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Extractivism | Resistance | Alternatives

Feminist Africa is Africa's peer-reviewed journal of feminism, gender and women's studies, produced by and for the transnational community of feminist scholars. It provides a platform for intellectual and activist research, dialogue and strategy. *Feminist Africa* attends to the complex and diverse dynamics of creativity and resistance that have emerged in post-colonial Africa, and the manner in which these are shaped by the shifting global, geopolitical configurations of power.

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Feminist Africa is guided by a profound commitment to transforming gender hierarchies in Africa and seeks to redress injustice and inequality in its content and design, and by its open-access and continentally-targeted distribution strategy. *Feminist Africa* targets gender researchers, students, educators, women's organisations and feminist activists throughout Africa. It works to develop a feminist intellectual community by promoting and enhancing African women's intellectual work. To overcome the access and distribution challenges facing conventional academic publications, *Feminist Africa* uses the internet as a key tool for knowledge-sharing and communication, while making hard copies available to those based at African institutions.

Two issues are produced per annum, in accordance with themes specified in the calls for contributions. The editorial team can be contacted at contact@feministafrica.net and general enquiries sent to info@feministafrica.net

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Feminist Africa has a submissions policy determined by its focus on continental feminist studies and activism. Periodic calls for contributions along particular themes guide submissions. All contributions must register the centrality of feminist politics and critical gender analysis to past, present and ongoing processes of social, political and cultural change in Africa. We regret that we cannot respond to all unsolicited submissions. Please submit contributions electronically to info@feministafrica.net We regret that we do not currently have the editorial capacity to consider contributions in languages other than English. All submissions to *Feminist Africa* must use the house style sheet and should not include graphics. Feature articles should not exceed 6500 words. Other contributions should not exceed 2000 words.

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Extractivism, Resistance, Alternatives

Charmaine Pereira and Dzodzi Tsikata

This issue of *Feminist Africa* marks the successful transition of the journal from its birthplace, the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, across the continent to the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Accra. After a three-year gap, *Feminist Africa* has emerged with a new institutional host, a new editorial structure and a new website. Many people have been involved in ensuring that this transition takes place smoothly. This issue[1] is on the theme of **Extractivism, Resistance, Alternatives**.

Extractivism refers to the longstanding colonial and imperialist phenomenon of accumulating wealth by extracting a wide range of natural resources from countries colonised in Africa, Asia and the Americas, and exporting this wealth to the metropoles. The natural resources involved are oil, gas and minerals, as well as the resources extracted from agriculture, seeds, land and water. This is the process at the heart of so-called "development", but the process leaves former colonised countries underdeveloped and impoverished. Affected communities face the violence of having their land and resources seized from them, the unravelling of social bonds, and the destruction of ecosystems (Gudynas, 2010; Acosta, 2011; Ye *et al*., 2020). What renders extractivism a distinct process within contemporary capitalism is the shift away from accumulation through ownership and direct control over sites of production, which is the case in industrial capitalism. Instead, accumulation takes place in a global system where operational centres with control over the flows of resources and services, extract these from places of poverty, concentrating wealth elsewhere (Ye *et al*., 2020). Extractivism and its consequences are highly gendered but its treatment in the literature is generally gender blind (WoMin, 2013, 2015). This issue presents feminist analyses of diverse manifestations of extractivism in Africa, the resistance to its consequences, and the alternatives that are being pursued.

International public and private sector players are currently exhibiting enormous predatory interest in Africa, viewing the continent as a source of vast natural resources and markets. A total of 101, mostly British, corporations that are listed on the London Stock Exchange have mining operations in 37 African countries. Together they control over $1 trillion of Africa's most valuable resources—gold, platinum, diamonds, copper, gas, oil, and coal (Curtis, 2016). The continent's three largest commercial partners are China, the European Union and the United States, whose transactions comprise a complex mix of infrastructure projects, commercial loans and trade, as well as "free trade" agreements allowing foreign companies preferential access to African markets (Schneidman and Weigert, 2018). African markets have also become increasingly important for Russia since the implementation of sanctions against that country in 2014. Russia is seeking to increase its access to African governments as well as African energy and mineral resources, in exchange for military support, arms, and nuclear energy (Blank, 2018). All this is happening at a time of deepening fractures and inequalities within African countries, with increasing immiseration, soaring unemployment, and the intensification of gender inequalities prevailing across most parts of the continent (African Development Bank, 2016; Seery *et al.*, 2019).

Against this backdrop, the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group[2]—a loose continental network of feminist scholars, activists, trade unionists, and members of political parties—has engaged in critical debates since November 2017 on the challenges arising from neoliberal "development", the intensification of capitalism through extractivism, and the space for political engagement and feminist activism. Members share an understanding of feminism as simultaneously an intellectual and a political project of transformation in the direction of social and gender justice. At the second Feminist Idea Lab, held in Kampala from 7 to 9 May 2018, discussions drew attention to the hegemonic narratives used to justify extractivist practices (e.g. modernisation, development, and food security), the actors involved (transnational corporations, authoritarian states and their militarised "security services") as well as the practices adopted (e.g. increasing corporatisation and land grabbing). The differing ways in which these developments have reinforced patriarchal, racist, and other societal fracturings in various African national contexts were also highlighted.

Members of the Reflection and Action Group agreed that it was essential to improve understanding of the processes of extractivism in Africa, and to document resistance and related struggles as well as alternatives. The Group's concept paper concluded that "genuine alternatives need to emerge from social movements, peoples, communities, and women specifically, based on their lived realities, developmental practices and aspirations that promote emancipatory and multidimensional change. [...] such alternatives already exist and are even practised" (Randriamaro, 2019: 17). In this issue, the feature article by Charmaine Pereira on genetically modified crops in Nigeria and the Conversation piece with Marianna Fernandes and Nzira de Deus on strengthening feminist solidarity across Brazil, Mozambique and Angola, grew directly out of these discussions.

The work of the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group has provided *Feminist Africa* with the opportunity to address this pressing concern and circulate the feminist perspectives emanating from different sites of extractivism. The first feature article provides a critical feminist analysis of the contextual dimensions of extractivism in Africa. Charmaine Pereira and Dzodzi Tsikata draw attention to the wider political economy within which extractivism operates, outlining ways in which the pre-eminence of financial processes has exacerbated extractivism in agriculture as well as in the energy sectors. The article addresses four main themes: the meanings and manifestations of extractivism, the key players involved, responses and resistance, and alternatives to extractivism.

Both Dzifa Torvikey and Charmaine Pereira address questions pertaining to agriculture in their feature articles. Extractivism in industrial agriculture and its expansion in Ghana is the focus of Torvikey's article and her analysis of the tensions that industrial cassava production generates in relation to women's household production of the crop. The control of household resources that are key in agrarian livelihoods, such as land and labour (Tsikata, 2009), becomes more complicated in the context of extractivism, with gender and class inequalities being sharpened in such situations. Pereira addresses the recent introduction of genetically modified (GM) food crops in Nigeria, with a focus on cowpea, a crop grown predominantly by poor women and men. This new face of extractivism in Nigeria is manifesting in the context of the federal government's drive to reduce the country's dependence on oil by strengthening its policy emphasis on agriculture. Meanwhile, there are increasing pressures on land as well as proliferating conflicts in rural areas as a

result of banditry, which the introduction of a technical "fix" such as GM crops cannot resolve.

Teresa Cunha and Isabel Casimiro's feature article examines the political economy of Mozambique, the surrounding conflicts, and the impacts on women's lives. The natural resources extracted cover the full spectrum—minerals and energy resources, aluminium, fishing, forestry, and industrial agriculture. Most of these come from northern provinces, including Cabo Delgado, where systematic violence, armed conflict and insurgent activities have been ongoing for the last six years.

Regarding the diverse actors involved in extractive processes, Pereira's feature illuminates the variegated corporate, governmental, and scientific agencies involved in promoting GM crops, from which they accrue vast profits. Contestations surrounding the conduct and interpretation of science mark the intellectual politics of this regime. Resistance to GM crops in the country has seen activists organising on multiple fronts, including rural communities and the federal legislature. While the focus has been on making connections between food sovereignty and farmers' livelihood security, there is a major lacuna concerning the social relations of production and their gendered dimensions.

Torvikey explores how women mobilised to resist the company producing the industrial cassava, the strategies they adopted, and the resulting outcomes. Her examination of women's different modes of resistance points to differentiated responses in women's struggles to regain control of their traditional systems of production. Yet women were united in their opposition to a production system that exploited their labour and prioritised corporate profit whilst jeopardising women's livelihoods.

The extreme repression, political harassment and deepening militarisation in northern Mozambican provinces created serious methodological challenges for Teresa Cunha and Isabel Casimiro's study. Despite this, the authors are able to highlight the multi-layered challenges faced by the impoverished women peasants to whom they spoke. They found women determined to organise, both to resist the divisive strategies of government and corporations, and to create new possibilities for the future.

What would it take to move from such extremely exploitative economies to feminist alternatives? Donna Andrews' Standpoint examines this question, pointing to the multiple converging crises—economic, social, and ecological—in which

extractivism is embedded. Andrews argues that alternatives are required on all the fronts on which feminists face challenges, from trade to technology and more. The violence and sexual exploitation surrounding the extractive industry are particularly egregious; feminists are exposing and challenging the sexism and misogyny on which such violations are predicated. Andrews highlights the tensions that arise over the denial in numerous quarters—by NGOs, state agencies, corporations and progressive activists—that the social and ecological costs of extractivism are borne by women through their unremunerated social reproduction work and cheap labour. Seeking alternative relationships among peoples and the planet is essential when faced with the social and ecological destruction that extractivism brings in its wake. Andrews concludes that the creation of life-affirming economies will lie at the heart of generating alternatives.

Feminist practice that aims to resist extractivism as well as generate solidarity in the struggle for alternatives is a critical arena for fusing knowledge and activism. The complexities of such efforts form the focus of our two Profiles and the Conversation. Margaret Mapondera and Samantha Hargreaves' profile of the feminist network WoMin outlines its journey from a research initiative on the destructive impacts of extractive industries on women, to the formation of an Africa-wide ecofeminist alliance. Abiodun Baiyewu discusses Global Rights, a human rights NGO in Nigeria which engages with rural communities where extractive activities are ongoing and works on natural resource governance across the country from a feminist perspective. Marianna Fernandes and Nzira de Deus, in conversation with Charmaine Pereira, discuss their collaborative efforts in transcontinental feminist organising and solidarity. Feminists from Brazil, Mozambique and Angola organised a week-long workshop to bring together rural women from these three Portuguese-speaking countries, who are actively engaged in resistance to transnational corporations and extractivist enterprises. The organisers came from the following groups and networks: *Fórum Mulher* (Women's Forum), World March of Women, *MovFemme* (*Movimento das jovens feministas de Moçambique* - Young feminists' movement of Mozambique), *Ondjango Feminista* (Feminist Gathering) and WLSA (Women and Law Southern Africa).

We pay tribute to the Nigerian feminist theorist, literary critic, and poet, 'Molara Ogundipe, who died on 18 June 2019. Adedoyin Aguoru recalls her time as a student with Ogundipe, celebrating the latter's intellectual and social

participation in university life, particularly her engagement with students in the Faculty of Arts. One of Ogundipe's major contributions is her theory of STIWANISM (Social Transformation Including Women in Africa). Ogundipe stresses the necessity of understanding the complex and paradoxical construction of African women in society, and was one of the first Nigerian Marxist-feminists at the University of Ibadan in the 1970s. She observed that, "All over Africa, African feminists are theorising our feminisms and we will do well to listen to them" (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994: 228). Desiree Lewis' FA interview 'In Conversation with Ogundipe' (Lewis and Ogundipe, 2002) draws attention to the multiple sources of radicalism influencing Ogundipe's politics, the significance of her work on identity, culture and language, as well as the challenges she faced as a leftist feminist in Nigeria.

As the year 2019 gave way to 2020, an initial outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China led to a new pandemic being unleashed upon the world. For the African continent, COVID-19 is yet one more crisis to add to the existing string of disasters—"climate heating, environmental degradation, unemployment and rising poverty, land grabs and widespread hunger, increasing violence, specifically violence against women, and civil conflicts in many countries" (WoMin, 2020). Responses to COVID-19 from governments across the world have been unprecedented in some respects, most of them involving more or less extensive restrictions of movement and lockdowns of one kind or another. Tanzania—with virtually no restrictions but affected by border closures and South Africa—with very extensive lockdown provisions—are at two ends of the spectrum, with many other countries along the continuum.

Working class and peasant women are particularly burdened by these crises, given their responsibilities as "primary household food producers, caregivers and harvesters of water, energy and other basic goods needed for the reproduction of life and the well-being of people" (WoMin, *ibid.*). Women are more likely to experience violence at the hands of their intimate partners in the context of intense social and economic stress arising from the pandemic, made worse by lockdowns (Britwum, 2020). The informal economy, of which women comprise the majority, has been badly hit; lockdowns prevent traders and vendors from earning money on a daily basis, without which they are unable to put food on the table. Migrant women, internally displaced women in camps, refugees and prisoners will also be seriously affected by the pandemic and its associated responses.

Feminists have argued that COVID-19, like other international health emergencies, will exacerbate existing inequalities on the basis of age, class, gender, disability and income (Williams *et al*., 2020). It is women who carry out the bulk of unremunerated care work and the pandemic will add sharply to this load, thus heightening "the risk of a crisis of social reproduction" (WoMin, 2020; Britwum, 2020). The global women informal workers' network, WIEGO, points out that COVID-19 has exposed the economic injustice and inequality that persists around the world: "most of those who provide essential goods and services do not enjoy essential rights" (Chen, 2020). The frontline workers who provide essential goods and services, many of whom are informal workers, comprise a total of two billion workers, an estimated 61% of all workers globally (Chen, *ibid*.).

There are connections between the emergence of SARS-CoV-2[3], the virus causing the COVID-19 disease, and extractivist activities. The scientific consensus is that COVID-19 is caused by a zoonotic virus, i.e. one that jumped from an animal to humans. "As people move further into the territories of wild animals to clear forests, raise livestock, hunt and extract resources, we are increasingly exposed to the pathogens that normally never leave these places and the bodies they inhabit" (Shield, 2020). Urban expansion, industrial agriculture and deforestation are among the activities that bring people into ever-closer contact with animal-borne pathogens. "When we mine, drill, bulldoze and overdevelop, when we traffic in wild animals and invade intact habitat, when we make intimate contact with birds, bats, primates, rodents and more, we run an intensifying risk of contracting one of the estimated 1.6 million unknown viruses that reside in the bodies of other species" (Tobias and D'Angelo, 2020). The industrialisation of animal agriculture has rendered livestock more susceptible to pathogens (Ajl, 2020). Clearly, extractivist activities have contributed to the emergence of COVID-19, while the pandemic itself has exposed the hierarchies and blatant inequalities of the neoliberal order, inequalities which governments have been willing to ignore or treat as "normal" for far too long.

