbers of Brazilian *cooperantes*, development cooperation workers, after Mozambique secured its independence from Portugal in 1975 (Azevedo 2012).

In the 1980s a large agricultural development programme supported by the African Development Bank saw over 40 Brazilian agronomists and other technicians working with Mozambican counterparts in the Lioma State Farm in Gurué District of Zambézia Province, which is now part of the area covered by ProSAVANA (Shankland forthcoming). However, the project was abandoned after an intensification of Renamo attacks in the region, and none of the Brazilian officials with whom we spoke had any knowledge of this prior phase of agricultural development cooperation.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw Brazil-Mozambique exchanges of another kind, as Mozambican peasant leaders made visits to Brazil that were sponsored by Northern NGOs, including as part of the movement of international solidarity that followed the murder of 19 protesters belonging to MST by state police near Eldorado dos Carajás in the Eastern Amazon in 1996. This brought UNAC into contact with MST, a contact that was subsequently to be intensified through UNAC's growing involvement with the transnational agrarian movement (TAM) *Via Campesina*, described by Borras Jr et al. as 'perhaps the most politically coherent of all contemporary TAMs' (2008: 172). There was thus a prior history of rural social movement interactions that could be drawn upon to mobilise transnational contestation of the next wave of engagement by Brazilian corporations and government agencies.

Brazilian private-sector investment in Mozambique, much of it state-backed through loans from the giant *Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social* (BNDES, National Economic and Social Development Bank), expanded exponentially during the Lula government (Rossi 2015). It was accompanied by a boom in Brazil-Mozambique development cooperation projects, both triangular (with Japanese, US or UK support) and South-South. Along with health and education, agriculture was to emerge as one of the leading sectors for such cooperation projects (Leite et al. 2014). While Embrapa was the dominant player, university-based agricultural researchers and technical specialists from the MDA also began to develop projects with Mozambique, especially after the 2010 Brazil-Africa Forum (Cabral et al. 2013).

The government officials and movement leaders were soon joined by two other groups of Brazilians who were to become an increasingly significant part of the ProSAVANA story: development NGO activists and agribusiness consultants. In addition to funding from international NGOs, the former were able to leverage government support for a farmer-to-farmer exchange between Brazilian peasant organisations and UNAC (Poskitt and Shankland 2014). The latter had developed a close working relationship with the big corporate players in mining, logistics and construction who were moving into Africa, but as the idea for ProSAVANA germinated they were also able to position themselves as potential implementers of government agricultural development cooperation projects.

Although Brazilian corporations and agencies' engagements with Mozambique span a wide range of scales, locales and sectors, from television advertising to civil engineering to public health policy, there is one which has stood out as by far the most significant actor in this latest wave: the mining and logistics giant Vale, which began exploring opportunities in Mozambique in the late 1980s and became the country's single largest foreign investor after winning control of the massive Moatize coal deposits in Tete Province in 2004 (Rossi 2015). Vale has long operated a 'corridor development'

model in Brazil that brings together mineral extraction and logistics – including railways and port complexes – with agribusiness development, maximising the returns on its logistics investments but often also intensifying land conflicts in the corridor regions (Selemene 2010; Almeida 1994). A Brazilian agribusiness consultant working on ProSAVANA told us that in his experience in Brazil, 'Vale builds the railways to get the minerals out, but then comes to people like us to help generate cargo for them'.<sup>4</sup>

In 2010 Vale took a controlling stake in the rail operator responsible for the line running across northern Mozambique to the port of Nacala, as well as in its Malawian counterpart (which made it possible to link the Moatize mine to the port more directly by cutting across Malawian territory). It thus managed to position itself to play a central role in agricultural development in this strategic 'Nacala Corridor', bringing the experience of its integrated Brazilian model into dialogue – and potentially into tension – with the spatial planning logic followed by the Mozambican state when it designated Nacala as one of the six strategic 'development corridors' of the national agricultural development framework.

Vale has brought with it to Mozambique an ecosystem of suppliers and satellites that includes not only the construction firms working on the Corridor's transport infrastructure but also the agribusiness consultants with whom it is used to working in Brazil. The latter include GV Agro, which led the development of the ProSAVANA Master Plan component, and which carried out a study for Vale of the potential for bioethanol development in Mozambique that served in many ways as the Master Plan's blueprint. This ecosystem extends into the state as well: the CEO of Vale appears in a 2010 Brazilian government video claiming that his firm had 'taken Embrapa to Mozambique' (Planalto 2010), and indeed Embrapa first began to carry out studies for Vale in the country as far back as 2005. This was the period in which Embrapa was subordinated to the then Minister of Agriculture Roberto Rodrigues, who is now head of GV Agro. This web of state-corporate-political interests has played a central role in driving ProSAVANA, and given the financial, political and technical power it can deploy, it could reasonably be expected to have an impact on agriculture in the Nacala Corridor region that is nothing short of transformational.

## **2.4 A Brazil-driven agrarian transformation in Northern Mozambique?**

Our initial document review and media scan suggested that Brazilian agribusiness interests were indeed already actively investing in the region targeted by ProSAVANA, and the programme's documentation implied that a major effort was under way to transfer Brazilian tropical agricultural know-how through the research component of the programme (known as ProSAVANA-PI) even before the Master Plan had taken shape. However, our fieldwork

found that thus far the impact in the Nacala Corridor region of both Brazilian agribusiness investment and Embrapa-supported technology transfer remains negligible.

This is despite all the undoubted efforts of the web of interests centred on Vale and Roberto Rodrigues. This web of interests promoted several visits by potential Brazilian investors, including both large and relatively small-scale agribusiness operators, but these have produced very few concrete results. There is certainly a Brazilian presence in agriculture in the Nacala Corridor, mainly via a few agribusiness firms' joint ventures with companies controlled by the Frelimo elite, but there is no large-scale Brazilian land grab under way.<sup>5</sup> Even where we identified sites for which Brazilian investors had secured land use permits (known in Mozambique as *Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento de Terra*, or DUATs), these seemed purely speculative: no effort had been made to start the investments required by the terms of the DUATs, and as a result these looked set to lapse before ProSAVANA had even concluded its Master Planning stage. Most of the DUAT requests that we identified dated to the initial wave of enthusiasm around the announcement of ProSAVANA in 2011-2012, and this wave had clearly been on the ebb for some time.

Some of our interviewees suggested that Brazilian interest in acquiring land in northern Mozambique would continue whatever happened with ProSAVANA – one used the phrase 'wherever the soybean grows, the gaucho will try to plant it'.<sup>6</sup> However, the scale of a possible second wave of Brazilian interest in acquiring land in the Nacala Corridor will depend on developments in Brazil, in Mozambique and in the key Asian markets for soybeans and other crops where Brazilian producers have a strong track record.

In Brazil, the agricultural frontier is still expanding, both into the Amazon and into the drier parts of the Cerrado belt in the northeast. Only if national policy shifts in ways that increase the costs of expansion into these areas by strengthening the regulations protecting biodiversity and indigenous territories in these regions of Brazil will the relative attractiveness of acquiring land in Africa increase. However, this has become less rather than more likely as a result of the political crisis that has convulsed Brazil since the October 2014 general election. This saw President Dilma Rousseff from Lula's Workers' Party (PT) narrowly winning re-election, but also increased the presence in Congress of representatives sympathetic to the agribusiness lobby, who were able to hold hostage her weakened government. As President Rousseff fought to keep control of Congress in the face of economic crisis and corruption scandals, she made a series of concessions to this lobby, including the appointment of a key agribusiness spokesperson as Agriculture Minister. These concessions proved insufficient to win lasting support, and key figures from the agribusiness lobby were active in the process that led to her impeachment by Congress in August 2016. The interim government of former Vice-President Michel Temer enjoys strong support from

agribusiness interests, which it has repaid not only by abolishing the MDA (thereby removing the principal centre of pro-peasant policymaking) but also by reversing some of the measures to protect biodiversity and indigenous land rights that had been put in place under the Workers' Party governments (Shankland et al. 2016).

In Mozambique, the extent to which the government was prepared to face down campaigning by UNAC and others and ensure large land grants for the exclusive use of foreign farmers was initially called into question when the hard-line President Armando Emilio Guebuza was replaced by the more conciliatory Filipe Jacinto Nyusi in early 2015. Nyusi attempted to build bridges with civil society, but this effort was derailed by hardliners within the governing Frelimo party, who carried out a series of assassinations and other attacks on leading civil society figures and opposition politicians that soon led to a climate of fear replacing the initial optimism. This has been seen as an attempt to close down space for political debate in the face of a resurgent Renamo, whose leader Afonso Dhlakama ran Nyusi unexpectedly close in the 2014 Presidential Elections. Dhlakama has claimed that the fact that Renamo won the largest share of the vote in several key provinces – including Nampula and Zambézia, the most populous of the provinces covered by ProSAVANA – gives him the right to establish 'autonomous provincial governments' there, and has threatened to pursue this decentralisation by force if necessary. Armed confrontations between Renamo fighters and government forces have occurred in several districts within ProSAVANA's target area. In these circumstances, Frelimo has little interest in provoking a revolt among the peasants of the Nacala Corridor by supporting large-scale land-grabs.

There has nevertheless been an increase in the number of reports of land-grabbing in the Nacala Corridor region, and one such case does involve a large soybean farm in Zambézia that is part-owned by the Brazilian agribusiness firm Grupo Pinesso (UNAC and GRAIN 2015). However, this farm was established through a joint venture with the family of former President Guebuza, without any support from ProSAVANA. Some of the land conflicts in the Corridor have become associated with ProSAVANA because they have received funding from a JICA 'Quick Impact Fund' that was branded as a 'ProSAVANA' activity; however, this fund was established separately from the joint Japan-Brazil-Mozambique ProSAVANA programme, and none of the projects that it has funded involve Brazilian investors (Mosca and Bruna 2015).