It is not surprising, therefore, that COVID-19 has compelled simultaneously material and existential questions to circulate in the public domain: What is "essential" to live a decent life? What is required to promote the wellbeing of all, and how can such goals be made central to government policy? Connections and disconnections, intimacy and distance between home and place of work in

urban as well as rural spaces are now difficult to ignore. Bodies, labour alienation, livelihoods, and land, their dynamic relations to one another – and to production and distribution – are increasingly receiving attention. As WoMin argues, "[W]e need radical transformations to guarantee a life for all beings on the planet" (WoMin, 2020). Universal health care that not only provides a public service but also entails people-oriented production of medicines and medical technology is one arm of such restructuring (Valiani, 2020). Another is an alternative farming system which would encompass food sovereignty and polycultures (as opposed to the monocultures central to agroindustry) as well as a more humane approach to livestock. Not only would this provide healthier food, but it would also result in healthier animals that are more resilient to pathogens. The interconnections among farming, health, and labour surface clearly here (Ajl, 2020).

African feminists have displayed vigilance and creativity in the discussions around responses to COVID-19, creating and taking up numerous opportunities to organise webinars and signature campaigns and to issue statements. One such initiative reveals the agenda-setting nature of their engagements. In July 2020, over 340 African feminists and feminist organisations signed an open letter to Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Donald Kaberuka, Tidjane Thiam, Trevor Manuel and Benkhalfa Abderrahmane – the Special Envoys mandated by the African Union to mobilise international support to address the coronavirus pandemic in Africa. The letter set out the nature of the COVID-19 crisis and its far-reaching implications and possibilities for rethinking Africa's economies and societies (African Feminism, 2020). As the African Feminist post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery Statement argues,

> COVID-19 has provided us with an opportunity to reimagine African political economies. This moment requires a pan-African response that creates an enabling environment for people and movement-led economic work, including but not limited to cooperative and solidarity economics, to be given the support and space to flourish. COVID-19 needs to be a turn-around point from orthodox laissez-faire models and overly financialised states. This crisis is an opportunity to dislodge structural inequality and re-frame the political economy which contributed to this tipping point.

The 12 recommendations in the Statement above are wide-ranging and fundamental. They include a call for a more proactive and reformed state which prioritises policy interventions that reinforce the rights of those most marginalised by current policies and thus more heavily affected by the impacts of COVID-19. These include women, and all who experience overlapping axes of structural marginalisation, on the basis of class, disability, HIV status, sexual orientation and gender identity. Other demands are the reinforcement of localised food supply chains; the prioritisation of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for the benefit of communities who are custodians of the resources and whose livelihoods are directly dependent on natural resources; and policy choices which recognise the centrality of the informal economy and the economic, social, political and cultural value of the care economy, and which offer support measures for a resilient care sector that does not rely on the exploitation of women in the home and in the workplace. There are also recommendations for a fundamental reform of social policy and the building of state capacity to deliver public goods and vital services to the citizenry without discrimination. Of the rest of the world, the Statement demands debt cancellation; foreign direct investment which does not insist on, and is not given, tax breaks and privileges that undermine local industry; and the sustainable use of Africa's natural resources in ways that protect the earth and local communities (African Feminism, *ibid*.).

These recommendations constitute an African feminist manifesto for the construction of a just, equitable and sustainable Africa and a rejection of extractivism; they should be the basis of conversations that engage all Africans. Fundamental changes of the kind recommended in this and other analyses, along with actions to guarantee the immediate security and interests of the African women likely to be hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, demand a restructuring of state-society relations in ways that "expand the role of the state and reorient its relations with people, thus taking us in the direction of the larger macro-revolutions needed" (WoMin, 2020). *Feminist Africa* hopes in future issues to accompany these struggles by highlighting, extending, and deepening the emerging feminist analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic on a wide range of topics that touch the lives of women and all marginalised groups, in the best traditions of rigorous and engaged scholarship.

In autonomous struggles and in alliance with progressive groups, feminists are challenging and resisting the ideologies sustaining extractivism and its treatment of natural resources—not only oil, gas, and minerals - but also land, forests, crops, and water. Feminists have shown that extractivism relies on the extreme exploitation of women's bodies and women's labour in unacknowledged and destructive ways. By remaining insubordinate to injustice, feminists can draw inspiration from one another in challenging the greed and corruption inherent in corporate self-interest and the capitalist order (Govender, 2020). While envisioning alternatives, feminist theory and practice needs now, more than ever, to be attuned to the ongoing flux in complex, layered realities. In an uncertain future, and across divisions of gender, class, generation, religion, race, sexual orientation and more, feminists across Africa and beyond are imagining the world anew, placing the wellbeing and dignity of all at the heart of transformed relations among peoples and the planet. Feminist knowledge, movements and organising are critical to this vision.

Endnotes

1. This relocation and new phase are reflected in our volume designation, such that all issues hosted by the African Gender Institute (1-22) constitute Volume 1 (2002-2017). From now on, volumes will be numbered annually, beginning with the current Volume 2, Issue 1 in 2021.
2. The African Feminist Reflection and Action Group is an independent group convened by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). At the first meeting, held in Maputo between 28 and 29 November 2017, 27 women attended from 16 African countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland (renamed by the King as Eswatini), and Uganda. FES convened four Feminist Idea Labs across the continent between 2017 and 2019, bringing together members of the Group and invited guests on these occasions. The Reflection and Action Group also met with and engaged local organisations at these events.
3. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2.

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Contextualising Extractivism in Africa

Charmaine Pereira and Dzodzi Tsikata

Abstract

This article contextualises the phenomenon of extractivism in Africa, exploring the extent to which the different meanings of extractivism in the literature contribute to an understanding of its gendered character. We argue that extractivism is embedded in the changing dynamics of contemporary capitalism and configured differently in diverse social formations, each with its particular history, state, class formation, political culture and practice, range of natural resources, and policies. Nevertheless, certain broad commonalities may be identified. We highlight four key themes that have been salient in the literature: 1) meanings and manifestations of extractivism; 2) the key actors involved; 3) responses and resistance; and 4) alternatives to extractivism expressed by feminist intellectuals and movements. The article points to the need for greater attention to African feminist analyses of context, women's resistance to extractivism, their propositions for anti-capitalist alternatives, and the possibilities of transforming our economies, our social relations, and our relations to the natural world.

Keywords: extractivism, resistance, alternatives, natural resources, actors, financialisation

Introduction

The extraction of ever-greater amounts of natural resources from the earth, propelled by commercial interests, is leading to increasingly exploitative and destructive activities in many regions (Gudynas, 2010; Acosta, 2011; WoMin, 2013; Ye *et al.*, 2020). Capitalism in the 21st century has been marked by a deepening of extractivism. Extractivism is defined as the accumulation of wealth through the extraction of a broad range of natural and human resources from colonies and ex-colonies in Africa, Asia and the Americas, and the exportation of this wealth to the centres of global capital (Gudynas, 2010; Acosta, 2011; Ye *et al.*, 2020). While extractivism has been a longstanding feature of capitalism since the 19th

century, its current features are linked with the maturation of two processes within capitalism: economic globalisation[1] and the financialisation of capital[2]. Economic globalisation and financialisation have meant that all economies in the world are integrated within a capitalist system created and dominated by activities and actors from the Global North. In this system, accumulation from economies dependent on primary commodities no longer relies on ownership and/or direct control over factories, plantations, mines, forests and labour. Instead, the operational centres of capital exercise *control over the flow* of extracted resources and services, and the *draining of value* to other places (Ye *et al.*, 2020).

Some commentators have pointed out that the extraction of surplus has always been an integral part of capitalism. Drawing on Marx's concept of primitive accumulation,[3] and Rosa Luxemburg's (1913/2003) expansion of its scope to the spread of capitalism into new territories, David Harvey (2003), for example, argues that the process of capital accumulation on a world scale is a continuing, rather than a transitory, process of "accumulation by dispossession". Dispossession underlines the use of force by market and state actors to gain private control over access to, and the use of, resources. Others have been concerned that the concept of extractivism is being substituted for capitalism. While this is certainly a feature in writings on extractivism which suggest that the intensification and expansion of extractivism is leading to systemic shifts in the nature of capitalism (Gudynas, 2010; Acosta, 2011), this is not a debate we take up in this article. Our interest is in exploring the extent to which the different meanings of extractivism in the literature contribute to an understanding of its gendered character. We therefore retain the conception of capitalism as an economic system of production and reproduction, at the same level of abstraction as feudalism and socialism. We also posit that economic globalisation, financialisation and extractivism are process mechanisms of capitalism.

Retaining the concept of extractivism has enabled us to explore certain features of capitalism that are being reinforced in economies dependent on primary commodities. It has also made possible a critical engagement with the literature on extractivism to uncover its different meanings in various contexts and in relation to different resources, both natural and human. Most importantly, it has facilitated a discussion of the economic models adopted by many African governments, which are characterised by a longstanding emphasis on accumulation via the extraction of

natural resources, predominantly for export. In much of Africa, which is currently the epicentre of extractivism, primary commodities account for over 60% of exports in 28 out of 38 African countries surveyed recently. In those countries that are dependent on primary commodities, the top two or three commodities comprise more than 80% of exports (UNCTAD, 2012, cited in UNDP, 2016). Volatility in commodity prices has generated considerable economic and political instability in addition to severe social hardship (UNDP, 2016).

The social, economic, and political dimensions of extractivism are evident in the deepening of inequalities within and among nations, the growing power of transnational corporations, and the erosion of sovereignty and decision-making power in national contexts. Complex changes in social relations of gender, class and ethnicity are unfolding as a consequence (Tsikata and Golah, 2010). While extractivism and its consequences are highly gendered, its treatment in the literature is generally gender blind (WoMin, 2013; 2015). This article, which is a feminist critique of extractivism and its manifestations in African contexts, addresses this gap in the literature. Our starting point is that extractivism is configured differently in diverse social formations, each with its history, state policies, class formations, political culture, and governance of natural resources. Nevertheless, certain broad commonalities in terms of coercive practice and consequences are clear: the appropriation of land in order to extract natural resources, the dislocation of communities, widening social and economic inequalities, the increasing use of violence to repress resistance, and the destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity. Our analysis proceeds by posing the following questions: Who are the key actors? What have the responses been and how have women engaged in resistance to extractivism? What are the possibilities for the transformation of economies, social relations, and our relations to the natural world?

Meanings and Manifestations of Extractivism

To explore its meanings and manifestations, we examine three important factors that have shaped extractivism in various places—context specificities, the nature of the resource sector in question, and recent developments within capitalism, such as financialisation of capital and contemporary large-scale land grabs. The discussion highlights the gendered implications of these factors and related developments, and their implications for extractivism.

The Specificities of Contexts

In the influential literature on South and Central American contexts (e.g. Lang and Mokrani, 2011), extractivism is understood to refer to a mode of accumulation embedded in a long history of colonialism and exploitation of the Americas, Africa and Asia, which involves the extraction and production of raw materials—primary commodities—from erstwhile colonies to satisfy demand from the metropolitan centres (Acosta, 2011). The resources involved are not only minerals or oil; they include those extracted from agriculture, forestry, and fishing.

Alberto Acosta argues that extractivism "has appeared in different guises over time" (2011, p. 63). Even those South American countries that aim to break away from the neoliberal model— Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela—have found themselves relying on extractivism in a new guise, referred to as neo-extractivism. This involves governments attempting to use the proceeds from extractivist activities to promote national development, primarily through social welfare policies and poverty reduction (Gudynas, 2010: 13). In spite of the commitment to national development and welfare policies, however, this neo-extractivism barely differs in its consequences from predatory extractivism, which has no pretensions about implementing a transformative agenda (Acosta, 2011). Just as predatory as extractivist economies, neo-extractivist economies have experienced rising unemployment and the continuing destruction of communities and the environment, with the ensuing social and political unrest being met with violence and suppression by the state's coercive apparatus (Lander, 2011; Riofrancos, 2019).

In Africa, the North African region has geostrategic importance given its closeness to Europe, its mining and oil industries, and the richness of its soil. Three countries—Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco—are particularly notable here. Algeria is the third largest supplier of gas to Europe, and both Algeria and Tunisia are involved in large-scale oil extraction. Precious ores are extracted in Morocco. Tunisia and Morocco are not only important sources of phosphates, which are used to make agricultural fertilisers, but they export large amounts of agricultural produce to Europe. Both countries engage in water-intensive agribusiness as well as tourism. The ecological crisis resulting from extractive activities in North Africa encompasses water scarcity, acute environmental degradation, loss of soil fertility and pollution as well as global warming effects such as desertification, recurrent heat waves, droughts, and rising sea levels. The serious tensions inherent

in extractivism in the sub-region have generated protests and resistance from those most affected by the multiple crises. They are the poor—small-scale farmers, near-landless rural workers, fisherfolk and the unemployed—who have lost livelihoods, suffered land degradation and environmental destruction, and had their health seriously undermined (Hamouchene, 2019).

In the former French colonies of West and Central Africa, extractivism is embedded in a very particular monetary arrangement, the CFA Franc currency arrangement. Ostensibly established to stabilise the currency in these former colonies on the eve of independence, the arrangement involves a fixed exchange rate for the CFA franc, free movement of capital between the African countries and France, the free convertibility of CFA (formerly into the French franc, and now the euro but no other currencies, nor even across the West and Central Africa CFA zones), and the centralisation of foreign exchange reserves. The fixed exchange rate means that exports from the African countries using the CFA franc are too expensive for most other countries yet remain cheap and convenient sources for continued extraction of natural resources by France. The central banks of each zone must pay a hefty portion of their foreign exchange reserves— 50% for the Central African zone[4] and 60% for the West African zone[5]—into a special account at the French Treasury, known as the "operations account" (Fazi, 2019). These funds help subsidise the French national budget and French public debt, even as the African countries whose monies are thus used have no knowledge or control over the sums involved (Taylor, 2019).