The scale of future Brazilian agricultural investment in the Nacala Corridor will depend both on the speed

with which Vale and its partners put in place the transport infrastructure that is needed to get produce from the Corridor to Asian markets affordably, and above all on the long-term price outlook for soybeans and other potential export crops. Vale has overcome initial fears that its infrastructure development programme would be radically scaled back in the face of collapsing coal prices, thanks to a cash infusion from the Japanese conglomerate Mitsui, whose business case for investing in the Nacala Corridor rail and port complex seems to assume that it will soon be shipping up to four million tons per year of agricultural commodities (Mitsui & Co. 2014). This may, however, be wildly over-optimistic given current volatility and a depressed outlook for soybean prices at least in the medium term.

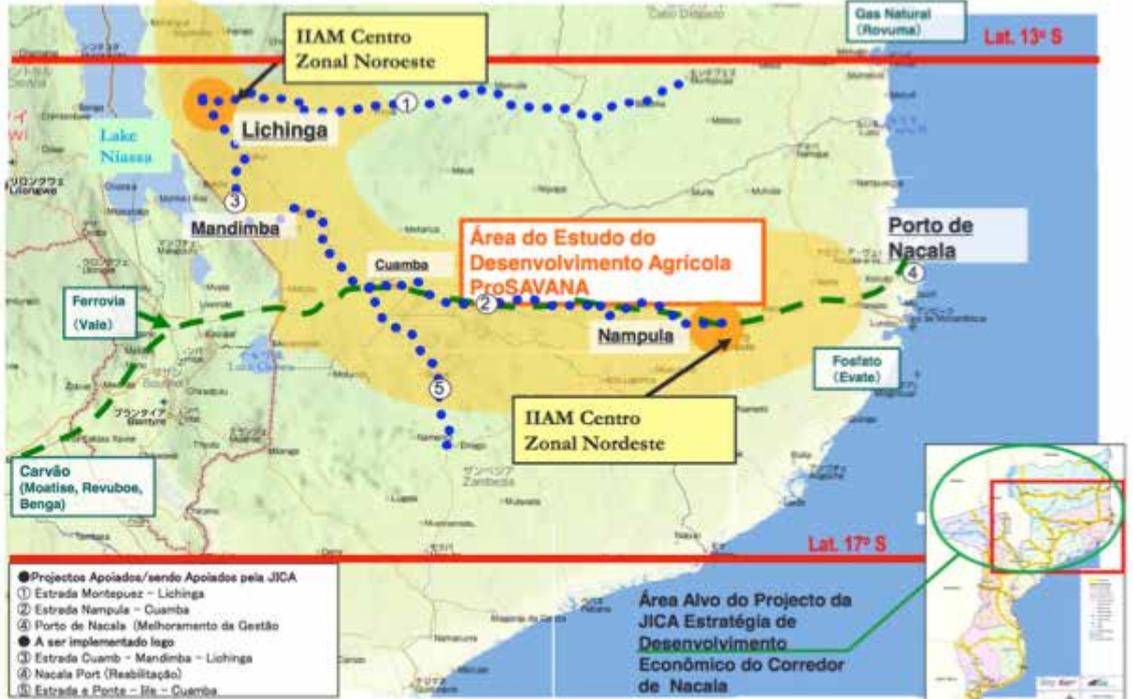
Most of the investment currently going into soybean production in the Nacala Corridor is intended to supply the market for chicken feed within the region, which is growing rapidly (Smart and Hanlon 2014). However, Brazilian soy growers are not interested in producing for the local Mozambican market, nor are they used to operating via contract farming with peasant producers; they excel at export-oriented production on their own large farms. This did not prevent contract farming opportunities and investment in local markets from assuming ever-greater importance at the heart of the ProSAVANA team's efforts to persuade UNAC and others that the programme would benefit small-scale Mozambican farmers as well as welcoming larger-scale foreign investments, in a clear example of the 'complementarity' narrative already seen in Brazil.

As we discuss below, the Zero Draft Master Plan finally released in April 2015 not only uses the 'complementarity' discourse but avoids as much as possible any suggestion that ProSAVANA will have a large-farm component at all. However, examination of the way in which the programme's coverage area has been redefined since 2010 suggests that it is intending to retain an element of large-farm development – just not in the original 'Corridor' along the rail line, whose relatively high population density makes conflict with large farms inevitable. Successive maps produced by the ProSAVANA Master Plan team have expanded its area to incorporate additional regions of Niassa Province that are further and further away from the rail line (the ostensible rationale for the Corridor), but have been identified as having low population densities and agroecological conditions that may be suitable for soybean cultivation using the large-farm Cerrado model. As the sequence of maps in Figures 1-4 below shows, through this process of northwards expansion the region covered by ProSAVANA grew from an initial 12 districts in 2010 to 19 districts in 2015.



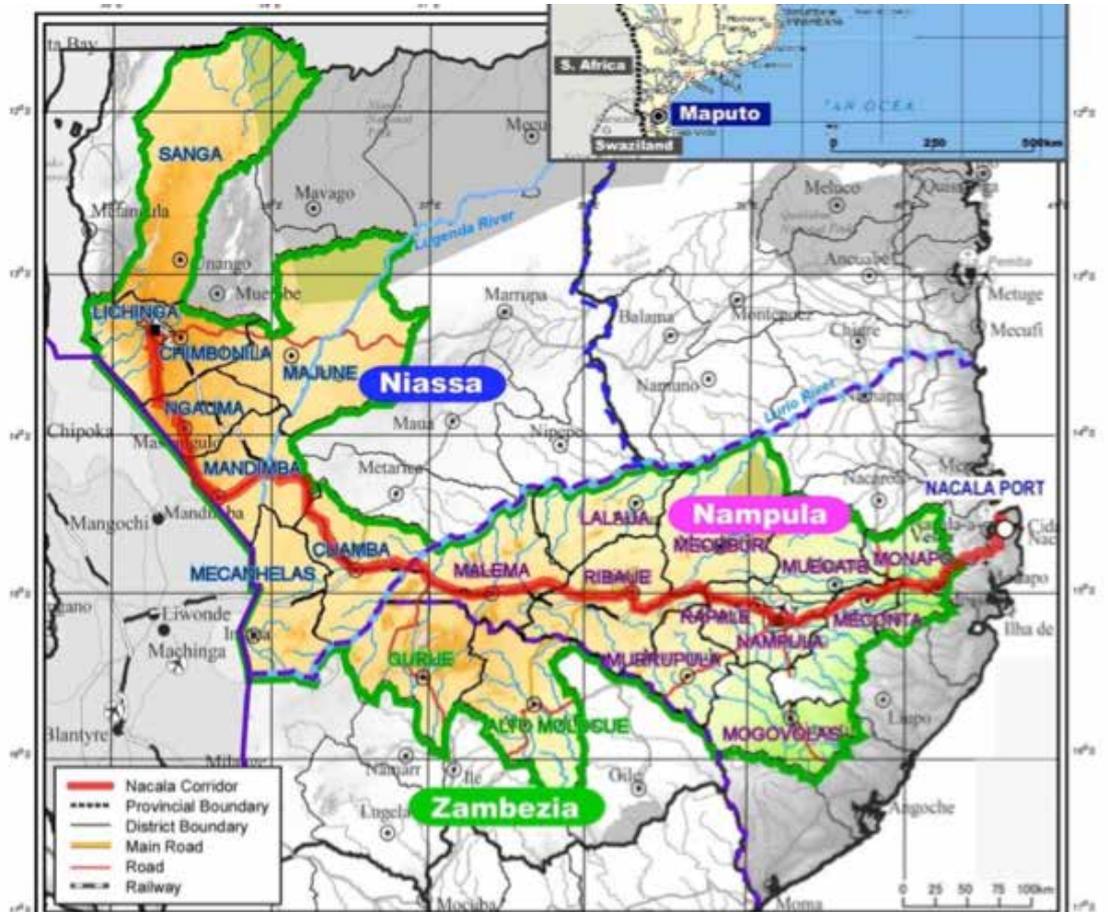
Figure 3: ProSAVANA's planned implementation area, 2013

## 1.2 ÁREA ALVO do ProSAVANA



Source: ProSAVANA-PD 2013b

Figure 4: ProSAVANA's Area of Implementation, 2015



Source: MASA (2015)

By adopting this strategy of northward expansion, ProSAVANA seems to be trying to avoid making the hard choice between frustrating the expectations of Brazilian and other agribusiness investors and confirming the fears of the Mozambican peasantry, by implying that would-be investors can be directed towards remoter and less densely-settled areas in the northern part of the Nacala Corridor. However, these areas are far from 'empty', and many lie in the buffer zone of the Niassa Reserve, Mozambique's largest protected area. Some land and environmental conflicts therefore seem inevitable even if this push succeeds – which it may not, given the greater attraction to investors of the more easily-accessible (and more densely-settled) land that lies along the region's rail and road corridors.

In our fieldwork we found that the current Brazilian presence in the Nacala Corridor is associated with some technology transfer, but this takes place less through the official presence of Brazil's flagship agricultural research institution Embrapa, the lead agency for the research component of ProSAVANA, and more through individual Brazilian agronomists who have found work with agribusiness operations in the Nacala Corridor that are owned by South African or European investors. We even found that while soybeans had indeed been introduced by the Brazilians, this did not happen under ProSAVANA; in fact, soy-growing in the Nacala Corridor was pioneered in the 1980s by the large Brazilian-led agricultural development project centred on the Lioma State Farm. After the project was abandoned during the war it was forgotten by Brazil's own development agencies – though not by the Mozambican peasants who had worked with Brazilian technicians to introduce and adapt tropicalised soy varieties three decades ago (Shankland forthcoming).