No former colonial power has retained the intensity of political, economic, military and cultural subordination and control over its former colonies as has France. Access to natural resources and markets in Africa for French interests are guaranteed through these neo-colonial relations and through highly personalised networks with local elites who benefit personally and are complicit in maintaining this exploitation. France's former colonies are critical for French economic concerns: nuclear power accounts for 80% of French electricity production and therefore uranium, sourced from Niger, is crucial. Moreover, the French aeronautics and weapon industries are particularly dependent on West and Central African countries for imports of manganese, chromium, and phosphates (Taylor, 2019).

The shifting significance of different sub-regions of the continent in terms of resource extraction is becoming more evident in recent times. The West African

sub-region has now become a major gold-mining zone with investment in exploration and exploitation activities increasing considerably since the mid-2000s. In the wake of the international financial crisis, gold prices multiplied almost six times between the years 2000 and 2011, from $316.6 per ounce to $1,896.5 per ounce (Prause, 2016). In the early 20th century, South Africa was the predominant gold producer but from the early 1990s, its production levels began to decrease. The second largest gold producer in Africa is now Ghana; gold mining activities have also increased in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal (World Bank, 2012). It is not only high gold prices that have driven the mining boom in West Africa, but also the liberalisation of mining legislation. This has led to a new generation of mining codes designed deliberately to attract foreign investment in the mining sector, with the inclusion of tax breaks and low-revenue payments. The liberalisation of legislation has been facilitated in many cases by the World Bank (Campbell, 2010, cited in Prause, 2016).

Increasingly centralised control over natural resources has led to their ruthless exploitation in a range of contexts. Jingzhong Ye *et al.* (2020) reflect on contemporary expressions of extractivism, particularly in emerging economies such as the BRICS[6] countries. The authors[7] posit that extractivism may be viewed as "*a particular mode of resource-use*"[8] (p. 158) which exploits the value in natural resources until this value is (nearly or actually) exhausted. The relationship between the processes of production and reproduction is structured such that natural resources are exploited without their material reproduction, leading to eventual depletion and degradation. Material reproduction is in any case not possible with resources such as oil but in the case of forestry, fishing and agriculture, the neglect of such reproduction has highly destructive consequences. The key features of extractivist systems today, Ye and colleagues (cited above) argue, include monopoly control by an operational centre over the resources to be extracted, close interlinkages between state and private capital groups, and the creation of infrastructure—roads, waterways and the like—to enable the removal for export of extracted resources. The wealth generated through the extractive processes is channelled away from the people closest to, and negatively affected by, the extractive activities, being accumulated in the operational centre and in participating capital groups. Thus, extractivism deepens the existing inequalities embedded in its dynamic in the first place.

Considering the rise of the BRICS countries and their relations to global

capitalism, the authors point out that these countries have elevated extractivism "towards a structural feature of the politico-economic system as a whole", one which is now central to growing parts of global capitalism (Ye *et al*., 2020: 156). This conception of extractivism goes beyond that of Acosta (2011) and Gudynas (2010), to propose that extractivism is now not solely about the capture of value through dispersed physically extractive activities (e.g. mining, oil extraction and certain kinds of agriculture) that are limited to the periphery. Instead, such relations may be extended to new locations and other sectors—finance, food processing, industrial production, trade, and service provision.

The gender-blind approach in much of the literature on extractivism is conceptually revealing. Ye *et al*. (2020), for example, specifically refer to reproduction in terms of the material reproduction of natural resources but not the relations of social reproduction. Yet social reproduction is central to an analysis of capitalist accumulation, as Marxist feminists have pointed out for decades. The exploitation of women's bodies and women's labour that is common to patriarchal relations and the class relations underlying capitalist accumulation permeates the plunder and conquest of colonies as well as the exploitation of nature (Mies, 1998). Feminist economists have not only highlighted the significance of the domestic realm within which most social reproduction takes place, but also the implications of mainstream partitioning of households and domestic spaces from the market, even as the market is dependent and intertwined with this realm.

Feminist scholars have also drawn attention to ways in which norms sustaining particular institutions, practices and relations—such as households, conjugal relations, divisions of labour and access to resources—are ordered on the basis of assumed heterosexuality, or heteronormativity. This is the expectation that the foregoing are *necessarily* based on traditional gender arrangements and monogamy. Heterosexuality, we should point out, is not solely about sexual expression. Instead, it concerns the interconnections between sexual life and non-sexual realms, as well as conceptions of sexuality and gender, which are institutionalised through law and the state as well as enacted in everyday social interaction (Jackson, 2006; Tamale, 2011; Pereira, 2014). Its implications for extractivism include not only gendered expectations of domesticity for women and household headship for men but also the varied manifestations of sexual exploitation and sexual violence that women often face in conditions of diminishing

livelihood options, conflict and/or displacement. This is particularly significant in mining contexts (WoMin, 2013).

Resource Sector Specificities

The commonalities and interdependencies between different resource sectors – agricultural resources compared to fuels, for example – as well as their specificities have varied implications. In their comparison of large-scale agricultural and traditional extractives, Le Billon and Sommerville (2016) highlight the growing spatial overlaps between agricultural and traditional extractive projects, which sharpen tensions between the two. However, there are also distinct ownership, access, and utilisation patterns. In large-scale extractive sectors, these processes are more often within economic enclaves characterised by exclusion and restriction, and are more capital intensive, with limited areas to control, more complex infrastructure to utilise and markets that are harder to access (Li, 2014).

Within extractive sectors, however, there is also considerable variation. Forms of exclusion in the gold sector are often violent; artisanal mining is generally marginalised and, in some cases, criminalised and suppressed. Despite this, artisanal mining persists due to its significance for rural livelihoods, the wide availability of deposits, the ease of extraction, and access to markets. Men, women, and children are involved in artisanal mining (Hilson, 2002; Tschakert, 2009; Awumbila and Tsikata, 2010).

Traditional extractives (e.g. oil, gas, minerals) and extractive forms of agriculture, such as agribusiness, have been differentiated in their tendencies to displace or integrate rural communities. At the same time, the sectors often compete over access to valuable resources, particularly land and water. High technology and capital-intensive agriculture relies increasingly on extractive activities for nutrients and energy inputs while traditional extractive activities generally reduce the fertility of neighbouring agricultural land due to soil contamination, water degradation and the destruction of the ecosystem. Yet, ties between agricultural and traditional oil, gas and mineral extractive sectors have become even closer recently through their joint inclusion in financial instruments and the movement of capital accumulated in one sector for use in the other (Le Billon and Sommerville, 2016).

The persistent extraction of oil, gas and minerals is leaving devastating ecological and environmental damage in its wake. The consequences involve

multiple forms of degradation, including people's relationships to the land and their communities, the loss of biodiversity, and the depletion of important resources (Acosta, 2011). The displacement of peasant communities from their land affects all members in terms of loss of livelihood, wellbeing and belonging. However, not everyone is affected in the same way. It is peasant women who are predominantly responsible for domestic food production as well as the everyday care and reproduction of their households and communities.

> Women's work situates them closest to polluted soils and waters, placing them at greater risk of ill-health [...]. But it is the women who labour on an unpaid basis to care for sick workers and family members, subsidising industries for poor living and working conditions, and releasing the state of its obligations to care for its citizens and hold mining companies accountable for their social and environmental impacts. (WoMin, 2013: 2)

The specificity of resources, and the capital and technological requirements of their exploitation, have implications for women's access to, and control of the land on which these resources are located. Demonstrating such a relationship requires fine-grained analysis. Awumbila and Tsikata's (2010) study on the gender segmentation of small-scale mining and mangrove harvesting shows that in small-scale mining, gender inequalities are reproduced by the new social identities formed by labour and land relations. In the mangrove area, however, contestations and conflicts arise out of the more formal tenure regimes resulting from increasing commercialisation. More studies of this sort are needed to deepen understanding of resource specificities and the gendered implications of extractivism.

Financialisation of Capital

The increasing prominence and power of the financial sector in the global economy, contemporary politics, and society have been hard to ignore since the 2007-2008 financial, food and fuel crisis. The dominant position of financial institutions and markets in the run-up to the crisis led many analysts to sharpen their perspectives on capitalism by referring to its growing financialisation. Defined broadly, financialisation is understood as "the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors and financial institutions in the operation of the domestic and international economies" (Epstein, 2005: 3). Financialisation "signals a fundamental transformation of the dynamics of capitalist accumulation through a shift in the creation of value to a relatively autonomous and increasingly

dominant financial sphere" (Labban, 2010: 545). It is increasingly recognised that financialisation, which is not a homogenous process, is also shaped by national and local contexts, having spread across the world at different rates and through varied processes in specific locations and sectors (Karwowski *et al*., 2018; Mader *et al*., 2019).

The relationship between financialisation and extractivism has received less attention in the traditional extractives sector i.e. oil, gas and minerals, than in the agricultural sector. Karwowski's study (2015, cited in Le Billon and Sommerville, 2016) of the deepening of financial markets found that funds raised by mining corporations through the Johannesburg Stock Exchange were more often used for speculative than for productive purposes. Regarding the accumulative logic of finance, Labban (2010: 550) argues:

> Finance allows investment in the future production of commodities as if those commodities have been already sold at a profit in the present, although there is no guarantee that those commodities will be sold at a profit or sold at all. [...] Financialization has permeated and transformed the nature of the production process – at the most fundamental level, the production of nature.

Given the hold that this financial logic has over the extractive industry, Labban (2010) argues that it is necessary to rethink notions of resource scarcity and crises. Rather than oil crises being about market shortages or scarcity in nature, they are now more fundamentally about *financial* dislocations, e.g. between futures and physical markets, or a decline in shareholder value and shortages of credit (*ibid*.). Shareholder pressure on parent companies, often located in the West, occurs regardless of the actual conditions of production, with negative effects on the financial position and sustainability of subsidiaries operating in the Global South.

With the increasing influence of finance in the economy, the socially constructed norms at work in this sector take on particular significance. Feminist research on financialisation highlights the masculinist ethos that pervades financial services and practices. Cynthia Enloe (2013) points out that *not* taking account of gender analysis risks assuming that women are "merely dependent bystanders, victims without agency" who "can be easily manipulated" (pp. 16-17). It also means considerably underestimating multiple sources of power, such as that wielded "by governments, by state officials, [...] by banking executives, by foreign

forces both during and after crises" (p. 17). Moreover, *not* taking feminist analysis of crashes and crises seriously can mean obscuring the workings and impact of diverse masculinities, rendering us "incurious about how male budget directors, male soldiers, male bankers imagine their own manliness, worry about expressing their manliness, and make choices based on their efforts to prove their manliness to their male rivals and male superiors" (p. 17). This has implications not only for the normalisation of masculinist organisational cultures but also for which economic issues are considered priorities and whose voices matter in their determination.

Recent Large-Scale Land Grabs

In the agricultural and food systems, financialisation is one of the most significant forces for change globally (Fairbairn *et al*., 2014), affecting both land use and land property relations (Fairbairn, 2014). Since the 2000s, there has been an upsurge in land grabs[9] across Africa (Batterbury and Ndi, 2018; GRAIN 2008, 2016). Many, but not all, of these land grabs have taken place for the purpose of financial speculation, which exacerbates the impact of extractivism.

There are continuities with historical periods of land grabbing elsewhere, such as the enclosure of the commons in England, and in colonial and postcolonial experiences and conditions (Borras and Franco, 2012; Batterbury and Ndi, 2018). Africa, for example, had experienced two earlier waves of large-scale land acquisitions since its partition among European powers between 1880 and 1914. The first wave included colonial-era acquisitions, particularly in the settler colonies, followed by the 1980s/90s land rushes for tourism, mining, and logging due to the neo-liberal turn from the 1980s. Yet, discontinuities with earlier historical experiences of land grabbing are evident in the political and economic context of contemporary market-driven large-scale land deals. These include the unprecedented size and speed of the acquisitions; the new players involved, in particular governments and companies from BRICS countries and the Arab world who joined the traditional European and North American investors; the fact that the acquisitions were driven by concerns about the volatility in food prices and food security; the search for alternative renewable energy sources; and the search for profits through land speculation. The influence of biofuel policies and the maturation of land market reforms of the early 1980s created favourable conditions for land grabbing. Without a doubt, the global financial, food and

energy crisis of 2007/2008 was the immediate trigger for the intensification of a trend (Doss *et al.*, 2014).

Although land grabbing is a global phenomenon, land in Africa is particularly sought after, being relatively free of the large-scale, industrialised agriculture and plantations that dominate other continents (Cotula *et al.*, 2009). In Central Africa, for example, large-scale investments in land have been a longstanding feature but since the 2000s, foreign investors have shown increasing interest in the sub-region. The recent land rush includes various efforts by transnational corporations not only to set up agro-industrial plantations for food, feed or biofuel, oil palm and rubber, but also to prospect for metals or fossil fuels buried under the forest—oil, iron ore and coal (Feintrenie, 2013). Rainforests in Central Africa are the second largest in the world, after the Amazon, with tremendous biodiversity (Malhi *et al.*, 2013); large areas of forest are set aside for conservation. At the same time, some of the largest reserves in the world of iron, cobalt, nickel, chrome, platinum as well as gold and diamonds are found in the sub-region—up to 85% platinum, 75% diamonds and 60% cobalt (Feintrenie, 2013).

With national governments negotiating concessions at an ever-increasing pace, prospecting and development projects in Central Africa have burgeoned as have land deals based on speculation over the increasing price of land (Deininger *et al.*, 2011). By the beginning of 2013, over 1.4 million hectares of land had already been acquired in five countries: Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and the Central African Republic. Most of the land acquired (over 660,000 hectares) was in Congo Brazzaville. Another 332,000 hectares, across the five countries, were under negotiation.

While some of the land transactions did not materialise, their disruptive effects such as increased land scarcity and conflicts have been highlighted in several studies. In general, local people's access to land is increasingly restricted and vast swathes of forest are under threat. Increasing demand on natural resources, from actors as varied as indigenous farmers and transnational corporations, has meant there is increasing competition for land. Conflicts over land are on the rise, particularly where there are overlaps between plantation or mining exploration permits and customary lands, and where logging concessions are given on permanent forests or protected areas (Feintrenie, 2013).

The dominant agenda of land and water grabbing today is agribusiness expansion and speculation. Offshore structures and illicit financial flows are key elements in this new wave of land grabs. For example, most of the companies involved in land deals in Mozambique are registered in Mauritius. Most farmland deals today are also deals about water. In Mali, Senegal and Cameroon, rights to water and access to water are explicitly guaranteed in the text of the legal agreements. Land deals are even being transacted in water conflict zones, such as along the Nile, upstream from water-dependent communities, and above non-renewable underground reserves, e.g. Sudan. Communities living next to these agribusiness operations will simply have no access to water in incidents of drought (GRAIN, 2016).