In general, there are also very few current signs in the Nacala Corridor of any agrarian transformation at all, whether driven by Brazilian capital and technology or not, though this may change in the medium term, if we believe the ambitious plans outlined in a new Japan-Mozambique regional development programme, the *Projecto das Estratégias de Desenvolvimento Económico do Corredor de Nacala* (PEDEC, Project for Economic Development Strategies in the Nacala Corridor). For now, despite some foreign investment and a rapid growth in commercial soybean production by medium-scale 'emergent farmers' in a few areas where conditions are particularly favourable, the transformation envisaged by first ProSAVANA and now PEDEC has barely touched the lives of most of the Nacala Corridor's small-scale farmers. In the most optimistic recent study, Smart and Hanlon (2014) conclude that there may be more than 60,000 'emergent farmers' in Mozambique – but even this number is a tiny fraction of the country's two million or so rural households, and there is no sign that the enabling conditions these authors identify as needed to permit the kind of scaling-up required to turn this into a full-scale agrarian transformation are going to be in place any time soon. The mass of Mozambique's farmers, for whom UNAC claims to speak, thus remain on the margins both

of Brazilian engagement and of broader moves towards an agrarian transformation in the country.

ProSAVANA is thus clearly not promoting a Brazil-driven agrarian transformation in the Nacala Corridor region. However, this is not to say that ProSAVANA is not producing wide-ranging effects within Mozambique, in Brazil and beyond. What we found is that these impacts are above all political in nature, and they are produced through the discursive framing and contestation of the programme rather than through its presence on the ground.

### **3 Official discourse: from a leaked Master Plan to the Zero Draft**

Official rhetoric on ProSAVANA has shifted over time, in part as a response to the contestation process but also as a result of changing economic and political conditions at the global level and particularly in Mozambique and Brazil. In this section we examine how this rhetoric has been articulated at different points during the development of the Master Plan, which as noted above suffered repeated delays and was only finally released in Zero Draft form in April 2015.

#### **3.1 The leaked Master Plan**

In April 2013, a draft version of ProSAVANA's master plan was leaked to the website [farmlandgrab.org](http://farmlandgrab.org), prompting a vehement reaction from civil society organisations to the private investment-driven agribusiness model that it envisaged, and especially to its inclusion of large-scale commercial farming within some of the 'zones' into which it divided the Corridor, three of which would be designated primarily for soybean production. The document envisaged a fifteen-year, three-phase programme whose initial phase would emphasise the 'fixing in place' of smallholder agriculture, which in the Nacala Corridor overwhelmingly follows an itinerant slash-and-burn/fallow pattern of shifting cultivation. While this was justified as establishing a more solid foundation for agricultural intensification on peasant farms, it would also have the convenient side-effect of freeing up current fallow areas for allocation to commercial investors by reclassifying them as 'unoccupied'.

Overall, the underlying rationale of the leaked Master Plan clearly attempted to combine three separate approaches familiar from the literature on rural development. The first approach was that of export-oriented agriculture. The very notion of a 'corridor' symbolises a vision in which the structural axis is a flow of local products to dynamic external markets whose demand encourages farmers to change their practices to increase productivity and receive higher returns. It was expected that contract farming arrangements would ensure the stability and activation of circuits of technology

investment, technical assistance and access to markets, connecting producers to end consumers via agro-industrial investments in the corridor. The second approach, integrated rural development, has been applied with mixed results over decades by many international development cooperation projects in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Here the view is to address a wide range of constraints experienced by rural populations – from the forms of production to issues such as health and gender relations. The third approach is to favour family farming, emphasising its modes of production and consumption and ensuring family farmers' autonomy in decision-making on the use of resources.

These three visions coexisted in the document, suggesting that it was attempting to deploy a discourse of complementarity – an indication that the Mozambican government was not indifferent to criticism and that it recognised the limitations of each of the three models when applied in isolation. However, an implementation strategy that effectively ensured harmonisation of the three approaches would require very specific skills and abilities, high-quality human, technical and financial resources and a great capacity for coordination between the various components and their inevitable conflicts.

The Brazilian experience shows that it is difficult to achieve the kind of harmonisation projected in the leaked version of the Master Plan. Large-scale projects like Prodecer and Proálcool, (the sugarcane-based bioethanol development programme launched in the 1970s) had among their declared objectives giving priority to family farming. However, the dynamics of agri-food chains and their requirements in terms of productive competitiveness swiftly created enormous levels of differentiation among farmers. In addition, the transformation in the social fabric in the crop-producing regions resulted in an inevitable process of monetisation of social relations which had structural effects on traditional ways of life. The end result was that while these regions grew richer a process of differentiation among farmers became entrenched, with a smaller group included in production and marketing channels; another small group employed in manufacturing industries, services and commerce created to support the agro-industrial sector (the concept of 'clusters' underpinning the leaked Master Plan); and a majority group having to seek livelihood alternatives in other sectors, often in distant urban centres. In terms of economic and social indicators the result was a decrease in overall income poverty, combined with an extreme increase in inequality and vulnerability and a strong intensification of rural-urban migration.

With regard to its beneficiaries, the leaked version of the Master Plan proposed a double differentiation. On the one hand, producers were organised according to scale, from small to medium to large. On the other, small farmers were subdivided into three groups: 'vulnerable', 'typical' and 'emergent'. Different strategies are proposed for the various groups, in line with the rationale outlined above. Although this was not formally articulated, a prominent role was allocated to the 'emergent' farmers,

as they were identified as having the resources and skills required to access new technologies and innovations and adapt to the requirements of contract farming with processing and marketing companies. According to the document, it was expected that these farmers would serve as reference-points (or models) for the 'typical' group of farmers, encouraging the latter to move into new forms of production and market integration.

It was also expected that knowledge, skills and resources to be provided by the public sector would improve the livelihoods of the vulnerable. However, implementing this strategy is not a simple 'cultural' issue to be resolved by exposing the poorest and most marginalised members of the peasantry to successful examples of emergent farmers. Nor is it a question of supply, to be resolved with improved agricultural extension and the introduction of new techniques. It is above all an issue of demand: how many farmers would be required to ensure the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in the region? While the leaked Master Plan suggested that, alongside foreign investment, specific 'models' for these farmers should also be adopted, its strategy for implementing these is far from clear.

A key unresolved issue for the programme outlined in the leaked Master Plan related to oversight and decision-making procedures. The set of strategies it outlined was not accompanied by clear institutional arrangements and associated governance and decision-making processes. It was silent, for example, on the role that farmers' organisations would play in the negotiation of investment decisions, contracts, or the management of ProSAVANA. Even in Brazil, with its powerful and well-organised rural social movements actively supported by allies within government, experience suggests that stronger and more organised actors are generally able to capitalise on the incentives provided by programmes such as ProSAVANA, sidelining any social and environmental concerns that are not written into contracts.

Although government officials and ProSAVANA representatives maintained that the leaked document represented a work in progress and that it had been misread by civil society organisations, public statements by public authorities in Mozambique and Brazil suggested otherwise. In fact, the leaked text was well aligned with public statements by Mozambican government officials and actors who had a vested interest in ProSAVANA in Brazil and Japan. This alignment ensured that the leaking of the Master Plan fuelled the escalation of the contestation of ProSAVANA.

Given the repeated refusal by the Mozambican, Brazilian and Japanese governments to say what the current Plan did contain, since they claimed that its content was different from that of the version that had been leaked, a transnational coalition of social movements and NGOs came together to demand an official position on ProSAVANA. This prompted the three governments to respond by publishing on the programme's website a Concept Note (ProSAVANA-PD 2013a) that sought to

address the key concerns raised by this transnational coalition.

### **3.2 The Concept Note**

The Concept Note made available on the ProSAVANA website in September 2013 warned in its introduction that it was not a summary of the programme's Master Plan but a document intended to provide a reference point for dialogue with stakeholders. The document emphasised the 'improvement of the quality of life' of residents in the area covered by the programme, stating that its mission was to promote 'modernisation of agriculture' and 'create jobs.' Significantly, it avoided any mention of soybean production zones, emphasising instead the establishment of 'clusters' to support production of tea, cashew and cassava, all crops that have long been established in different parts of the Corridor.

As articulated in the Concept Note, the rationale behind the whole programme was as follows. Poverty is a result of low levels of local agricultural productivity. To boost productivity four aspects needed to be combined: introduction and dissemination of new technologies to improve the productivity of land, labour and capital; investment in infrastructure to support production flows, reducing transport costs that result from the long distances from consumer centres; attraction of foreign capital to enable the necessary investments, due to low local capacity; and finally, the adoption of strategies to diversify production by combining crops considered to be the ones consumed at the family level with commercial crops, ultimately promoting the creation of agribusiness clusters.

As it was presented, the Concept Note was a coherent document. However, a number of questions remained unanswered. For example, in most developing countries intensification of farming has meant the reduction of rural labour use. As noted above, in Brazil soybean production employs, on average, one worker for every 200ha. The higher the productivity, the lower the demand for labour. The programme seemed to suggest that the opposite would occur in Mozambique, despite the fact that it proposed related activities that also rely on a high degree of incorporation of technology. Would these activities not lead to discrimination among farmers and result in accelerated rural-urban migration and exclusion? Similarly, many of the areas that have been affected by projects of this nature have seen the replacement of food crops by cash crops, as competition generates a struggle for factors of production, in particular land and labour. It is not clear that Mozambique's land governance structures are sufficiently robust to prevent this problem and the resulting rise of monoculture across the whole region, as is happening in the Cerrado region of Brazil, with its attendant environmental impacts (Cabral and Norfolk 2016; Shankland et al. 2016).

Finally, the Concept Note emphasised that the government was willing to engage in a dialogue which respected the principles of cooperation, according to which such conflicts would have to be addressed at different phases of implementation. But how far would it be possible for the problems identified in ProSAVANA to be addressed as the project was implemented, given that the principal critiques of the programme related to its core rationale? Would it really be possible to address them without compromising the envisaged scope of the initiative?

### **3.3 The Zero Draft Master Plan**

The release of the Concept Note was accompanied by a modest consultation process that reached fewer than a thousand of the Nacala Corridor's four million inhabitants, and raised more questions than it answered. Brazilian journalist Amanda Rossi described visiting the Corridor in 2013 and being asked 'what exactly is ProSAVANA?' by peasants wherever she went, commenting that 'not even the institutions responsible for the programme explained in concrete terms what it was, beyond general statements of intent... given the lack of definitive answers, it is understandable that doubts remained' (Rossi 2015: 247). After this brief opening-up for a hesitant consultation process that served only to intensify the frustrations of those seeking concrete answers to their questions, the programme entered a long period of official silence during which the contestation of ProSAVANA reached a new pitch of intensity, as described in Section 4.

Finally, in April 2015, a new round of consultation began with the release of a full, officially-sanctioned Zero Draft of the Master Plan (MASA 2015). The rationale of this Zero Draft is very much in line with official rhetoric on agricultural policy in Mozambique in recent decades. As we discussed above, agricultural policy in Mozambique has historically sought to modernise production and commercialisation processes to promote rural development. The Zero Draft restates ProSAVANA's main objective as being to strengthen smallholder agriculture in order to improve the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the Nacala Corridor. As in other agricultural policy documents such as PEDSA (MINAG 2011), government and the private sector are expected to provide the necessary incentives and support. The text emphasises support for the region's main food crops, such as maize, cassava, bean and groundnut, in order to ensure food security, combined with the production of crops such as soybean for the domestic market.

In many ways, the Zero Draft Master Plan seems to have been designed to allay most of the concerns raised by Mozambican civil society organisations that contested ProSAVANA. The document stresses that land allocation will be coordinated by the government in order to ensure that no land grabbing takes place and that food production will be a priority.

Despite having a radically different emphasis from the leaked draft, and an ostensibly pro-peasant focus, the history of poor communication with Mozambican civil society organisations since the outset of the programme (Jamal et al. 2012; Jaintilal 2013; Cabral and Leite 2015) has led many to regard the Zero Draft with scepticism. This scepticism is partly due to the continuing lack of information on key issues. For example, the review of the Draft Zero Master Plan by Mosca and Bruna (2015) notes that while the document puts smallholder farming at the centre, it lacks detail on important issues such as what roles are envisaged for differentiated groups of smallholder farmers. They also note that issues such as public sector subsidies and the quantity of private sector investments are also not detailed. The joint written response of the Mozambican civil society groups that make up the 'No to ProSAVANA' campaign, whose preparation was led by the environmental NGO *Justiça Ambiental* (JÁ, Environmental Justice), was similarly critical of the Master Plan's lack of specificity on key issues such as forest protection and water resource management and the weak and tentative language in which its commitment to guaranteeing the land and other rights of peasant communities in the Corridor was expressed, despite its extensive use of 'politically correct' language (Náo ao ProSAVANA 2015: 2).

In addition to the lack of detail on some key issues that had already been raised by civil society organisations, their objections focused on the process by which the Master Plan had been developed and discussed, criticising in particular a perceived lack of transparency and unwillingness to involve NGOs and peasant organisations in systematic dialogue. The very process of dissemination of the Zero Draft Master Plan was contested by an important segment of civil society that included UNAC, as the optimism that had greeted President Nyusi's rhetoric at the time the consultation process was launched gave way to scepticism and accusations that the process had been deeply flawed, authoritarian and 'lacking in democratic spirit' (Mosca and Bruna 2015: 25). The main claim was that standard public consultation principles that would have allowed for adequate public debates had not been followed, with poor communication around the location and timing of consultation meetings and intimidating behaviour by some local officials that seemed intended to limit rather than foster debate. This was compounded by the attitude of the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, who stated in a public consultation meeting in Maputo that the government was ready to 'go over any obstacle and continue' with ProSAVANA. In this climate of polarisation and mistrust, civil society has had little incentive to focus on a more nuanced discussion of what was actually being proposed in the Zero Draft, with the result that despite the efforts of JÁ and its allies to produce an in-depth analysis, much of the current criticism of ProSAVANA simply rehearses the old critiques articulated in relation to the documents and public statements that preceded it. In the next section, we examine how these critiques were developed and articulated by peasant movements and other groups with which they came to engage

through an increasingly transnationalized contestation process.

## 4 ProSAVANA and its critics

ProSAVANA came to the attention of civil society organisations working on agriculture and with peasants in Mozambique in the first half of 2010, when a number of official ProSAVANA-related events were organised and the media began to reproduce statements by government representatives from the three countries hailing the programme and its prospects for contributing to the end of poverty in Mozambique. Civil society organisations grew increasingly concerned at issues such as the size of the land area reportedly being allocated to the programme and associated fears of land grabbing; the prospect of monocultures expanding at the expense of age-old diverse agricultural practices; the lack of clarity over the role of smallholder agriculture in the projected agribusiness-led model; and the potential environmental impacts associated with export-oriented mechanised agriculture. These concerns echoed the critique of Prodecer which had been raised by many civil society organisations and academics in Brazil. This critique portrayed it as a programme that produced food for the world but left many Brazilians landless, undermined family farming, degraded land, damaged biodiversity and produced negative impacts on the health of the population of the areas where it was implemented (Schlesinger 2013; Mazzetto Silva 2009).

The levels of anxiety among pro-peasant civil society organisations in Mozambique were heightened by an international context that was marked by the consequences of the global food and fuel price crisis. These consequences extended from urban food riots in many countries, including Mozambique (see Brito et al. 2015), to the intensified interest of transnational private capital and richer countries in acquiring agricultural land in Africa. The increased prevalence of such 'land grabs' triggered both local conflicts and national fears over 'the rise of a new type of global geopolitics... where national sovereign territory increasingly is subject to non-national systems of authority' (Sassen 2013: 25). Attention to Brazil's role in this process grew along with the rise in visibility of the BRICS as development actors, following from the intense interest that Chinese agricultural investment in Africa had already attracted, despite the growing evidence that the real scale of this investment had been significantly overstated (Bräutigam 2015).

The conceptualisation of ProSAVANA was shaped by a broad range of forces, including the agribusiness development model that had found expression in the Brazilian Cerrado under the influence of Prodecer, and the global reconfiguration of agribusiness and commodity trading networks whose expansion into Africa has found political and policy expression in 'African Green Revolution' discourse and initiatives such as the G8-supported New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. As we discuss in the following sections, its

emergence also coincided with a particularly significant moment in the trajectories of pro-peasant movements in Brazil and Mozambique, and the confluence of these factors seemed almost perfectly pitched to stimulate a transnational contestation linking Mozambique, Brazil and a range of global networks.

#### **4.1 Peasant movements in Mozambique and Brazil: a confluence of trajectories**

Peasant movements in Brazil and Mozambique have followed very different trajectories, but they have a shared history of struggle against neoliberal approaches in agriculture policy and against land expropriation. In recent years, this has come to underpin an increasingly intense process of exchange and collaboration.

In their contestation of the agribusiness-dominated development model, Brazilian social movements have split into two camps, reflecting different views of agrarian conflict. Although the dominant organisations in both camps, on the one hand MST and MPA and on the other the *Federação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura Familiar* (Fetraf, National Federation of Workers in Family Farming), an organization affiliated to CUT, were both born under the influence of the Catholic left, in the mid-1990s they went their separate ways.

MST, which is largely composed of landless or more impoverished farmers and smallholders, turned its focus to mobilising around the category of 'peasants' in order to establish a unifying frame for the different conditions of its members. They no longer focused their opposition on traditional large landowners but instead on agribusiness. This was because they viewed the competitiveness of Brazilian agribusiness not as the result of entrepreneurial spirit but as deriving from land ownership, which they argued had conferred upon this social group the political power that had enabled them to capture public funds in order to modernise. In other words, Brazilian agricultural modernisation had been made possible by the capture of the state by the most powerful social groups, accompanied by the exclusion of broad masses of farmers. Thus, MST and its allies argued that promoting a different model for Brazilian agriculture would require rejection of agribusiness.

As noted above, the largest rural workers' organisation in Brazil, CONTAG, had been created in the 1960s but followed a largely non-confrontational path until it began to place greater emphasis on mobilisation in the context of the democratic opening of the 1980s. This brought it closer to Fetraf/CUT in the 1990s, as both sets of actors abandoned organising around a 'rural workers' identity, replacing it with a 'family farmers' identity. Within this camp, mobilisation was articulated as being in opposition to agribusiness as a whole, despite the fact that a segment of family farming is itself built on the principles of productivity and incorporation of technologies used by the large-farm segment. This means that in practice the

unions' criticism sometimes focuses not on the agribusiness model per se but on the priority given to the segment of large producers within it.

In response to the shift towards a more radical position by the trade union camp, MST created its own arm to represent small producers, MPA. At the same time, it intensified the efforts it had been developing since the 1990s to reach out to other movements at the international level, through its links with the transnational agrarian movement Via Campesina. By this stage, MST and MPA could no longer focus their mobilisation only on agrarian reform, as had been the case in the movement's original phase, for two reasons. The first is that the struggle for land receded in intensity in Brazil during the 2000s, as economic growth and expansion of urban employment opportunities defused many conflicts over land. The second is that internationally MST found that it was not necessarily the struggle for land that mobilised farmers, but rather opposition to the technological model of the agri-food sector. This gave rise to the demand for food sovereignty as a message that was able to bring together different social movements and sectors, including environmental NGOs, to strengthen opposition to agribusiness-dominated models.