Whilst the governments, investors and development agencies involved in, or in support of, land grabs tend to argue that the land ventures will create jobs and produce food, these are not synonymous with land itself and the possibility of working on, or living off, the land. Under the new land ventures, smallholder farmers, especially women, workers and local communities will almost inevitably lose access to land for local food production (Oxfam, 2011). The new commercial opportunities tend to mean that certain categories of men assume greater control over the land, reducing women's access in the process. New sources of income from the land are also more likely to benefit men. Women are rarely involved in consultations with investors, partly because they are less likely than men to be custodians of land or landowners. Women's land rights are generally insecure and they face constraints and systemic discrimination in relation to their access to, ownership of and control of land. Although women in rural communities are generally involved in agriculture, men have effective control of the land and the income generated from it, even if this was derived from women's labour (Kachika, 2010; Tsikata and Yaro, 2014).

Several studies have found that the increasing drive to produce biofuels in the wake of the global financial, energy and food crises of 2007/2008 set up competition for land with food crops, lowering the availability of food and increasing prices. This affected women more than men, given women's gendered responsibility for feeding the family. Large-scale land deals ignore secondary uses of land – as sources of nuts, fruits, roots, medicinal and kitchen herbs, fodder, dyes, rope, timber, roofing and fencing materials – which are significant for women

(Kachika, 2010; Tsikata and Yaro, 2014). Underlining the critical importance of land to rural livelihoods, more recent studies have argued that for most rural societies, denial of access to land "literally means ruin. Livelihoods, homes and histories are effaced...." (Batterbury and Ndi, 2018: 579). The results are displacement, migration and, where possible, resettlement.

There are several old and new players in this current phase of extractivism. In the next section, we discuss certain key actors and their roles in advancing extractivist processes and outcomes.

Key Actors in Extractivism

Transnational Corporations, the BRICS, States and Local Elites

Internationally, a wide array of actors in the finance and food industries have turned to land as a new source of profit in the wake of the global financial crisis. These include private investors, such as "the investment houses that manage workers' pensions, private equity funds looking for a fast turnover, hedge funds driven off the now collapsed derivatives market, grain traders seeking new strategies for growth" (GRAIN, 2008: 2). Through their roles in financialisation and land speculation, these actors contribute to the deepening of extractivism.

Corporations, transnational as well as national, are central actors in extractivism. In the field of seeds and agricultural chemicals globally, six major corporations, known as the "Big Six," dominated sales in 2015—BASF, Bayer, Dow Chemical, DuPont, Monsanto, and Syngenta. Each of the Big Six had a distinctive profile, strongly marked by domination in the sale of either seeds and traits or chemicals (MacDonald, 2019). Plans for mergers and takeovers among these already large firms began in 2016. By the end of August 2017, Dow Chemical and DuPont had completed their $130 billion planned merger to form DowDuPont, which subsequently split into three independent entities specialising in specific business sectors: agriculture, in the form of crop protection chemicals and seeds (Corteva AgriScience), materials science (Dow), and specialty chemical products (DuPont) (Reuters Staff, 2017; Tullo, 2019). In 2017, ChemChina finalised its $43 billion takeover of Syngenta AG (Fukao, 2017), and in 2018, Bayer cleared the last major regulatory hurdle in its $66 billion takeover of Monsanto (Bloomberg, 2018).

The implications of these mergers go beyond the official focus of business regulators on competition, market shares and concentration. The deeper issues

have to do with power and control over resources and the restructuring of the agricultural sector. A contraction in the number of providers of major agricultural inputs pushes farmers and food systems down a narrow technological path marked by dependence on proprietary seed, particularly genetically modified seeds, and agrochemical inputs. Highly processed, input-intensive staple crop varieties will be entrenched at the expense of traditional foods and biodiversity. Ultimately, food sovereignty and sustainable food systems are being seriously threatened by these mergers (ACB, 2017).

Major seed and agrochemical corporations do not operate in African countries in isolation. As Charmaine Pereira points out in this issue, such corporations work in concert with several other actors whose effectiveness is nevertheless dependent on the support of national governments. Small-scale farmers, notably women, are those particularly likely to be adversely affected by the threats above because of the specific ways they are inserted into global and national agro-food systems. Vandana Shiva (2016) shows how the deepening exploitation of land and seed through industrial agriculture has given rise to interlinked ecological as well as social crises, impoverishing farmers on formerly fertile land and culminating in conflicts portrayed as primarily identity-based—religious and ethnic—despite their prior material basis.

Transnational corporations are present in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco but the form of that presence varies. In the mining sector in both Morocco and Tunisia, national capital—private and public—dominates and transnational capital is minimal. In Algeria, the national oil and natural gas company, Sonatrach, is given majority ownership of all projects in the sector, by law. A contrary position prevails in Tunisia, where Shell holds an astonishing *100%* interest in the most productive gas field in the country and, to add insult to injury, sells the gas back to the state at international market values in hard currency (Hamouchene, 2019). Tunisia, we should note, was the first country in which the widespread popular uprisings characterising the Arab Spring took hold in 2010; Algeria and Morocco followed suit in 2011.

BRICS corporations have been notably aggressive in the extractive sectors, where their response to falling commodity prices has been to intensify the volume of extraction in order to maintain profits (Bond, 2017). There are several noteworthy cases of such activities, which commentators have sharply criticised as looting and

corporate-driven underdevelopment (see Bond, 2017: 5). They include the Chinese Queensway Group's $13 billion extraction of diamonds from Zimbabwe (which are unaccounted for) and the Indian firm Vedanta's purchase of the continent's largest copper mine from Zambia at a paltry one-twentieth of the amount of subsequent *annual* profits. Other egregious acts include the displacement of thousands of Mozambican villagers by Brazil's Vale mining house in its quest for coal, and South African cell phone giant MTN's tax dodging in several African countries, using Mauritius as a tax haven (Bond, *ibid*.).

Rather than playing a progressive role in stemming the extraction of resources and profits from African countries, the BRICS have instead been accused of actively contributing to Africa's underdevelopment. Bond (2017: 25) argues that the BRICS are "best understood as a new, more malevolent force within a general framework of neoliberal extractivism, amplifying the already extreme uneven and combined development so damaging to Africa" rather than offering alternatives. The bloc's assimilation into several multilateral institutions—the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, and the UN Framework for the Convention on Climate Change—is symptomatic of this situation (Bond, *ibid*.).

In the case of China, the largest and most influential of the BRICS economies, the state supports private capital through the China-Africa Development Fund, a private equity fund. The fund was set up with a commitment from the China Development Bank of $5billion for Chinese corporations to invest in agriculture in Africa over the next 50 years (Johnny 2008, cited in GRAIN, 2008). Typically, this has taken the form of Chinese companies "leasing or buying up land, setting up large farms, flying in farmers, scientists and extension workers, and getting down to the work of crop production" (GRAIN, 2008: 3). Agricultural co-operation deals have been agreed in which Chinese firms gain access to farmland in a range of African countries in exchange for Chinese technologies, training, and infrastructure development (GRAIN, 2008).

Analysts in the global political community have often laid the responsibility for large-scale land deals at the door of post-independence states themselves, given their apparent weak governance of the land sector and tenure security (Deininger, 2011). As a result, improved governance tends to be championed as the solution to addressing some of the most negative features of land deals, namely "forced dispossession, speculative behaviour, corruption and a general lack of

transparency" (Wolford *et al.*, 2013: 2). While improvements in land governance are certainly needed in many countries, the claim that poorly-governed countries are the most vulnerable to land grabs has been vigorously challenged. To give an example, Brazil, which is involved in land acquisitions in other parts of the Global South, is on the receiving end of land investments from Asia, Europe and the Americas, even though it is not considered to have a weak governance system (Borras and Franco, 2010; see also Fairbairn, 2013, on Mozambique). Moreover, governments are being actively advised by the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, among others, to change land ownership policies and practices to increase incentives for foreign investment in farmlands. A major target of the World Bank's $1.2 billion package to address the food crisis in Africa in 2008 was to change land ownership laws (GRAIN, 2008). As pointed out earlier, the World Bank has also been involved in the liberalisation of mining legislation (Campbell, 2010, cited in Prause, 2016).

The state has played different roles in extractivist processes and relations. Where rent relations are being developed, three roles are significant (Andreucci *et al.*, 2017). First, the state establishes property rights and entitlements that enable rent to be extracted, such as concession rights for mineral exploitation, and the allocation of farmland for agricultural production (p. 12). Second, the state plays a regulatory role, for example, in land development. In new forms of ownership, the state puts in place legislative frameworks enabling the patenting of genetically modified organisms and may police the use of the resulting intellectual property. Third, the state can sometimes act as a landlord, such as when it is the actual owner of the resource (e.g. land) itself (Andreucci *et al.,* 2017).

In practice, many African governments are actively involved in supporting land grabs by both foreign investors and local elites. Kachika (2010) draws attention to how this has taken place in Mali, Tanzania, Senegal, and Ethiopia. The state has used its regulatory and coercive powers to dispossess pastoralists in Tanzania and quell resistance to resource grabbing. In Nigeria, the Niger Delta has long been a site of major confrontations between communities and government security forces, resulting in massive violations of the rights of those protesting against the activities of oil corporations in the area—Shell, Chevron, Mobil, Elf and Agip (Human Rights Watch, 1999; Ekine, 2000). Attacks on communities by the military have involved the killing of protesters, looting and destruction of property, and rape

and sexual slavery of women and girls (Ekine, 2000). In this issue, Teresa Cunha and Isabel Casimiro highlight the growing militarisation and aggressive policing of Mozambican communities affected by extractivism. Women face numerous challenges in their efforts to resist the exploitative and violent social relations unleashed by the government's economic policies.

Local-level elites play a critical role in large-scale land grabs, exerting control over access to land through their exercise of power via traditional authority, bureaucratic influence, historical access, locally-based business knowledge and networks, and the power to set development agendas (Fairbairn, 2013). In Mozambique for example, despite it having some of the most progressive land laws in Africa, there has been extensive peasant dispossession in the current land grab. Class inequality and the actions of elite Mozambicans operate as filters mediating the impact of land deals. Given this localised level of control, the end results of land deals vary considerably from one part of the country to another. Although community land rights and traditional forms of access to land are emphasised at a rhetorical level, in practice, local elites compete with one another in seeking to bypass these forms of access when faced with the possibility of profiting from expropriation (Fairbairn, *ibid.*).

Chinese engagement in artisanal and small-scale mining, often illegal in informal mining economies such as Ghana's (Hilson *et al.*, 2014) is another illustration of the role that local elites play in resource extraction by foreign capital. Contrary to reports in the local media that Chinese migrants have "taken over" the informal mining sector, the authors show that Chinese migrants' entry into the country is facilitated by partnership with local operators and other nationals, as well as with Chinese-owned service companies operating in Ghana. It is important to recognise that the growing Chinese participation in artisanal and small-scale mining is facilitated by state neglect and repression of the informal gold mining economy, which is burdened by a regulatory framework that discourages legalisation. Desperate individuals operate in this shadowy economy, in marked contrast to the formal large-scale mining sector, where the state provides generous tax breaks to corporations in an effort to attract foreign investment (Hilson *et al.*, 2014).

In spite of the collaborative activities of local elites, segments of local communities have resisted the dispossession and other disruptive effects of

extractivism on their communities and livelihoods. In the next section, we examine various forms of resistance, with particular attention to women's struggles.

Responses and Resistance to Extractivism

Ecofeminism constitutes a significant political and intellectual force for resistance to extractivism. There are diverse strands of thought within this field, some focusing on material conditions (e.g. WoMIN, 2013, 2015) and others emphasising women's personal and spiritual connections to nature (see Allison, 2017). In 1993, Mies and Shiva joined forces in what they describe as their materialist approach to ecofeminism. Their edited collection, *Ecofeminism*, has been recognised as raising important points such as the proposition that modern science, colonialism and development should be understood as interrelated processes. However, Mies and Shiva's underlying assumptions have been critiqued as deeply flawed (Molyneux and Steinberg, 1995) in conflating nature with women instead of analysing specific historical and socially constituted gender relations.

Secondly, Mies and Shiva's championing of women-centred spontaneous grassroots struggles as the only meaningful political action for women, i.e. outside the sphere of male power, has been cast as ultimately being unable to "generat[e] a politics adequate to the enormity of the threat to survival presented by environmental degradation" (Molyneux and Steinberg, 1995:103). Whilst this is not an argument against the potential power of rural women's struggles, it does raise the important question of what kind of politics, alliances, and organising, and in what contexts, are necessary for resisting extractivism and instituting alternatives.

Local communities tend to be made up of varied social classes and groups with differing degrees of political power and varying, often competing interests, and "highly differentiated access to, control over, and use of land resources" (Borras and Franco, 2010: 34). It is useful, therefore, to disaggregate the "rural poor", a term which encompasses men and women who are poor peasants, small-scale farmers, agro-processors and traders, landless rural labourers, pastoralists, and subsistence fishers. The non-poor include chiefs, rich farmers, landlords, moneylenders, aggregators, and large traders. This is important because the changes in both land use and land property relations brought about by the emerging food-fuel agro-industrial complex will affect the various social classes and groups within the local community differently. They will therefore have different political

responses to trans/national commercial land deals.

It is also the case that the views of the rural poor affected by mega development projects may be different from those of social movements and organised groups in civil society oriented towards the rural poor. Questions of how issues are framed and the resulting demands, as well as their underlying bases, are likely to differ across diverse kinds of groups in civil society. Competing views of the problem, strategies for change and the alternatives envisioned may be differentiated on the basis of class and gender as well as ideological orientation towards the dominant development framework. Issue-framing, strategies and alternatives are also likely to vary between the rural poor in affected villages and organised advocacy groups. Environmental activists, for example, are likely to have different priorities from crop producers in rural areas, who are more likely to frame their issues and demands around the terms on which they produce and sell their crops (Borras and Franco, 2010).

Some of the most successful examples of resistance to extractivism therefore are those that privilege both livelihoods and environmental issues and are driven by communities. The Green Belt Movement (GBM) founded in Kenya in 1977 by Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, is instructive as an example of a rural struggle that took such an approach. The GBM was set up partly in response to rural women identifying needs they could no longer meet—the provision of firewood, clean drinking water, balanced diets, shelter, and income. This was not only because rural environments were being degraded. Additionally, "forests [were] being cleared and replaced by commercial plantations, which destroyed local biodiversity and the capacity of the forests to conserve water" (Maathai, 2004). Commercial farming was also replacing household crop growing. Tree planting became a way of dealing with rural women's immediate needs, while protecting local biodiversity, indigenous trees, and medicinal plants. By 2004, the GBM had planted over 30 million trees; they provided fuel, food, shelter, and income to support children's education and household needs while creating employment and improving the soil (Maathai, 2004).

In Senegal, an example of effective community-based opposition to extractivism is that of the conflicts between artisanal miners and the Canadian corporate mining firm Teranga Gold Corporation. These conflicts flare up on numerous occasions, particularly when the Corporation closes down sites used by artisanal and small-scale miners. Since high-grade gold deposits tend to be

found in small, restricted areas and migration elsewhere is not an easy option, once artisanal miners lose access to their sites, they lose their central means of gaining a living. In the absence of alternative modes of making a living, miners' confrontations with the corporation and the police are ultimately conflicts over livelihoods (Prause, 2016).

Much community opposition to mining concerns confrontations between labour and capital. Accounts of such opposition have tended to address primarily the production sphere, with the focus on (male) workers, their employers, and unions (Benya, 2015). The locations in which such struggles and conflicts occur are overlooked, thus ignoring the role of women in sustaining the dynamic relations between production and social reproduction. Asanda Benya's (2015) analysis of women's experiences at the time of the massacre of 34 striking miners in Marikana, South Africa, on 16 August 2012, showed that women's work in the home was pivotal in sustaining a mining economy predicated on the sale of labour power below the cost of its reproduction. Women were also actively involved in sustaining the strike action; their work in the home and in the community was thus "crucial not only for the accumulation of capital, but also for resisting it" (Benya, 2015: 556).

In the Niger Delta, women's responses, and resistance to the violence of the Nigerian military state has taken varied forms (Ekine, 2000). When soldiers descended on towns and communities, most people would run away to escape the shootings, burning and destruction; many of the elderly women, however, refused to run away. Responses to the rape and sexual violence that military personnel perpetrated were varied across communities. When soldiers invaded the town of Choba on 28 October 1999, the rape of women was filmed by a journalist and published in Nigerian newspapers. Survivors in Choba turned inwards, supporting one another through the combined trauma of not only having been raped publicly but also being forced to endure the personal and community-wide shame of having photos of their violations circulating publicly. Elsewhere, Ogoniland had already been the site of sustained organising against both the Nigerian government and the oil company, Shell, when the military state began a three-year campaign of violence against the Ogoni people in 1993. Survivors of sexual violence spoke out publicly about their experiences and became highly organised, subsequently engaging in "collective action as an act of resistance in their struggle and coordinat[ing] their

activities with men in the community" (Ekine, 2008: 77). Subsequently, women from three different ethnic groups—Ijaw, Itsekiri and Ilaje—organised unprecedented mass protests between June and August 2002, laying aside previous differences. Thousands of women occupied eight oil facilities belonging to Chevron/Texaco and Shell Petroleum. Women's political awareness of the divide-and-rule tactics used by oil corporations as well as successive Nigerian governments informed their solidarity across ethnic divides. "[T]he situation had become so desperate that many women realised that such cooperation was essential for their success" (Ekine, 2008: 79).

With regard to agribusiness, resistance to large-scale land deals is growing considerably. The actions of companies as they "tear down forests, dig up burial sites, fence off pastoral zones and pollute the air and water" generate conflicting claims over lands and territories (GRAIN, 2016: 9). Opposition to the deals, from communities and the organisations that support them, grows as security forces clash with community members and civil society, and activists and journalists face harassment from lawyers. Increasingly, connections across different kinds of struggles against agribusiness are being made. Farmers' organisations in Senegal, for example, are supporting pastoralists who are affected by large-scale projects. Urban groups displaced by industrial development projects in Mali are among the first to travel to rural areas to help farmers defend their land. Connections across national boundaries are also being made by communities in different countries, who are negatively affected by the land-grabbing activities of the same corporation (e.g. Dominion Farm). These communities are organising to support and learn from one another. There are also more cross-sector struggles, taking the form of solidarity among those opposing biofuel initiatives and those opposing mining projects (GRAIN, 2016).

Protests and struggles against extractivism in North Africa have engaged peasant communities, grassroots organisations, and social movements, not without tensions (Hamouchene, 2019). Instances of resistance in North Africa have been viewed as representing the environmentalism of the poor, which is less about "the conservation of exotic species or pristine nature" and more about "a quest for environmental and social justice and a fight against the social exclusion, the violence and authoritarianism of neoliberalism and its elites" (p. 16). The ecological dimension of the resistance takes second place to more keenly felt

problems – "socioeconomic rights such as jobs, development of urban and rural infrastructure, distribution of wealth, and democratisation of decision-making" (p. 16).

The import of these responses and acts of resistance to extractivism is to imagine another world in which environmental and socio-economic sustainability of communities and the economy are the norm. In the next and final section of this article, we discuss alternatives to extractivism as expressed by feminist intellectuals and movements. We are particularly interested in the possibilities that these afford for subverting the current trajectory of patriarchal and capitalist development towards a more transformative agenda.

Alternatives to Extractivism

Various movements, scholars and institutions have converged to address the restructuring of ecologies, economies and polities brought about by extractivist activities. Feminist critiques of capitalist accumulation have proposed alternative political, economic, and social arrangements where the emphasis is on the production of *life*, not commodities (e.g. Mies, 2005). Sylvia Tamale (2020) emphasises the need for an alternative to the dualistic anthropocentrism inherent in the Western colonial worldview and its hegemonic orientations to the natural world. The dichotomised logic of this worldview creates hierarchical relations between humans and the rest of the natural world, marked by human supremacy. This informs the predatory exploitation of the natural world that lies at the heart of extractivism, "disrupt[ing] the healthy web of life in ways that threaten the very foundation of life itself" (p. 85).

Tamale (*ibid.*) contrasts the dualisms of Western philosophy with the distinctly different philosophies underlying indigenous knowledge systems in which people's relations to the world are shaped by connections and continuities. For many African communities, people are part of the natural world and not partitioned from it. The underlying philosophy – *Ubuntu* – "celebrate[s] the values which connect past and present, as well as humans and nature" (p. 85). Hence women who work on the land share a "long history of ecological consciousness and moral obligation towards future generations" (p. 85), as evident in the activism of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. Tamale thus proposes that *Ubuntu* provides an alternative philosophy – and with it an alternative orientation to being and acting in the world – to the current worldview which naturalises extractivism.

Feminist economists have critiqued mainstream understandings of the economy for decades. Kate Raworth's (2017) *Doughnut Economics* is a recent example of an effort to rethink the economy on a systemic basis, drawing on ecological, feminist, institutional and behavioural economics. The goal of endless growth and wealth accumulation in malestream economics is radically shifted to one of promoting human wellbeing "within the means of our planet" (p. 28). Here, the economy is viewed as embedded within limits set by the social foundation—food, education, housing, health—as well as the ecological ceiling i.e. the Earth's life-giving systems. The safe and just space for humanity's existence emerges, doughnut-shaped, encircled above and below by the ecological and social limits, respectively. The myth of the self-contained, self-sustaining market is unravelled to show that the provisioning of wealth takes place in previously excluded zones – the household, the commons, the state – not just the market. These excluded arenas are embedded within and dependent upon society, itself embedded within the living world (Raworth, *ibid*.). Within the household, as feminists have shown for decades, it is predominantly women and girls that carry out the unpaid care work that is so central to setting the social limits.

Viewed in system terms, the economy is re-envisioned as an open sub-system of the closed Earth system. Not only does the economy "depend[s] upon Earth as a *source*—extracting finite resources such as oil, clay, cobalt and copper, and harvesting renewable ones such as timber, crops, fish and fresh water", but the earth acts as "a *sink* for [the economy's] wastes" (Raworth, 2017: 64). The extraction of natural resources generates waste, which cannot be wished away. Moreover, Raworth points out that the economy's fundamental resource flow is not money but energy—directly or indirectly from the sun. Without energy, nothing can move, grow, or work. The economy should be more distributive by design, not only of income but also of wealth, "particularly the wealth that lies in controlling land, enterprise, technology, knowledge and the power to make money" (Raworth, 2017: 23).

Women's autonomous organising internationally is a major force in the struggle against extractivism. Notable in this regard is the feminist anti-capitalist movement, *Marcha Mundial das Mulheres*—the World March of Women (WMW).[10] The movement was inspired by the Women's March Against Poverty (*La Marche du Pain et des Roses*) in 1995 in Quebec. Twenty-five women from women's groups

in 14 countries in Africa, Asia, South and Central America participated. Slowly, the idea of mobilising women across the world in an international campaign against poverty and violence emerged. Organised by the *Fédération des femmes du Québec* (FFQ), the project of the World March of Women 2000 was launched in Quebec in 1998 (Dufour, 2005).

WMW's starting point is that women are active subjects in the struggle to transform their lives and that to do this, it is necessary to overhaul the patriarchal, racist, homophobic, climate-destroying capitalist system. With this in mind, WMW organises among women in urban as well as rural locations, and also forms alliances with social movements. The movement seeks to construct a feminist perspective that affirms equality and women's rights to autonomy as the basis for its envisioned alternative society.[11] By 2013, WMW was active in 62 countries; its ninth International Assembly in São Paulo, Brazil—home to the international co-ordination centre—was attended by around 1,600 women. The meeting enabled those present to take stock of WMW's trajectory of building a popular feminism, rooted in local struggles but also connected to international actions.[12]

Every five years, WMW organises international solidarity campaigns. These campaigns now take place on 24 April, in memory of the thousands who died—mostly women garment workers—on that day in 2013 when the Rana Plaza factory collapsed, in Bangladesh's worst industrial accident.[13] The fifth such international solidarity campaign, in 2020, took the form of a protest against the power and impunity of transnational corporations—"the protagonists of racist and patriarchal capitalism".[14] The power of corporations, WMW points out, continues to be supported by extreme right wing forces in power, thus reinforcing authoritarianism and violence, the dispossession of communities and denial of basic rights. For WMW, "The conflict is between capital and life. We defend life!"[15] The movement rejects "wars, economic sanctions and blockades, militarisation and transnational armies, tools of terror, rape and systematic assassination of social fighters."[16] WMW's struggles to transform society are informed by a view of the economy as inseparable from politics, health, and life. In multiple sites—neighbourhoods, schools, fields, streets and networks—WMW has been building alternatives, such as the construction of the solidarity economy, agroecology, food sovereignty, popular communication and the organised movement itself (Fernandes, 2018).[17]

On the African continent, WoMin, a continental network of activists, has been actively engaged in research and action. Their interventions have addressed themes such as international and regional policy and human rights frameworks, women miners, land and food sovereignty, women's unpaid labour and contributions to the extractive industries, the impact of extractivism on women's bodies, sexuality and autonomy, and artisanal mining (WoMin, 2013). WoMin has also carried out participatory action research on the impacts of extractivism on women in East, West, and Southern Africa (WoMin, 2015), and has used their analysis to frame targeted demands of the African Union and African governments. Feminist research and action, such as that by WoMin, has drawn attention to ways in which extractivism not only involves the drive to exact ever-increasing profit from the extraction of natural resources, but also deepens the extraction of women's labour in the process.

A notable example of women organising alongside progressive social movements in resistance to extractivism was evident at the Thematic Social Forum on Mining and the Extractivist Economy, in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2018. An excerpt from the final Statement points to the Forum's collective analysis of extractivism, highlighting the heterogeneity of groups affected as well as important aspects of their common experiences:

> Peasants, small-scale farmers, migrants, refugees, pastoralists, displaced persons, indigenous and working-class women are enslaved by this extractivist, patriarchal development model. They work hard to guarantee the survival of family and community under increasingly precarious conditions. Their labour of care, subsistence production, social reproduction and the recreation of fragile threatened ecosystems is invisible, unrecognised, and undervalued. Their labour subsidises capital's profits and serves the interests of patriarchy. (Thematic Social Forum on Mining and the Extractivist Economy, 2018: 3)

It is worth noting that this statement was produced by a wide range of groups. Participants at the Thematic Social Forum above came from "mining-affected communities, trade unions, people's organizations, the women's movement, LGBTI people, faith-based groups, indigenous peoples, workers, small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, youth, support groups and academics from 60 countries, including from 28 African countries, as well as from the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe" (p. 3).

Their overall aim is to work towards a future free from the destructive consequences of extractivism, through a just transition which involves the transformation of production and consumption patterns as well as social organisation. Ultimately, this is about building "a new, democratic, eco-feminist and post-capitalist order" (*ibid*: 8) through common struggles and the consolidation of a broad-based movement of resistance.

These diverse struggles against extractivism, some more sustained and more effective than others, highlight the complexities in understandings of the phenomenon and the intellectual and organisational responses to its current dominance.

Concluding thoughts

We have argued that extractivism—the increasingly ruthless exploitation and appropriation of the broad range of natural resources found across Africa by corporations, the BRICS countries, states, and local elites—has been manifested in disparate forms across the continent and is embedded in the changing dynamics of contemporary capitalism. Differences in these manifestations arise partly as a result of colonial history; partly due to the types of resources extracted – food, agriculture, land and water, in contrast to oil, gas and minerals; and partly due to the impact of financial speculation in different parts of Africa. The neoliberal emphasis on free markets and the primacy of private interests exacerbates the gender, class, and other inequalities arising from extractivist processes and their destructive consequences. The BRICs countries, many of them former colonies themselves, have played active roles in serving imperial interests through their predatory engagement in extractivism. The dynamics involved are specific to African contexts, and thus not addressed in the oft-quoted and highly influential literature of South and Central America.

Our analysis points to the need for greater attention to African feminist analyses of context and the conceptualisation of extractivism, its gendered impact on communities and livelihoods, and the ways in which it relies on and exacerbates the burden of women's unrecognised and unremunerated labour. All these shape women's resistance to extractivism, their propositions for anti-capitalist alternatives and the possibilities of transformation of economies, social relations, and our relations to the natural world. In the wake of the tremendous inequalities and

destruction resulting from extractivist activities, feminists have organised within and across national borders, in the forefront of struggles for a world free from social, political, and economic injustices and violence.