In Mozambique, UNAC had been created in the early 1990s as a response to concerns over the future of the peasants' cooperatives that had been established during the socialist period, in the context of the Structural Adjustment Programme that started in 1987. The initial question was whether cooperatives could continue to exist in a capitalist economy; having argued that they could, UNAC turned its attention to how best to protect peasants' interests in the new neoliberalism-dominated context.

At the centre of UNAC's project was the idea of peasants' self-organisation. In a radical departure from previous party- and state-led experiences, including that of its direct precursor organisations such as the General Union of Cooperatives in Maputo<sup>7</sup>, from the outset UNAC sought autonomy from the ruling party and the state in order to put peasants' interests first. In the words of its first president, 'the idea then was to create an institution that would stand up for peasants' rights whether or not these peasants were grouped in cooperatives or associations.'<sup>8</sup> After a nationwide consultation process, UNAC held its inaugural assembly in 1994 and presented itself as an umbrella organisation whose role was to promote the grouping of peasants into cooperatives or associations in order to defend their interests.

Over the course of its two decades of history, the organisation has undertaken a diverse range of activities, some of which – including the provision of technical support to farmers and participation in post-war and post-natural disaster reconstruction activities – have meant that at times UNAC has acted and been seen as an NGO rather than as a social movement or union. However, in 1996-1997 UNAC played an important mobilising and representational role during the

discussions over and dissemination of the new Land Law, gaining considerable visibility in the process. Through this experience, UNAC not only strengthened its relationship with its constituents but also diversified its network to include national and international NGOs, development cooperation organisations, parliamentarians, academics and fellow pro-peasant institutions.<sup>9</sup> It was also in the late 1990s that UNAC first connected with Brazil's MST, and through this link became affiliated to Via Campesina.

The land campaign experience in Mozambique and the link with international organisations with similar interests that had emerged through Via Campesina combined to lead UNAC to reflect on its own agenda and activities. At the beginning of the 2000s it began internal discussions that led to the development of a strategic plan which put the emphasis on advocacy for peasants' rights, leading UNAC to focus on strengthening peasants' organisations, calling for food sovereignty and expanding peasants' political voice.<sup>10</sup>

The mid-2000s saw the broadening of fora for civil society participation in policy dialogue in Mozambique. Public debates and campaigns organised by institutions such as *Fórum Mulher* (FM, Women's Forum) on gender and women's issues, *Grupo Moçambicano da Dívida* (GMD, the Mozambique Debt Group) on debt relief and the G20 NGO coalition on civil society participation in anti-poverty policy through the system of *Observatórios de Desenvolvimento* (Development Observatories) all placed demands on UNAC to participate and contribute its views on issues relating to the peasantry. The same period saw UNAC strengthening its international networks and participating for the first time in hosting a Via Campesina conference.

These changes in UNAC's national and international engagements came at a time when most of Mozambique's major aid donors had turned their focus to budget support, reducing the flow of project implementation funds that NGOs could access. As was the case for other Mozambican civil society organisations, UNAC found that its human and financial resources were overstretched as it sought to respond to the goals it had set itself on multiple fronts. The shortage of resources led to the exit of key staff members, while also opening up opportunities for renewal. After 2010, as donor frustration grew with the slow pace of political opening and the failure to translate economic growth into poverty reduction in Mozambique, a new wave of funding began to flow into strengthening civil society organisations. UNAC has been a key beneficiary of this change, and has been able to recruit a group of young and energetic staff members who are working towards strengthening the organisation at the grassroots level while also engaging actively in public debates on key issues concerning the peasantry. This has included engagement in policy dialogue, a notable example of which was UNAC's contribution to the development of PEDSA, currently the document of reference for agrarian development in Mozambique. It has also included increasingly high-visibility contestation

of government policy, the most prominent example of which has been over ProSAVANA.

## 4.2 Contesting ProSAVANA in Mozambique and Brazil

Mozambican civil society organisations concerned about the implications of ProSAVANA initially found themselves faced with scant information and recurring contradictions in official statements. They therefore began to look for alternative sources of information in Mozambique, Brazil and Japan to enable them to take a position regarding the programme. They were able to access documents and news through networks such as Via Campesina and through international NGOs which operated in all three countries. These transnational links became increasingly important as the contestation process evolved.

In 2011, a series of media reports in Brazil highlighted a drive to attract Brazilian agricultural investment in the Nacala Corridor that was explicitly linked to ProSAVANA, with one report stating that the Mozambican government had made six million hectares available for occupation by Brazilian commercial farmers in the provinces of Niassa, Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Zambézia (Mello 2011). This suggestion that a wave of Brazilian agribusiness land acquisitions in Mozambique was imminent triggered a flurry of activity among Brazilian civil society actors that had hitherto paid little attention to their country's growing role in Mozambique.

To established Brazilian development NGOs such as the *Federação de Órgãos de Assistência Social e Educacional* (FASE, Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance), the *Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas* (IBASE, Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis), and the *Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos* (INESC, Institute for Socioeconomic Studies), ProSAVANA seemed to represent the intersection of global capitalist forces, whose impacts on marginalised rural populations in Brazil they had long denounced, with a corporate-dominated expansion of Brazilian presence overseas about which they were feeling a growing unease. Brazil's rush into Africa had left them – and the progressive forces with which they were aligned – behind. This had denied them a role in exporting the more progressive of the country's many 'models', ensuring that (as they saw it) only the most socially regressive and environmentally destructive of these models made the journey to Africa. To make things worse, they had been virtually excluded from the new flows of both government and private-sector funding that were going into this African expansion, at a critical moment when the Northern aid-funding on which they had depended for decades was rapidly drying up.

These organisations activated their links and alliances in academia and in the more accessible branches of government, ensuring that their concerns circulated among a subset of the intelligentsia linked to progressive

political parties, including the ruling PT. They also strategised with their friends among the remaining international NGOs with a presence in Brazil, many of whom belonged to the same networks. They secured support from ActionAid, Oxfam and the German political foundations to organise field visits to Mozambique, to publish reports and to welcome delegations of Mozambican activists whose eyes they could open to the future which awaited them if they did not resist the advance of the particular 'Brazilian model' represented by ProSAVANA (Ferreira 2013; Mello 2013).

One such visit by Mozambican civil society organisations in search of information led in 2012 to the production of a video documentary entitled *A face oculta do ProSAVANA* ('The Hidden Face of ProSAVANA'). The documentary presents Brazilian farmers' first-hand experiences of Prodecer as reported to representatives of Mozambican civil society organisations including UNAC and *ORAM-Associação Rural de Ajuda Mútua* (ORAM-Rural Association for Mutual Support). It was filmed on a trip to the agribusiness-dominated state of Mato Grosso that was organised by FASE and funded by a variety of international NGOs and foundations including Oxfam and the German Left Party's Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. In the documentary the 'Brazilian model' of agricultural development is visually presented through long takes showing vast expanses of sugarcane or soybean monoculture, vividly contrasting with images of the rich and diverse miombo woodlands of the Nacala Corridor and with stock footage of naked Brazilian indigenous children splashing happily in an unpolluted stream. It is narrated through stories told by Brazilian small farmers and indigenous activists who have lost land or have been squeezed out of markets. It is depicted as embodied in the pesticides that Mato Grosso residents describe as being sprayed indiscriminately from planes to poison the land and the people of what was once the Cerrado. Although the documentary film was recorded during a trip to Brazil choreographed by FASE, it was edited in Maputo in a process overseen by UNAC and carries an unmistakably Mozambican framing of Brazilian realities that provided a powerful counterpoint to the largely Brazilianised narratives of ProSAVANA circulating in civil society and the media.

Since ProSAVANA had by now become a central issue in UNAC's work, this documentary was shown in most meetings organised or co-organised by UNAC and where issues related to land and peasants were discussed. The video provided a more powerful way of communicating what was at stake in ProSAVANA than documents or speeches, particularly among UNAC's grassroots constituencies where literacy levels are low and command of Portuguese is often limited. Peasants who had watched the documentary told us that it had significantly contributed to the way they now understood the 'Brazilian model' of agrarian development.

The documentary was also used at the national level in various civil society meetings to raise awareness of the dangers of land expropriation, environmental

impacts and general degradation of peasant's livelihoods. Its clarity and power contrasted effectively with the evasive and often contradictory messages that emerged from the Mozambican government over the course of 2013 and 2014, while the publication of the Master Plan was repeatedly delayed. Government officials' attempts to allay the fears articulated in the film after the draft Master Plan was leaked in 2013 were not convincing enough, especially because of the uncoordinated manner in which official pronouncements were made and the ambiguities that remained even after the ProSAVANA Concept Note was released later that year.

In May 2013, Mozambican civil society organisations disseminated an open letter to the Presidents of Mozambique and Brazil and the Prime Minister of Japan demanding that ProSAVANA be halted in order to allow for public consultation and reflection on the project. UNAC and JÁ were at the forefront of the campaign at the national level, but a key role in convening the discussions that led to the production of the letter was played by civil society groups based within the Nacala Corridor itself, especially those linked to the *Plataforma Provincial de Organizações da Sociedade Civil de Nampula* (PPOSC-N, Nampula Civil Society Platform). Although government officials at different levels did attempt to respond to the points raised in the letter, no formal response was provided until August 2014, and in the meantime public speeches by government representatives at different levels ended up feeding a continuous cycle of conjecture about the real nature of ProSAVANA (see e.g. Funada-Classen 2013a).

Paradoxically, it was this lack of clarity that intensified the debate over ProSAVANA, as different agendas and fears were projected onto the programme. Between 2013 and 2014 ProSAVANA became the subject of a growing range of public pronouncements by national and international authority figures and increasingly heated debate in civil society and academic fora (Fingermann 2013; Funada-Classen 2013b). In 2013 and 2014, ProSAVANA was the subject of discussion in most national and international meetings organised by UNAC. Ultimately a civil society campaign was launched to reject the programme before the official statement of what it would actually do – the Master Plan – had even been published (UNAC 2014).

Among Mozambican civil society organisations, UNAC emerged as one of the key institutions articulating the opposition to ProSAVANA, as it was uniquely positioned to link the local, regional, national and international levels. As noted above, the documentary film *A face oculta do ProSAVANA* had given UNAC's young Maputo-based activists a powerful tool for communicating with grassroots peasant associations in the Nacala Corridor whom they had previously struggled to mobilise. The organisation's geographical reach allowed it to convene mass meetings of peasant leaders at both the regional and national levels, and its recruitment of technical advisers with a background in environmental campaigning helped it to build common ground with

the green coalition led by JÁ. The development of this common ground with environmental NGOs was also supported by the growing prominence in UNAC's discourse of agroecology, the focus of an exchange programme with MPA that had resulted from contacts established through Via Campesina. Its links with Japanese academics helped UNAC representatives to secure invitations to Japan, including a high-visibility visit organised to coincide with the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 2013.

In Brazil, it was a combination of Via Campesina connections and more recent NGO links (which themselves had been developed with the support of international NGOs) that in December 2013 secured an invitation for a UNAC spokesperson to present the organisation's views on Brazil-Mozambique agricultural development cooperation at a meeting of the *Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* (CONSEA, National Council on Food and Nutrition Security), a key site for formal government-civil society policy dialogue. This contributed to a resolution that included strongly-worded criticism of ProSAVANA (CONSEA 2013: 6). Given CONSEA's formal status and political prestige, this made it impossible for the Brazilian government to ignore the controversy. The government reluctantly began to treat the impacts of its international development cooperation activities as a legitimate subject for public debate, effectively 'putting an end to the insulation of cooperation from wider state-society dynamics' (Cabral and Leite 2015: 440).

After more than a year of waiting for a formal response to the open letter demanding information and public consultation on ProSAVANA, further delays in the publication of the Master Plan and a series of unsatisfactory meetings with ProSAVANA and government representatives, UNAC and a number of Mozambican civil society organisations decided in mid-2014 to launch the 'No to ProSAVANA' campaign to stop the programme altogether. This became the focus of the largest transnational gathering that the civil society campaign had yet seen, the Triangular Peoples' Conference held in Maputo in July 2014. This conference brought together a broad range of Japanese and Brazilian civil society groups, including several (such as Brazil's CONTAG) that had not previously been very visible in the campaign, as well as key leaders from some of the most important Maputo-based NGOs, including FM and *Liga dos Direitos Humanos* (LDH, Human Rights League).

However, the presence of NGO leaders from the Nacala Corridor itself was considerably less visible at the Triangular Peoples' Conference, and the key Nampula-based civil society platform PPOSC-N was notably absent from the list of 'No to ProSAVANA' declaration signatories. This signalled that despite UNAC's efforts to maintain connections with grassroots constituencies, the dynamics of engagement within ProSAVANA's target region were diverging from those at the national and transnational levels. Within the Corridor, a more complex picture was emerging that saw some NGOs remaining vocally opposed to the programme while others opted for

constructively critical engagement that aimed to improve the content of ProSAVANA rather than halting it altogether. Some local peasant associations (as well as some UNAC-linked Provincial Peasant Unions) had become more intensely mobilised after experiencing land conflicts as a result of foreign agricultural investment. Some of this investment has involved projects that have been seen as 'ProSAVANA projects' because they have benefited from JICA support via a budget line that was branded as part of ProSAVANA despite having a separate genesis from the main trilateral programme, and the impression of being part of the trilateral programme has been strengthened by JICA's use of Brazilian consultants (Mosca and Bruna 2015). Other local associations had become more muted in their opposition to the programme, as they were caught between promises of development benefits and fear of government reprisals in the increasingly tense political climate that characterised the Nacala Corridor in the period preceding and immediately after the October 2014 Mozambican Presidential elections.

The elections dominated public debate in Mozambique in the second half of 2014, which meant that the 'No to ProSAVANA' campaign rapidly lost visibility. A similar process happened in Brazil, where a bitterly contested election campaign saw PT-sympathising civil society groups draw back from explicit criticism of the government's international engagements for fear of providing the opposition with ammunition, which meant that there was little follow-up to the involvement of Mozambican civil society groups in the international mobilisation around the Brazil BRICS Summit in July 2014 (Poskitt et al. 2016). As outlined above, the narrow re-election of PT President Dilma Rousseff was followed by a deepening of the political crisis, which culminated in her impeachment. The interim administration that replaced Brazil's PT-led government in August 2016 shifted strongly towards a Northern-aligned rather than a South-South-focused foreign policy, and showed no interest in resuscitating Brazil's faltering development cooperation programmes with African countries such as Mozambique.

In Mozambique, by contrast, the electoral process was followed by an apparent fresh start, as President Nyusi's new cabinet was quick to seek out NGO leaders for dialogue, including over ProSAVANA, while several leading civil society figures accepted government jobs. This process of realignment often attracted accusations of co-optation; while these were similar to those that had greeted the migration of NGO leaders into government after the PT came to power in Brazil, there was a greater degree of mistrust between ruling party and civil society in Mozambique. This mistrust was intensified by the actions of hardline groups within Frelimo, widely suspected of being behind attempts to intimidate figures who were perceived as being too close to the opposition, as well as more extreme acts such as the assassination of the academic Gilles Cistac in March 2015 (Hanlon 2015).

In April 2015 the government released the Zero Draft Master Plan and organised a fresh round of consultations throughout the Nacala Corridor and in Maputo. However, as discussed above, the public consultation meetings did not mark the hoped-for transformation in patterns of engagement. The process as a whole was highly contested by some civil society organisations including UNAC, who complained that it was being manipulated by government organisers to ensure a preponderant presence of people who supported ProSAVANA; that the whole process did not take into consideration legally established procedures for public consultation; and that it was being led by government officials who showed little interest in accommodation with dissident voices. In response, government representatives questioned the presence of peasant organisation representatives from outside the areas where consultation was taking place, claiming that they were not peasants and simply wanted to oppose ProSAVANA – thereby questioning UNAC’s legitimacy as an organisation capable of speaking for peasants at every level from the local to the international.

UNAC did not in fact associate itself with the most radical denunciations of the consultation process; these came from *Acção Académica para o Desenvolvimento das Comunidades Rurais* (ADECURU, Academic Action for the Development of Rural Communities), a small advocacy NGO with its origins in the student movement whose members included several current and former UNAC advisers but which was not formally affiliated with the peasant movement organisation. It was ADECURU that in September 2015 produced the follow-up video to the UNAC/ORAM ‘Face Oculta do ProSAVANA’ documentary, a film entitled ‘*ProSAVANA: Terra Usurpada, Vida Roubada*’ (‘ProSAVANA: Land Grabbed, Life Stolen’) that deployed revolutionary slogans and confrontational language alongside footage recycled from the earlier documentary. UNAC did not associate itself with the new film’s more inflammatory discourse, though it remained critical of the consultation process. Instead of repeating the video-based mobilisation strategy it had deployed so effectively in 2013 and 2014, UNAC joined with JÁ and other establishment NGOs in producing a careful, densely-argued, 22-page critique of the Zero Draft Master Plan (Nã ao ProSAVANA 2015). Although this concluded with a call for ProSAVANA to be abandoned and for the government to initiate a new round of consultations in order to prepare a ‘national strategy for the development of family farming’ (a longstanding UNAC demand), the details of the critique left open various entry points for possible negotiation, welcoming some aspects of the Master Plan and calling for more information on others rather than for their outright rejection.

However, the level of polarisation and mistrust around the programme was already so high that it proved impossible to build on this more measured and nuanced approach to critique of ProSAVANA. In January 2016, a workshop was organized in Nampula with the intent of restarting the consultation process. It was co-hosted by civil society platforms from the region covered by ProSAVANA and facilitated by consultants who had been

hired by JICA specifically to deliver a better level of dialogue with civil society, but the event became dominated by disagreements between the organisers and the Maputo-based activists representing UNAC at the meeting, at one point degenerating into a physical confrontation. In February the ‘No to ProSAVANA’ campaign released a note denouncing the workshop as part of a process of ‘forced legitimisation’ and describing it as ‘stained by serious irregularities which once more confirm the prevalence in the ProSAVANA programme of irredeemable conceptual and procedural flaws’ (Nã ao ProSAVANA 2016: 1).

## **5 Beyond the contestation of ProSAVANA**

The preceding sections have shown how the contestation process led to a transformation of the official discourse on ProSAVANA, whose Zero Draft Master Plan has abandoned many of the most controversial features of the version that was leaked in 2013. In this final section, we examine the extent to which the contestation process has produced wider transformative effects on the civil society organisations involved – particularly UNAC and its Via Campesina allies MST and MPA – and on patterns of civil society-state engagement around agricultural development and international cooperation policy in Mozambique and Brazil.

### **5.1 ProSAVANA and the changing forms of peasant movement organisation in Mozambique**

One of our initial assumptions in undertaking this research was that the patterns of organisation of the Mozambican peasantry were changing as part of a movement led by UNAC in response to an ongoing agrarian transformation. We also assumed that the recent changes in UNAC’s discourses about rural development in general and ProSAVANA in particular had been driven by the intensification of its links with the Brazilian MST through Via Campesina. Over the course of fieldwork we found ourselves having to revisit both of these assumptions.