Endnotes

1. "Economic globalisation refers to the increasing interdependence of world economies because of the growing scale of cross-border trade of commodities and services, flow of international capital and wide and rapid spread of technologies. It reflects the continuing expansion and mutual integration of market frontiers.... Multinational corporations (MNCs) have become the main carriers of economic globalisation. They are globally organising production and allocating resources according to the principle of profit maximization. And their global expansions are reshaping macroeconomic mechanisms of the operation of the world economies" (Gao, 2000: 1-2).
2. Financialisation refers to the increase in the size and importance of a country's financial sector relative to the overall economy, representing a shift away from industrial capitalism on a global scale. See also Epstein's (2005) definition in the discussion of financialisation later in this article.
3. Accumulation based on predation, fraud, and violence.
4. The countries involved are Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Equatorial Guinea is the only country in this group that is not a former French colony.
5. These countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. Guinea Bissau also uses the CFA; it is the only country in the group that is not a former French colony.
6. This is the acronym used to refer to the group of five emerging national economies—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—with significant influence on regional affairs.
7. Teodor Shanin, one of the authors, died in Moscow on 4 February 2020.
8. Emphasis in the original.
9. The term "land grab" has come to refer to a new wave of trans/national land speculation and commercial land transactions predominantly for the purpose of large-scale production and export of food, animal feed, biofuels, minerals and timber (Borras and Franco, 2012).
10. https://www.onacional.com.br/brasil,5/2020/05/17/marcha-mundial-das-mulheres,40970 -https://grassrootsonline.org/who-we-are/partner/world-march-of-women-wmw/
11. https://marchamulheres.wordpress.com/mmm/
12. https://www.onacional.com.br/brasil,5/2020/05/17/marcha-mundial-das-mulheres,40970
13. "Bangladesh factory collapse toll passes 1,000", 10 May 2013. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22476774

14. https://marchemondiale.org/index.php/2020/04/23/the-conflict-is-between-capital-and-life-we-defend-life/
15. https://marchemondiale.org/index.php/2020/04/23/the-conflict-is-between-capital-and-life-we-defend-life/
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

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Reclaiming our Land and Labour: Women's Resistance to Extractivist Agriculture in South-eastern Ghana

Gertrude Dzifa Torvikey

Abstract

Neoliberal development projects have invaded multiple spaces. In rural areas, women's livelihood activities are targets for interventions in the name of poverty reduction and this is often conveyed through commercial agricultural production schemes. These initiatives have become the source of tension between household-based production and capitalist production systems. This qualitative research uses the establishment of an industrial cassava company in south-eastern Ghana to reflect on some of the lingering questions of commercial agricultural production. This was done by examining its features, its implications for livelihoods, and women's resistance strategies to the extractivist production system. Women combined evasive and confrontational resistance strategies based on class—including demands for new land, land occupation, labour withdrawal from household farms and the company, and absenteeism from work—to reclaim their land and labour. The women's politics had wider ramifications for the new production systems, causing the company to change its production model as a response to the many concerns of the women and other social groups. The strategies largely contributed to rescuing the local economy from extractive agricultural production. The women were united in their individual and collective struggles against a system which they soon realised threatened their livelihoods. In this study, I argue that women's responses to the changes in their agrarian landscape, although differentiated on the basis of class, should ultimately be seen as questioning the neoliberal development vehicle that encroaches on autonomous production and gives less than it takes.

Keywords: Women, Ghana, commercial agriculture production, cassava, resistance, livelihood

Introduction

At the centre of Ghana's development trajectory is a long history of extractive production anchored in mineral mining and agricultural export commodity production. Colonial and post-colonial governments have implemented development policies that promoted the exploitation of gold, diamond, manganese and iron ore (Ayelazuno, 2014; Childs and Hearn, 2016) as well as agricultural export commodity production. The discovery of oil and gas in 2007, and its subsequent production from 2014 onwards, became the latest addition to the country's extraction-dominated development model (Aryeetey and Ackah, 2018). In the agricultural sector, cocoa is the best example of a crop developed through an extractivist model. Ghana was the world's leading producer of cocoa until it lost this position to Côte d'Ivoire in 1978. Currently, more than 700,000 households produce cocoa, which earns the nation over two billion dollars annually, an amount crucial for the economy (Kolavalli and Vigneri, 2011). Several studies have documented how cocoa production has profoundly changed land, labour, gender and class relations in producing areas (Hill, 1963; Mikell, 1989; Amanor, 2010).

The cocoa dependency model proved costly to the Ghanaian economy due to world price instabilities which affect cocoa pricing. To protect the economy from cocoa revenue shortfalls, the state embarked on export crop diversification programmes from the 1980s, which saw the promotion of horticultural crops such as coconut, mango, pineapple and papaya. In 2001, cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), an essential food security crop, became part of a Presidential Special Initiative programme which promoted cassava for industrial starch production (Tonah, 2006). Although the project failed, private companies started enrolling farmers into cassava contract farming schemes (Poku *et al*., 2018). Trade and financial deficits resulted in hyperinflation from 2009. Consequently, the state announced an industrial policy of import substitution by encouraging local raw material use in industrial manufacturing in exchange for import duty waivers. As a result of this incentive, by 2012, Guinness Ghana Limited and Accra Brewery Limited, the local subsidiaries of the world's leading multinational breweries— Diageo and SABMiller—began processing cassava into beer (Torvikey, 2019). This intensified cassava production in leading producing areas and subsequently changed production dynamics.

The story of cassava's rise to industrial prominence is a new addition to an ever-expanding feature of extractivist agriculture, which is catching up with crops

that are traditionally produced, processed and marketed at the household unit. This said, in Ghana, regardless of the sector in which extractivism is taking place, its wider ramifications are seen in increasing land dispossession—which affects the livelihoods of smallholder producers—and environmental destruction. Although the working conditions of peasants are worsening, extractive agriculture continues to be the main focus of Ghana's agricultural policies, which are centred on increasing production but pay little attention to how smallholders reproduce themselves.

In 2005, a wholly Ghanaian enterprise, Agro Industrial Cassava Company Limited[1], acquired 3,000 hectares of land to produce cassava for industrial processing in parts of South-eastern Ghana, where women have traditionally cultivated cassava mainly for food and trade. The acquisition dispossessed many migrant women and appropriated their labour. This kind of agricultural production could only be extractivist. Extractivist agricultural production has come under immense scrutiny for its destructive nature. Ye *et al.* (2020) argue that a major feature of extractivism is using resources without reproducing them. Resources crucially include land and labour. Direct and indirect land dispossession and ecological destruction are some of the core outcomes of extractivist agricultural production. Land dispossession seriously affects labour relations, with negative consequences for reproduction and livelihood outcomes such as food security. The structural logic of extractivist production entails dispossession, accumulation, exploitation and uneven distribution of gains and losses, often circumscribed by power relations (McKay, 2019).

The gender and class inequalities and inequities related to control of resources in households are further complicated in the complex processes of extractivism. Land and labour are central to agrarian livelihoods (Apusigah, 2009; Tsikata, 2009; Li, 2011) and for women's empowerment (Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2019). In recent times, large-scale land acquisition and land appropriation have been critiqued for creating poverty rather than providing jobs and improving livelihoods. Even when jobs are created, the labour conditions and extent of incorporation depend on the structure of production, including its institutional model, the type of crop, the level of mechanisation, and labour regime (Hall *et al.*, 2017). In addition, since the losses and gains are unequally distributed, it is women who usually occupy the lower rungs of the new and modern employment structure. It is also women who are locked up in manual, casual and precarious work. As social reproducers,

changes concerning land and labour affect women in complex ways.

Neoliberal development projects rarely take into account the socio-cultural context of their local constituents, thereby creating constant friction in communities and households. New agricultural projects may create some euphoria due to the framing of their intentions and envisaged outcomes; they will attract farmers who are understandably receptive to new technologies, methods and inputs that promise to improve agricultural production, income and wellbeing. Farmers often participate in producing new crops or old crops that have received a boom in production (Li, 2014). However, due to the power hierarchy in traditional societies and the structure of production, the immediate and long-term ramifications of such projects exacerbate gender and class differentiation.

Maria Mies (1991) has consistently pointed to the contentious features of capitalist development. She highlights its polarised process which creates wealth and poverty as well as losers and gainers. This logic defines extractivist agricultural development, which is fashioned on production that subjugates traditional systems and prioritises problematic modern ones. Extractivist agricultural production framed in efficiency and growth logic contradicts sustainability, which has profound implications for social groups, especially women and migrants. Extractivism is therefore a polarised process and phenomenon.

Using the establishment of an industrial cassava company in rural South-eastern Ghana as a case, I address the following questions in this article: How did women mobilise to resist the company? What were their strategies and what were the outcomes? Feminist analysis of these questions highlights the significance of listening to women's voices and what they tell us about women's capacity to change relations of production.

Theoretical Framing

This article adopts resistance and feminist theories of the household to illuminate the features of neoliberal extractivist agriculture production and the different ways in which rural agricultural producers resist exploitative production systems, while acknowledging the context specificity of their struggles. Class and gender relations in the communities and households under examination are key dimensions of these struggles. James Scott's (2005) concept of infrapolitics highlights everyday forms of resistance and their diverse and complex forms that are situated in ways reflecting

the material conditions of the exploited. Scott (1985; 1990; 2013) shows that class relations produce different types of resistance, which come about as a result of political, social and economic power differences. Power asymmetries produce overt and covert forms of resistance, and thus resistance struggles become situated. Social groups and sites are important in shaping resistance forms and strategies.

Infrapolitical strategies are used in contexts that demand great caution and where there is an absence of mass mobilisation. Open confrontation can be fatal for social groups such as migrants and women who derive their resources from others whose economic, social and political rights are constantly debated. In such contexts, everyday forms of resistance are not without merit and consequence. The wide varieties of strategies used by the exploited and dispossessed show their recognition of the processes of domination rooted in material practices in a neoliberal economic paradigm. As Scott (1985) rightly notes, every instance of domination is connected with processes of appropriation. Therefore, infrapolitics and everyday forms of defiance are strategies to minimise appropriation and its effects. One end goal of such forms of resistance is to alter power relations and impel renegotiation.

The household as a site of resistance to capitalist production provides an important lens through which to view gender and class relations. The forms of resistance that manifest within it respond to particular concerns of households and these may differ for men and women. In rural households where economic interdependence and separation exist, conflicts often arise in production relations, especially ones that threaten women's socioeconomic autonomy. Women play triple roles in agricultural production. They operate their own farms, sometimes drawing labour from the household, and also work on their husbands' farms as a matter of duty and responsibility. Additionally, they provide reproductive services such as cooking for labourers in household farms that their husbands control. The multiplicity of women's roles shows integration, independence and separation of production. At the same time, due to the intricate relationship between capitalism and patriarchy, women are very often oppressed in each of these three spheres. New agricultural schemes often gloss over these aspects and the internally-differentiated character within the household, even though they often generate resistance (Kandiyoti, 1985; Razavi, 2009).

Methodology and Study Area

The data for this work are culled from the qualitative component of a larger project. The main data collection approaches used were in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and non-participant observation. The names used for the quotations are pseudonyms.[2]

The study was conducted in five communities in South-eastern Ghana which are well known for cassava production for domestic consumption and market trade. For the purposes of this analysis, three categories of community are differentiated: indigenous, secondary-indigenous and migrant. Two of the communities identify themselves as indigenous or indigenes. Indigeneity in this sense means a history of first settlement, with associated control of land resources and political power. These communities own vast tracts of lands which were allocated to the other communities. Two of these other communities are labelled as secondary-indigenous and the last community, a migrant one. Communities that are classified as secondary-indigenous arrived second in the area centuries ago and had lands allocated to them by those communities that arrived first. The order of arrival and resource control dimensions have become an exclusionary factor in major decisions concerning land lease to the Agro Industrial Cassava Company Limited. The migrant community rightly acknowledges its migration status from the 1930s and still owes allegiance to its community of origin in the Volta Region. Its members have established a farming community which continues to expand. The cassava company acquired lands that used to be cultivated by farmers in the migrant and secondary-indigenous communities, which are directly affected by the acquisition.

Women's land access has been shaped by the local norms in different communities. Indigenous women access lands through their families and the market. Women in the secondary-indigenous community obtain land through the market, especially by allocation from the indigenous community, and through allocation by husbands. Migrant women who married migrant men access land mainly through their husbands. Unmarried migrant women access land through the market, often by yearly rental or sharecropping.

The study found that differences in how women from different communities gain access to land were important for understanding how the women were affected by the land acquisition for industrial cassava production, their incorporation into

the production system, and how they responded to the agrarian change that the cassava production represented.

Description of the Case

Agro Industrial Cassava Company Limited (AICC Ltd.), wholly Ghanaian owned, was the first private company to venture into large-scale industrial cassava processing in Ghana. Since the fall of the state's industrial cassava company, AICC Ltd. has become the biggest industrial cassava company in the country. The company acquired 3,000 hectares of land in some communities in South-eastern Ghana to cultivate cassava for the production of ethanol, High Quality Cassava Flour and Industrial Flour. The company claimed that 100 farming households were dispossessed while community members disputed the figure, saying it could be more than 300. Prior to the acquisition, the dispossessed mainly used lands on a token payment basis. They received no compensation, since the landowners argued that they were tenants and not allodial title holders. In customary law, allodial title is the ultimate interest in land. Allodial title can be held by a stool, family, and community, and confers ownership and control on holders. Other types of land interests such as customary freehold, tenancies, sharecropping and annual rental, among others, are derivatives of the allodial title (Woodman, 1996).

AICC Ltd.'s agricultural production model comprises a nucleus estate along with contract and outgrower schemes. Both contract farmers and outgrowers had a contractual relationship with the company where the latter committed to buying industrial cassava produced by the farmers. Contract farmers were allocated a hectare each of company land to produce cassava, while outgrowers used their own land. A land limit of at least two hectares was required for participation in the outgrower scheme. Due to this restriction and other factors to be discussed in the ensuing sections, only 28 out of 107 registered outgrowers in the communities were women.

The company organised cassava production on a strictly monocropping basis and therefore outgrowers were prohibited from intercropping. The company did make some concessions that farmers could cultivate cowpea, soya and groundnuts in the cassava farms as a soil fertility measure. The company determined both the price and measuring standards for the crop, often using a truckload (about two and a half tonnes) as the unit of measurement.