In our fieldwork in the Nacala Corridor we did find that a reshaping of peasant organisation was under way, but not as part of a movement led by UNAC in response to an agrarian transformation. Instead, the driving factor appears to be the Mozambican state’s effort to re-engage with small producers and organise them into associations to facilitate the channelling of state and donor resources and the process of negotiation around land rights and agricultural investment. This effort follows a breakdown in trust provoked by forced collectivisation in the 1980s, the chaos of the armed conflict and then a long period when formal associational life was largely a construct of rural development programmes implemented by

international NGOs. It is driven more by political than by economic considerations, with new rural development funds being used to consolidate Frelimo patronage networks as a bulwark against the supposed risk that the peasantry might turn towards Renamo, the opposition party-cum-guerrilla movement which (as noted above) emerged from the 2014 elections greatly strengthened in the key provinces of the Nacala Corridor region, and which has now turned once more to armed actions in support of its demand for 'autonomous governments' in the region.

UNAC is in an ongoing process of organisational change at provincial level and at the grassroots, as it engages with the new government-supported associations while seeking to build a capillary structure that will legitimate its national-level representation claims. While remaining uncompromising regarding ProSAVANA, UNAC has sought to find a balance at the national level between the need to take a firm anti-ProSAVANA position and the desire not to close down space for engaging with government on agricultural development more broadly; and at the subnational level between the need to affirm its new provincial-level structures as active defenders of peasants' rights and the desires of autonomous district-level associations to engage with programmes that may bring concrete benefits to their members and/or to avoid antagonising local power structures.

We also found that while UNAC's public position has indeed been influenced by its engagement with Brazilian social movements, the discursive interchange with Brazil is much less confined to the Via Campesina network than we first thought. The most important sponsors of UNAC's recent engagements with Brazil, including the 2012 visit to Mato Grosso that led to the production of the '*Face Oculta do ProSAVANA*' video documentary and the 2013 audience with the National Food and Nutrition Security Council, have been mainstream development NGOs such as FASE, INESC and IBASE rather than MST and MPA. Even with MST and MPA the pattern of engagement is more complex and longstanding than we had first thought. In the Nacala Corridor we interviewed peasant leaders who had visited Brazil more than 15 years ago, in exchanges sponsored by Northern NGOs as part of the international solidarity movement that followed the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre of MST protesters. MPA does have an important and longstanding collaboration with UNAC, but this is currently focused more on an attempt to transfer agroecological farming techniques than on training for grassroots political mobilisation.

Agroecology is also a link between UNAC's discourse and that of its most important Mozambican civil society ally, the NGO JÁ, which in turn is part of Friends of the Earth International. This is a global network in which – unlike in Via Campesina – Brazilian NGOs are relatively insignificant players compared with their European and Asian counterparts. As Brazil's role in ProSAVANA has declined in importance, the role played by Japan (both in ProSAVANA and in the wider programme of investments

in the Nacala Corridor) has become more visible, and links between UNAC and Japanese NGOs have acquired greater significance. Thus UNAC's emerging discourse on ProSAVANA is being co-constructed not only with Brazilian agrarian movements through Via Campesina but also with local associations, national environmental NGOs and transnational networks where its main interlocutors are neither Brazilian nor represent peasant constituencies.

## **5.2 ProSAVANA and the changing nature of Brazilian engagement**

As noted above, our mapping of Mozambique-Brazil civil society exchanges led us to realise that North-South development NGO networks have become more important facilitators of these exchanges than Via Campesina, and that mainstream Brazilian NGOs such as FASE, IBASE and INESC have now become significant interlocutors for UNAC and the other Mozambican actors contesting ProSAVANA – arguably more so than MST.

We also observed the emphatic engagement of CONTAG, Brazil's largest rural workers' union and an historic political rival of MST, in the transnational mobilisations against ProSAVANA in Maputo in July 2014. CONTAG's significance comes from its status as a key member of CUT, the union movement that is aligned with Brazil's PT, and from its influence over sectors of the MDA, which at the time was increasingly competing with the MAPA for leadership in Brazilian agricultural development cooperation (Cabral 2015). The MDA was expected to play a role in the 'model-based' agricultural extension programme, ProSAVANA-PEM, but CONTAG's high-visibility adherence to the 'No to ProSAVANA' campaign signalled that this was becoming less likely. In the event, the MDA and its allies decided to abandon any attempt to take over ProSAVANA and to invest instead in other ways of exporting the more smallholder-friendly of Brazil's many agricultural development strategies, including the 'More Food International' and 'Purchase from Africa for Africans' (PAA) programmes (Cabral et al. 2016).

PAA, which is run in partnership with the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) but which began life as a Brazilian domestic policy initiative called the *Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos* (Food Purchase Programme), has become a key symbol of the potential of Brazilian experience to support rather than threaten family farming in Africa, in explicit contrast with ProSAVANA. PAA was actively promoted by CONSEA, which became one of the preeminent spaces for government-civil society policy dialogue during the latter years of PT rule in Brazil, and sought to internationalise its remit as Brazilian successes in reducing hunger and undernutrition began to be channelled into international programmes that sought to export successful Brazilian 'models'. Following its 2013 initiative of calling UNAC representatives as witnesses in a debate on Brazil's role

in promoting food security in Mozambique, CONSEA linked up with PAA to invite Mozambican activists from ORAM and FM as well as UNAC to its major national conference in Brasília in November 2015 (PAA 2015).

CONTAG, FASE, IBASE and INESC were not only formally connected with government through their seats on key federal policy councils such as CONSEA, but also had ready access to influential allies in the Brazilian Presidency through longstanding informal networks dating back well before the PT came to power in 2003. One of the key sites in which these networks interacted with the debates around ProSAVANA was the *Grupo de Reflexão sobre Relações Internacionais* (GR-RI, Reflection Group on International Relations), a discussion forum bringing together influential thinkers from across the internationalist Brazilian Left (including independents and members of the Communist and Socialist parties as well as of the ruling PT) which is defined by one of its founders as 'an informal group that gathers progressive and left-wing intellectuals, political activists, civil society movements and political party representatives, besides some civil servants (as individuals) from the Presidency and federal ministries, including Itamaraty [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs]'.<sup>11</sup> Significantly, these networks also included staff from the Brazilian branches of the international NGOs Oxfam and ActionAid, which as noted above played a key role in facilitating links with Mozambique and funding exchange visits such as the one which led to the UNAC *'Face Oculta do ProSAVANA'* video.

These networks and spaces such as the GR-RI have become increasingly active in pushing for greater public debate on Brazil's South-South cooperation activities and its foreign policy in general (Milani and Pinheiro 2013). This effort rose in intensity as Brazil's role in the BRICS grouping became more prominent, especially with the announcement at the 2014 BRICS Summit in Brazil that the grouping would establish a New Development Bank to fund infrastructure investment in these countries themselves and in Africa, raising the temperature of civil society debate over the risk of international engagements serving to promote 'the export of Brazil's contradictions' (Leite et al. 2014). Within this broader agenda, ProSAVANA became an important symbolic resource for raising public awareness of Brazil's role in Africa, in effect producing a coherent vision of this role that was absent on the ground but nonetheless acquired a political reality – another example of how the programme has functioned as a focus for performative discourses.

### 5.3 Emerging trends

On the day of the launching of his 2014 electoral campaign, Frelimo's candidate Filipe Nyusi promised in Nampula, *'Vamos transformar Moçambique numa potência agrícola'*: 'We are going to transform Mozambique into an agricultural powerhouse'. In Nampula such promises have become commonplace, with district administrators repeatedly announcing the

potential benefits of agricultural projects such as ProSAVANA (and in some cases threatening to prosecute their detractors). For the national and local elite, the lure of agribusiness-driven agrarian transformation remains as strong as when ProSAVANA was first conceived. But for the peasants of Nampula and of Mozambique, ProSAVANA remains a vague and poorly-understood proposition that seems as likely to represent a threat as an opportunity. Following the dissemination of the Zero Draft Master Plan there is now more of an indication of what the implementation of ProSAVANA might look like, but many unanswered questions remain.

One thing does, however, seem to be certain: the domestic and transnational forces that have given rise to such widespread concern over issues such as land grabbing, environmental destruction and the stamping out of smallholder agriculture by export oriented agribusiness are no longer operating principally through ProSAVANA. In their analysis of the Zero Draft Master Plan, Mosca and Bruna (2015: 30) conclude that the relationship between ProSAVANA and the broader development strategy for the Nacala Corridor is far from clear, asking 'is ProSAVANA the agricultural component of the Nacala Corridor Development Strategy? Or is it only the family farming component?'. The broader strategy is more clearly expressed in the new regional initiative, PEDEC, which aims to promote 'integrated development strategies' across five provinces, including the three covered by ProSAVANA (Oriental Consultants et al. 2014: 1). PEDEC is a bilateral Japan-Mozambique initiative, which makes no mention of Brazilian involvement – or indeed of ProSAVANA. Meanwhile, the Brazilian consultants from GV Agro who designed the controversial first version of the Master Plan to complement a private-sector but government-backed 'Nacala Fund' no longer play any formal role in ProSAVANA – but GV Agro's sister firm GV Projetos has begun to promote a rebranded and repositioned Nacala Fund which this time has been negotiated directly with the Government of Mozambique, bypassing the Brazilian and Japanese official development cooperation agencies (Amorim 2014: 12). PEDEC and the Nacala Fund have made little progress as investor confidence in Mozambique has collapsed following the revelation of the country's high levels of "secret debt" (Castel-Branco et al. 2016). However, they are likely to attract renewed interest as commodity prices recover and Mozambique submits once more to the strictures of the global financial regime – despite the risk of heightened social conflicts (in the Nacala Corridor and elsewhere) that will accompany the inevitable structural adjustment process.

Thus the geostrategic alliances and global capital networks that converged around the initial conception of ProSAVANA, having been edited out of the programme's official discourse, are now pursuing their interests in the Nacala Corridor through other mechanisms, largely shielded from the active contestation that ProSAVANA has attracted and the demands for public accountability to which the programme's status as a government development cooperation initiative has exposed it.

Nevertheless, a coalition of some of Mozambique's most important civil society groups, headed by UNAC, continues to make 'No to ProSAVANA' their principal rallying-cry for opposing externally-driven development in the Nacala Corridor, despite the apparently diminished threat represented by the programme and the growing threat posed by other initiatives operating outside the ProSAVANA frame. It may be that ProSAVANA – a simple, easily-identifiable brand onto which could be projected fears of land-grabbing, biodiversity loss, transnational corporate encroachment, Japanese government resource-seeking, Brazilian government 'sub-imperialism' and Mozambican government authoritarianism – has simply been too potent a focus for mobilisation for opposition to it to be abandoned in favour of engagement with the complex, multi-dimensional ongoing process of penetration of the Nacala Corridor by transnational capital.

The performative power of ProSAVANA as a focus for mobilisation is evident at the transnational level, where we have observed that, despite the absence of widespread field implementation of the programme, it is already producing a number of important effects. As we have noted, the contestation of ProSAVANA has provided an opportunity for the strengthening of international civil society alliances, both through bilateral exchanges such as the one in 2012 that gave rise to the '*Face Oculta do ProSAVANA*' video and through Triangular Peoples' Conferences such as those in 2013 and 2014 which brought together Mozambican, Brazilian and Japanese civil society organisations to discuss ProSAVANA. Although Japanese NGO-state engagements are beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that the level of Japanese civil society interest in the country's role in Mozambique has increased exponentially since the contestation of ProSAVANA began, and is now one of the most significant factors shaping the reorientation of the programme. As discussed above, in Brazil ProSAVANA has provided a powerful focus for civil society efforts to open up public debate on the country's development cooperation activities – though now that Brazil's foreign policy priorities have undergone a radical shift under the new government, the symbolic value of ProSAVANA has been greatly reduced. The networks that the contestation of ProSAVANA helped to catalyse within Brazil remain, but they are currently struggling to reconfigure themselves and find new ways of operating within a political landscape that has been transformed by the end of PT rule.

In Mozambique the contestation of ProSAVANA has provided unprecedented opportunities for national NGOs and UNAC's Maputo-based leadership to establish new links with the local peasant associations that they had long struggled to mobilise, leading one activist to reflect that 'perhaps ProSAVANA will be a "necessary evil" – necessary in order to provoke negatively affected communities to rise up' (Monjane 2015: 1). Thus the process of mobilising social support and engaging the government has not only had a productive effect in shifting ProSAVANA's official discourse towards its current pro-smallholder agriculture emphasis, but also on the

internal dynamics of organisations such as UNAC, as well as (more problematically) on relations between Maputo-based and Nampula-based civil society groups.

The Mozambican government has responded to this dramatic evolution in UNAC's ability to project itself as a political actor with a mix of threats, concessions and co-optation attempts. At various points during the contestation process, government representatives deployed a nationalistic tone, accusing UNAC of being the puppet of foreign interests, and implying that public statements such as the open letter calling for the programme to be halted had been written by MST. UNAC has undoubtedly imported elements of MST discourse over time, and there are important historic links between these two Via Campesina member organisations, but however much it might suit the Mozambican government to project it as such, this is far from being a simple story of MST discourses being taken up uncritically by UNAC. As we have seen, the Via Campesina link has come to be complemented and in some areas even overshadowed by other Mozambique-Brazil civil society interactions. Critically, throughout all these interactions, Mozambican actors have actively been shaping the perceptions of their Brazilian interlocutors, and not only articulating their own narratives about the perceived threat to peasants' land and livelihoods but also constructing 'Mozambicanised' narratives about Brazil that balance the Brazilianised social imaginaries of Mozambique that are increasingly present in Brazilian public discourse (Shankland and Gonçalves 2016).

Other, less directly nationalistic arguments were used by government officials during the public consultations over the Zero Draft Master Plan, including the accusation that NGO and UNAC representatives were sabotaging the process for political reasons or that they were travelling to these events from Maputo only to receive *per diems*. Several activists also reported having received threats from officials or Frelimo representatives.

At the same time, however, the government continued to make overtures to civil society, leading some UNAC leaders to start to argue that a less confrontational approach would yield better results.

Following the highly contested process of public consultation on the Zero Draft Master Plan, the Mozambican government promised to take into consideration the inputs it had received. Meanwhile, as noted above, both Mozambican academics and some civil society organisations (including UNAC) moved away from blanket condemnation of the kind articulated in ADECRU's video '*ProSAVANA: Terra Usurpada, Vida Roubada*' and begun instead to look more closely at the ProSAVANA documentation that is now in the public domain in order to produce focused responses addressing specific aspects of the programme (Mosca and Bruna 2015; Não ao ProSAVANA 2015).

This emerging dynamic of increased government responsiveness and more technically-oriented civil society engagement offered the possibility of starting

to defuse the tensions for which ProSAVANA had become such a powerful focus. However, the confrontations around the Nampula consultation workshop in January 2016 indicated that these tensions would stay close to the surface as long as the prevailing logic of top-down, externally-driven agrarian transformation in the Nacala Corridor remained unchanged. No sooner had the ProSAVANA management unit announced the creation of a civil society engagement mechanism than the 'No to ProSAVANA' coalition was denouncing the regional NGO platforms that had agreed to join it for having been co-opted and the consultancy firm that had been hired by JICA to manage the process as a front for a longstanding effort by WWF to buy the compliance of local civil society groups.<sup>12</sup>

Tensions over the response to ProSAVANA within Mozambique's civil society between NGOs based in Maputo and those located in the Nacala Corridor have escalated since the initial consultation meeting.<sup>13</sup> Although the formal creation of the *Mecanismo de Coordenação da Sociedade Civil para o Desenvolvimento do Corredor de Nacala* (Civil Society Coordination Mechanism for the Northern Corridor, MCSC-CN) was supported by the regional civil society platforms in Nampula, Zambézia and Niassa, it was denounced by the Maputo-based, Brazilian and Japanese civil society groups of the No To ProSAVANA campaign, which described as "fraudulent" JICA's funding arrangements for the mechanism and for the consultancy contracted to revise the Master Plan with civil society participation.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, growing tensions over the armed opposition group Renamo's calls for devolution to Central and Northern Provinces have given such North-South divisions a much harsher edge in the current Mozambican political context.

As the successive pro-smallholder revisions to the programme reduced the level of threat represented by ProSAVANA, other potential threats began to come to the fore, and some civil society groups recognised the need to shift the focus of contestation away from a specific emphasis on ProSAVANA towards a broader debate about the development process in the Nacala Corridor. However, on the evidence to date it seems that it has not been possible to maintain the connections forged during the ProSAVANA contestation process between local, regional, national and international civil society groups.

An analysis published in August 2016 by a Japanese civil society coalition concluded that the campaign against ProSAVANA had included "the first-ever cross-tri-frontier and trans-continental civic activities... to protect the rights and food sovereignty of local peasants and communities collectively", and that these activities have "encouraged and empowered the peoples and organisations of the three countries, succeeding in public and private policy shifts, bringing fruitful outcomes, and offering fresh learning experiences, but has also resulted in tremendous pains, especially to the leaders of Mozambican peasants and civil society organisations" (No to Land Grab, Japan 2016: 6). As the political and

economic context continues to deteriorate, there is a risk that those opposing exclusionary development processes in the Nacala Corridor will find themselves facing further "tremendous pains". At the same time, as the scale of ambition of ProSAVANA has diminished, and Brazil's engagement has become much less central to a corridor development process increasingly driven by bilateral Japan-Mozambique dynamics, it has proved a much greater challenge to keep energised the multi-level connections of the 'No to ProSAVANA' movement. It remains to be seen whether civil society groups at the local, regional, national and international levels can find new ways of maintaining solidarity and deploying effective collective action without the powerfully symbolic focus for transnational contestation that Brazil's initial highly visible role in ProSAVANA provided.

## End Notes

- 1 For the full collection of World Development articles produced by the 'China and Brazil in African Agriculture'
- 2 Japanese actors – ranging from the cooperation agency JICA to corporations such as Mitsui to NGOs such as the Japan International Volunteer Centre – have played an extremely important role in shaping both the design and the contestation of ProSAVANA, but this role lies outside the scope of this paper; for an important initial analysis, see Funada-Classen 2013a, and for a comprehensive recent overview, see No to Landgrab, Japan 2016.
- 3 On the More Food programme see Mukwereza (2015) and Cabral et al. (2016).
- 4 Interview with CAMPO agronomist, Nampula, 5 April 2013.
- 5 Tim Wise, who visited the Nacala Corridor in search of the 'biggest land-grab in Africa' a few months after our initial fieldwork, arrived at a similar conclusion (Wise 2014).
- 6 'Onde a soja der, o gaúcho planta' (interview with CAMPO agronomist, Nampula, 5 April 2013). Gaúcho is a colloquial term for someone from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, used in this context to refer to the southern Brazilian farmers who have taken soybeans across the central Cerrado belt and into the north of the country.
- 7 For the history of the UGC and its initial association with Frelimo's 'Dynamizing Groups' see Cruz e Silva (2007).
- 8 Interview with Ismael Ossemene, 21 January 2014.
- 9 For a brief description of the land campaign see Negrão (1999), Hanlon (2002) and Kanji et al. (2002).
- 10 Interview with Luís Muchanga, 11 February 2014.
- 11 Carlos Milani, pers. comm. 14 May 2015.
- 12 See <https://adecru.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/denuncia-da-parceria-entre-a-wwf-e-o-prosavana/>.

- 13 See Chichava 2016 for a discussion of these tensions.
- 14 See <http://www.pambazuka.org/pt/land-environment/moçambique-campanha-“não-ao-prosavana”-considera-fraudulento-o-processo-de>.

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