A New Agricultural Production System: Land, Labour and Food Security Concerns

Women often bear the grave consequences of agricultural commercialisation in ways that complicate their lives. Such complications could be social, economic, cultural, and political. For projects that have a combination of labour regimes, the health of the workers and that of the environment are often compromised (Tsikata, 2016; O'Laughlin, 2017). The structure of industrial cassava production creates both tension and excitement as it changes social relations of production. The ramifications of the commercial production of cassava are three-fold—land dispossession, labour exploitation, and food security. Within these are also ecological factors that threaten sustainable agricultural production in the communities.

The company's land acquisition disproportionately affected women who were dispossessed and who cultivated parcels of land that were relatively small in size. As a result, they had to cultivate multiple crops on one small plot to manage the fertility of the soil. They were now forced to use the same piece of land repeatedly, while some others stopped farming completely. The land acquisition also increased rent seeking among landowners, who started demanding annual rents or payments in-kind for land use. Since women's land access and use rights are derived from male relations mainly, the harsh changes in the land tenure practices affected their livelihoods. The affected women also complained about the distance of the new lands they acquired and expressed safety concerns about farming in those areas. Here are a few of the impacts mentioned by the women:

> I was cultivating groundnut, maize and cassava before I lost the land to the company. In the past, we used not to give anything for the land use but now, we give the landowners crops after every season since land is scarce now. Also, the company's land is on a higher ground. But the place we have now is a marshy area and so our cassava and yam do not do well there.[3]

> Initially, when the land was acquired, we asked the landowners to give us other lands. They gave us the hill lands that are far away from the community. Those lands are very fertile, but the area is not safe. The problem is that the lands are near the Togo border and murders happen there frequently. As a woman, what can I do when men surround me at a place like that? We have all our crops there. But we stopped going there due to the security problems.[4]

The household was incorporated into the production scheme through contract farming which relied on unpaid family labour, especially that of women and children. The land size criteria to become an outgrower—at least two hectares—were not sensitive to women's relatively smaller allocations, which averaged a hectare. Women who could not meet the land size criteria but who nevertheless desired to participate in the outgrower scheme combined their lands with those of their husbands in order to qualify. In households where men registered, women, especially wives, contributed both reproductive and productive labour to the contract farming schemes. Depending on the resource endowment of the household, the women would cook for labourers, mainly using food crops such as cassava, beans, groundnuts and vegetables from their farms. Husbands also relied on the income from women's daily trading activities to pay labourers. In addition, some women worked alongside their husbands on the contract farms. Some women with older husbands mostly worked on the farm all alone and also supervised labourers. However, since the men were the registered outgrowers, they controlled the income from the outgrower scheme.

As it turned out, the company could not fulfil its obligation to buy all the cassava that outgrowers produced, despite setting a land size limit that gave rise to overproduction of the crop. Due to the high starch content of the company's preferred cassava variety, which the communities said was not suitable for local food consumption, the company was the only potential buyer. Thus, its inability to purchase the produce caused a glut and led to massive post-harvest losses. Apart from this, women were incensed that the cultivation of the industrial cassava prevented them from getting access to cassava for local trade which hitherto was an essential livelihood activity for them. Cassava trading was one of the main economic activities for many women as its harvesting was spread over the year as a socioeconomic strategy. The women soon realised that the industrial cassava production system threatened the traditional cassava production and marketing system, as it became incongruous with the way they organised production and marketing. They complained about the fact that households and the community at large were producing cassava varieties they did not eat. They also found the use of agrochemicals in the production of cassava to be problematic and strange since their usual varieties were not chemical-dependent. A female traditional leader explained the women's concerns as follows:

> The company had more male outgrowers than females because we women were not interested. They introduced chemicals in the production of cassava, weighing of produce and rules on harvesting which were different from what we practice. That was not how we organised our cassava production before the company came.[5]

In addition, the women found the use of the truckload as a measuring standard of the contract cassava to be exploitative. The women said that they could make four times as much as the company paid for such a quantity if they sold that amount on the local market, and even more if they processed the same quantity into *garri* or *agbelima* (cassava dough). They found the harvesting structure tedious and costly: a contract farmer was expected to harvest in one fell swoop, which is at odds with the traditional harvesting structure. Prior to the arrival of the company, cassava farmers did harvesting sequentially, only a day before market day and by acreage when there was a bulk buyer who harvested by herself or himself. The women maintained that the way they traditionally harvested cassava suited their labour needs and capabilities. Usually, they would harvest only the quantity of cassava they needed for home consumption and for sale in the local market, which was held every five days. The portion harvested would be replanted before the next market day. That way, they were able to manage production and harvesting simultaneously. Sequential harvesting is also a strategy to manage pricing and oversupply. The women enumerated numerous problems with the organisation of industrial cassava:

> The outgrower scheme did not help us. We can get about 30 sacks of cassava dough from the full bucket of the truck which would fetch GHS1,600. But the company buys that same quantity at GHS500. So, we felt cheated.[6]

> The company preferred starch, so it advised farmers to harvest cassava in six months. With this type of production, we farmers can cultivate cassava twice a year. But we have observed that this type of production was not helpful to us. The farmer will suffer and produce, and the company will harvest it in six months. Yet the farmer will not make much money since s/he has to harvest more to get one truck. But if you allow your cassava to grow well over a one-year period, you will realise that you get better harvest. So, you see, because the company is just interested in the starch, they don't allow the cassava to mature before harvesting.[7]

In terms of labour in the company, many women were employed mainly as casual workers, often working long hours (7 a.m. to 5 p.m.). The work in the company was segmented into two types. The first was on the farm. Farm workers did planting, harvesting, carting, loading, weeding and spraying. Women were assigned all these except spraying. Farm workers started work at 6 a.m. and clocked off around 11 a.m. The farm work was organised as an individual task although workers often helped one another so that they could accomplish the work on time. Many farm workers were men.

The second type of work was factory work, which comprised peeling, washing, milling, bagging and packing. Most factory workers were women. The women would also load the cassava peels onto a truck after work. Then they swept, scrubbed and mopped the floor before going home. The work was organised as a group task with five women assigned to process two and a half tonnes of cassava daily. Many of the workers at the first stage of processing were women. Only one man worked under a shed where 20 women were working when I visited the factory in 2016. His portion of the work was mechanised; he milled the cassava into dough. However, it was the women who filled the milling machine with the cassava they had finished peeling. The women also cleaned the man's section of the factory after work. The second stage, which was flour production, involved three men. Two men worked with the machines while one cleaned the factory during and after production.

Casual workers did not enjoy any social security or annual, sick or maternity leave. They wore no protective gear. The women used only rudimentary tools that made work difficult. Even the seats they used at the processing site were their own kitchen stools which they brought from home and carried back at the end of the day. Most of the work was manual. When women fell ill and were absent from work, they received no pay. Although all the female workers in the company were casual workers, some had worked for as long as eight years by 2017 and these were mainly migrant women from land-dispossessed communities with no alternative livelihoods. Above all, the company defaulted in paying wages and often either delayed payment or paid less than the amount that was due. Some former workers recalled their experiences as follows:

> The supervisor would often give large areas for us to weed or harvest. The tasks were always very tedious. They gave us huge plots to weed in a day. We often spent so much time weeding. They kept their eyes on us and monitored us. We could not eat once we got in the yard. They called us at a specific time to eat and after that we could not eat again. Those were some of the things that exhausted some of us. It also angered us. They were treating us like slaves.[8]

> When the company first arrived, we were happy that work had finally come to our communities. Though they were not paying us any good wages, we were managing. But the work conditions were terrible. If you go to work today and as you know, we human beings are just like machines and can break down too. When you ask permission that you have a headache, they would give you a chit to go to the hospital at your own cost. They deducted the sick days from our pay. But it was the work that made us sick most of the time.[9]

The women's continuous casualisation meant that they could not benefit from any social security schemes. I agree with Ouma (2018) who argues that the employment and labour structures of capitalist enterprises are intentionally designed to create division among the workforce and to quash solidarity among workers since a unified workforce would pose a high risk to companies. In this instance, the few men recruited were permanent workers, often supervisors and administrative workers. Cassava peelers and harvesters had different working conditions. The peelers, mostly women, worked longer hours and received less pay than their male counterparts on farms. The differences in working conditions for men and women meant that organising for structural reforms in the company was quite unlikely.

The casualisation of the female workforce contravened section 75(1) of the country's Labour Act 2003 (Act 651) (Government of Ghana, 2003), which enjoins employers to take workers on a permanent basis once they have worked continuously for six months. However, the law has gaps which compromise the security of agricultural wage work. Section 73(1) of the same legislation states that "an employer may hire a worker on terms that suit the operations of the enterprise" (Government of Ghana, 2003: 27). This is an example of what Peck (2002) highlights as the state's role in providing legislative cover that promotes neoliberal capitalism and extractivism, which consume bodies in the name of job

creation, competitiveness and growth. Many agro-processing companies of this nature use the seasonality of crops to justify the pervasive casualisation of its workers. In Ghana, Torvikey (2018) shows that long term labour casualisation of female workers in the agro-processing formal sector has become a permanent feature of the employment structure in the country.

The company's operations also affected food security in the household and in communities. Men and women committed most of their land and labour to producing different crops. While women cultivated cassava, maize, okra, tomatoes, pepper, groundnuts, cowpeas and green leafy vegetables such as *gbomaa*[10], *ademee*[11] and *atoma*[12], men cultivated maize, rice, cocoa, yam and oil palm. Since a high number of the dispossessed were women, the household lost diverse food crops which it had produced on the land that the company acquired, thereby compromising the household's dietary diversity. Similarly, the fact that the company promoted monocropping meant that the women could not plant essential food crops on the household's outgrower farm. Even when the company asked farmers to intercrop cassava with soya to manage fertility of the soil, the women pointed out that besides taking too long to cook, soya foods were alien to the community. Soya food preparation therefore created new burdens on women's reproductive roles as it required more energy and labour.

Meanwhile, the industrial cassava variety itself was unsuitable for local food consumption. Women lost access to cassava for food which they usually traded in local markets. Income from cassava trading was partly used to purchase food that the household did not produce for itself (such as sugar, salt, spices, fish, meat and eggs) and energy for food preparation (charcoal, fuel wood, kerosene and matches). Land concentration and expansion by male outgrowers to meet outgrower production criteria and the company's acquisition also affected women's access to the commons, a source of essential food products and fuel wood. In general, the company's operations constituted an attack on all four pillars of food security—availability, accessibility, sustainability, and utilisation. Many of these ramifications of the company's production system informed the reasons for women's resistance to the project.

Women's Resistance to the Extractivist Agricultural System

Two broad forms of resistance were discernible in the communities that hosted the industrial cassava company: evasive and confrontational forms. Both strategies were used simultaneously, depending on the actor and her particular concern. Land dispossession was the first issue around which women rallied, especially those from the secondary-indigenous community. They had to confront an internal power (landowners) and an external power (the company) and therefore used different strategies in each case. Due to the social and economic costs of openly confronting the traditional authority and landowners, the women engaged in dialogue, resorting to cultural and moral arguments to make demands. Framing their activist demands from the perspective of motherhood, women argued that their roles as mothers and social reproducers should be maintained through restoration of their access to land, which the dispossession had restricted. They needed the land to produce food for their children and to sustain themselves and the rest of the family.

Women from the secondary-indigenous community protested against the land acquisition and asked for new parcels of land to be allocated to them. They questioned the moral basis for the land sale and acquisition which threatened their livelihoods and community social cohesion. Rather surprisingly, even the dispossessed men whom I interviewed felt that they only had user rights to the land and not the allodial title; they therefore felt unable to question the land acquisition. The women in the secondary-indigenous community justified their right to use the land on the basis of their roles as social reproducers and mothers who needed to feed their families. The landowners listened and allocated new plots of land to them. However, the women realised that the allocated plots were waterlogged and unsuitable for producing root tuber crops. Other areas allocated to them, though fertile, were far from the community and also unsafe. Thus, the women could not use the land they obtained.

Since the women did not get adequate and suitable land from the landowners, they turned their anger towards the company which had dispossessed them. Here, they were more forthright and confrontational in their demands. In their own words, they made "noise" to drum home their demands. They mobilised and hounded company officials whenever the latter visited the communities. They openly demanded the return of their lands and verbally abused the company and

its officials. In addition, they occupied part of the company's 1,200ha vacant land and continued to cultivate it. The women also put pressure on the company to leave some of the land near the community as a buffer for food production. They were successful in pushing back the company and continued to cultivate the land that they reclaimed. The women detailed some of these confrontational resistance strategies and outcomes as follows:

> In the past, before the cassava company was established, we cultivated land freely and even chose where to cultivate which crop. Some crops are good for higher ground and others for marshy areas. We women in this community made noise and reminded the company that we needed to feed our families and therefore we needed land. If we had not done this, they would have cultivated even our residence.[13]

Some women who owned land participated in the contract farming scheme in their own right. However, they withdrew from it very early on due to restrictions on intercropping, the company's unfulfilled promises to supply labour for harvesting, questionable measuring standards, and low producer price. The women's withdrawal exemplifies an evasive form of resistance.

The few women who participated in the contract farming scheme in the initial stages believed that it would give them better incomes and also solve the tedious nature of local cassava marketing. As an act of defiance, during cultivation, some women mixed the company's preferred varieties with local ones which they could sell in the local market as a stopgap measure for poor pricing. A female outgrower summarised the general concerns about the industrial cassava production system:

> The company paid low prices for the cassava. I cultivated cassava on contract for the company in the past and it yielded well. When I harvested it, it was almost a bucket of a truck full and the company paid me GHS40 since they said it was not a full truck. Since then, I stopped cultivating for them. That was in 2007. I suffered. I suffered a lot. If I were to sell that cassava in individual homes in this community, I would have made so much money. Luckily for me, I mixed their variety with the local [*ankra* and *tuaka*] ones I used to cultivate. That was what saved me from debt.[14]

The outgrower above is referring to having planted local varieties of cassava at the time of cultivation, in addition to planting the company's preferred varieties.

Women who contributed their labour on household outgrower farms as a matter of conjugal duty withdrew their labour and concentrated instead on their own production. They realised the exploitative nature of the scheme, which did not guarantee an income commensurate with what they would earn if they produced and marketed the food-oriented variety. The women's boycott of the outgrower scheme and their subsequent return to autonomous agricultural production shows their consciousness of the food security and agroecological dimensions of the industrial cassava production system. A woman who participated in the outgrower scheme with her husband reiterated this concern:

> In this community, we eat what we produce. We only buy fish, salt and some ingredients. We used to cultivate cassava before the Agro Cassava Company Limited introduced us to the new variety. We were told not to intercrop with any other crop except cowpea, soya and groundnut. Meanwhile, those crops have their own problems. The new cassava variety is not suitable for the food we eat here. They told us that we could not eat the cassava we produced for them. At the time households were producing for the company, there was hunger in our communities. Households that had both husband and wife in the outgrower scheme were worse off. You could go to your own farm and yet you are hungry. Now, my household's food situation has improved because we stopped producing for the company. The company created initial poverty and if we were not to stop producing for it, we would have died from hunger.[15]

Some women used non-participation, desertion and absenteeism as strategies to confront the company's operations and labour exploitation. Other women, especially those from households with resources such as land to engage in autonomous production, did not take up work in the company. Some of them later recognised the exploitation that their colleagues were enduring but thought that women who took jobs in the company were doing so as a coping strategy to solve temporary financial problems. The following voices reiterate this position:

> I have never worked in that company. I can trade. I can also farm. Why should I go and work there? The women who worked there had specific problems. That is why they took those short-term jobs. They wanted to solve some financial problems with income they would earn from the company.[16]

> I worked there because my son was in the Teacher Training College then. At the end of the month, whatever I received, I sent some to him or used it to buy provisions for him so that he would not be hungry. I managed the little that remained for me. I was managing it until he completed school and I quit the work.[17]

Many women deserted the company due to the terrible working conditions. In the early years of the establishment of the company, many indigenous women took jobs in the company. However, many left and returned to their farming and trading activities as they considered the factory and company farm work to be exploitative and a waste of time. They found the structure of production problematic. The women who continued to work there used different strategies to show dissent. I visited the company one Saturday in March 2016. There was no-one at the shed where the women did the processing. The cassava that had been harvested that morning was heaped there. A company official complained, saying:

> This is how these women behave. Sometimes, especially on Saturday, they would fail to come to work, thereby shutting down production completely. When they come on Monday and we query them, they would come with all sorts of excuses. They would say they went for funerals, marriage and naming ceremonies. These women are undisciplined.[18]

The women used absenteeism to resist the exploitative capitalistic production system that did not pay adequate wages, paid irregularly, and had no social security and protection schemes for them. In the absence of these, they used their Saturdays to rest and to cater for traditional forms of social security which found expression in their attendance of social events.

The company felt the effect of the women's actions and responded accordingly. It expanded its own farms, abandoned the land size criteria and resorted to radio announcements to attract cassava producers in the region on the back of massive withdrawals from the outgrower scheme. It also started buying cassava of any quantity and variety from independent farmers. Here, one can say that the women's actions changed the company's stringent production strategies of insisting on monocropping, sourcing only particular varieties that were unsuitable for local food consumption, and only buying from outgrowers. Unlike Gyapong (2019) who argues that everyday forms of politics may not have big effects and therefore may not change the structure of production relations, I argue that the

aggregate effects of the women's actions resulted in a major restructuring of the company's production model.

The rationale for the women's actions—some collective, others individual—shows the resilience of traditional production systems which are anchored in sustaining livelihoods and the ecosystem. In general, the women found their production system more efficient and therefore doubted the new methods and technologies that the industrial cassava had introduced to farmers. One respondent summarised her feelings about the structure of industrial cassava production by saying dismissively, "Is it that Agro Industrial Cassava Company that will teach us how to cultivate cassava? What do they know about cassava production?"

Conclusion

The social relations of production and the agrarian structure differentiated women's access to resources such as land. Therefore, the company's land acquisition affected them differently. Yet, opposition to the type of production which prioritised profit over sustaining livelihoods united the women's struggles. In the absence of strong social movements in Ghana's rural areas, strategies and responses to the extractive agricultural production system can be seen in different forms. The success of an agricultural project should depend on the level of involvement of farmers and their assessment of the ensuing benefits. In this work, I have shown that women's responses to industrial cassava production must be contextualised as a trajectory of both evasive and confrontational forms of resistance. This was a journey of fifteen years of unravelling and the people's discovery of the deceit in the type of production which they were coerced into accepting. I argue in this article that it was women who rescued the local economy from continuous subjugation to industrial agricultural production. Such production does not prioritise the environment and tried to create a pseudo-crop production specialisation in an area that has been known to produce multiple crops which secure livelihoods and food. The women fought against land dispossession and labour exploitation, both in the company and in the household, and against their general constraints in accessing reproductive and productive resources.

The women resisted the production of the industrial-type cassava through multiple actions. Dispossessed women questioned the moral basis of the land sale to the company. The women directed their anger at the traditional authorities

who sold the land, and asked for new plots of land to be allocated to them. The women also confronted the company by demanding that it leave a buffer for local food production. They succeeded in pushing the company back and subsequently occupied parts of the company's lands to produce cassava and other food crops. The women also resisted the exploitation of their labour as wage workers in the company. Many indigenous women were the first to quit work in the company due to the low pay, delayed payments and tedious work structure which prevented them from combining factory work with crop farming and trading. Migrant women, who formed the core of the workforce due to their lack of alternatives in the absence of land, used absenteeism to resist the factory-type production structure. It was common practice that on Saturdays all women would fail to go to work, as though it were choreographed, thereby halting production for the day. At the household level, the women boycotted the cassava contract farming and outgrower schemes by first refusing to participate and secondly, by withdrawing their labour from their husbands' contract farms.

The women were successful in getting land for permanent and temporary production. However, land occupation means their access to land is still insecure. Their strategies also caused a change in the way the company organised its production. The women's struggles to free their traditional production systems are linked to the embeddedness of reproduction, production and ecological concerns. The household is a site for constant struggles about conditions arising out of a household's relationship with capital. I posit that women's responses to changes in their agrarian landscape, although differentiated on the basis of their class and access to productive resources such as land and labour, should ultimately be seen as questioning the neoliberal development vehicle which encroached on their autonomous production and gave less than it took from them.

Endnotes

1. A pseudonym.
2. The larger study, from which this article is drawn, went through the University of Ghana's ethical clearance procedures, which included seeking consent from participants to use their quotes. The interviews were conducted in the Ewe language, transcribed and translated into English.
3. In-depth interview, Dada Aliforsi, farmer/trader, secondary-indigenous community, 28 May 2017.
4. Female FGD, secondary-indigenous community, 2 June 2017.

5. Key Informant Interview, female traditional leader, secondary-indigenous community, 24 May 2017.
6. In-depth interview, Elinam, female, 30 years, married, farmer/trader, indigenous community, 1 May 2017.
7. Community Open Discussion, female participant, 26 years, company casual wage worker/farmer, 26 May 2017.
8. In-depth interview, Davi Elolo, 42 years old, migrant, married, former company wage worker, secondary-indigenous community, 20 March 2017.
9. Female FGD, secondary-indigenous community, 2 June 2017.
10. Jute mallow.
11. African eggplant.
12. Surinam spinach.
13. Female FGD, secondary-indigenous community, 2 June 2017.
14. In-depth interview, Dada Mercy, 65 years, widow, farmer/trader, indigene, indigenous community, 1 March 2017.
15. In-depth interview, female, Dada Fidelia, farmer-trader, migrant community, 28 May 2017.
16. In-depth interview, Dada Christina, migrant, farmer/trader, wife of an indigenous wealthy farmer, indigenous community, 22 May 2017.
17. In-depth interview, Dada Enyonam, widow, farmer/trader, indigene, indigenous community, 29 March 2017.
18. Onsite observation. Production Manager complaining about the women, March 2016.

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"Cinderellas" of Our Mozambique Wish to Speak: A Feminist Perspective on Extractivism

Teresa Cunha and Isabel Casimiro

All in uniform. Some in army uniforms,
others in administrator uniforms.
(Pepetela, 2018)

Abstract

Mozambique is currently undergoing an intense cycle of extractive activities, with most of the generated benefits being transferred to international corporations and local elites. This has given rise to extreme inequality, the emergence of violent conflicts, the erosion of democracy, forced displacement of many people, and a systematic disrespect for the material and spiritual living conditions of the population who are divested of their territories. Against this background, the living conditions of women and girls have undergone many setbacks. We adopt the phrase "*Cinderellas of our Mozambique"* as a metaphor for those women who continue resisting the economic development model based on the violent and intensive extraction of natural resources. Our text draws on both theory and our experiences in the past two years, namely: 1) our active participation in several events on extractive activities in Mozambique and their impacts on women's lives; 2) 50 interviews, mainly in the northern provinces (Cabo Delgado, Maputo, Nampula and Niassa), where megaprojects and extractive activities are more intense; and 3) our organising and facilitation of three workshops in Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado province. Our paper is structured in two principal sections. In the first, we discuss and analyse the contemporary political economy of Mozambique as a southern African country. In the second section, based on our own experience and the narratives and practices of Mozambican women, we identify some of the possible causes of suffering and some of the ideas of resistance and future alternatives led by women and their communities.

Keywords: Mozambique, women, extractivism, African Feminism

Introduction

Since the era of colonial occupation in Mozambique came to an end in 1975, the exploitation of natural resources by the Portuguese Estado Novo dictatorship has given rise to an economic model based on extractivism (Castel-Branco, 2010). The consequences of such a model are blatant inequality, exclusion and injustice experienced by the black population in Mozambique (Francisco, 2003). According to Bidaurratzaga and Colom (2019), the exploitation of natural gas began in the 1960s under colonial occupation of the country. The same is true for coal, which has traditionally been exploited in the north-western province of Tete in the form of small-scale mining, both for domestic consumption and for export. Small-scale mining began to change in 2004, however, when the Brazilian transnational Vale won the exploitation concession of the Moatize mine—one of the largest untapped reserves in the world—and the South African corporation Sasol began extracting natural gas from the Pande and Temane fields.

Although Mozambique is extremely rich in natural resources, with fertile land and valuable timber, minerals and energy resources, the large majority of its inhabitants are poor and too many people live in extreme poverty (Castel-Branco, 2010; Hofmann, 2015; Langa, 2017; Orre and Ronning, 2017). At the same time, increasingly larger and more luxurious private residential or tourist condominiums and sumptuous hotels are being built in the cities, while more people are forced to leave their neighbourhoods and face dire living conditions, mostly in the cities. Waste food pickers, both women and men, walk through the main streets scavenging for food, while the government fails to implement public policies aimed at promoting the well-being of the population or redistributing wealth.

Mozambique boasts a formally democratic regime, yet the political climate is marked by fear, with differences of lifestyle signalling the suffering and discrimination that continue to haunt life and citizenship in the country. In the last four years, several activists, intellectuals and journalists have been harassed, prosecuted by the state, attacked and in some cases, assassinated. They include Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco, prosecuted by the state (2015) and currently living in exile; José Macuane (23 March 2016) and Ericino de Salema (19 July 2018), harassed and seriously injured; Gilles Cistac (3 March 2015) and Anastácio Matavele (6 October 2019), assassinated. All had publicly expressed their dissent regarding the state of the nation and the government's actions. To date, the national police

have not given any explanation or prosecuted any person concerning these crimes. This silence strengthens the view that the Mozambican government does not have the political will to find and prosecute those who are involved or may even be complicit in the violations.

Countering this situation, local as well as national initiatives and many others are taking place around the country. A number of different associations have been engaging in research on these issues over the last ten years. They include Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust, Moçambique (WLSA Moçambique), *Centro Terra Viva (CTV)*[1], *Centro de Integridade Pública (CIP)*[2], *Instituto de Estudos Socio-Económicos (IESE)*[3], *SEKELEKANI – Comunicação para o Desenvolvimento*[4], *KUWUKA JDA*[5], *Justiça Ambiental (JA)*[6], and *Cruzeiro do Sul – Instituto de Investigação para o Desenvolvimento José Negrão*[7]. Monitoring activities have been conducted by *Iniciativa de Transparência na Indústria Extractiva em Moçambique (ITIEM)*[8] and *Coligação Cívica sobre Indústria Extractiva*[9]. There is an increased awareness in civil society of how extractive activities are reproducing injustices and reinforcing old and new forms of discrimination against women and girls. The participation of Mozambican civil society organisations in regional networks; the development of joint research on extractive activities and their impact on women's and men's lives; advocacy and campaigning actions for reform conducive to long-term structural changes; together with the different alliance models on the African continent and the world at large, represent different forms of resistance and solidarity aiming at building an alternative post-extractivist African ecological vision.

A young Mozambican feminist[10] once referred to the grandmothers who participated in the armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism as the "Cinderellas of our Mozambique".[11] For her, this signified the simultaneous strength and perseverance of women in overcoming wartime challenges in their lives, and the realisation of the independence dream. We adopt this expression here as a significant indigenous metaphor to name those women[12] who continue resisting one of the faces of contemporary colonial oppression: the economic development model based on the violent and intensive extraction of natural resources. These women are restless fighters who are capable of formidable actions against unrelenting oppression. They are women who dare to tell their stories despite the risks. They treat ashes as if they were fire and hope as though it were

their sister. They weep and do not hide their anger at being abused, but they do not accept their abusers' impunity.

In writing this text, we have drawn both on theory and our empirical experiences over the past two years, especially those concerning our active participation in several events on extractive activities and conflicts in Mozambique and their impact on women's lives. In total, we conducted 50 interviews with women on this theme. Ten of the interviews were in Maputo, the capital of the country, and the other 40 in three northern provinces: Niassa, Nampula and Cabo Delgado, where extractive activities and systematic violence have been ongoing over the last six years. Thirty-eight of the 50 interviews were carried out in groups[13], in which 98 women participated in total. The women say they feel more confident when they are in groups and preferred to talk with us this way. Our other main sources of information include a series of three workshops held in Pemba (in February 2019) with the collaboration of the Department of Ethics, Citizenship and Development, College of Social and Political Sciences of the Catholic University. We also used the documentary *Terra em Suspenso/ Tierra en Suspenso* produced by our research team (Babagaza Studios and Gogoratuz, 2019).[14]

The women with whom we worked are mainly impoverished peasants. We also worked with teachers, journalists, students and social workers—active leaders in civic organisations based in Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa Provinces. The large majority (90) are adults, between 30 and 50 years of age. Despite wanting to speak to us, none of the women allowed us to mention their names or refer publicly to most of their comments and reflections. Women fear for their lives and those of their families because of the overall climate of repression and political harassment. In the northern provinces, women are also scared of potential attacks by different groups of insurgents and of how the latter may react to the women's testimonies if they were made public.[15]

We address the limitations imposed by this situation by referring instead to material which both resonates with what we heard during the fieldwork and which is available in other reports and the media. We draw particularly on Palmira Velasco's work—she is currently the researcher on the Natural Resources, Environment and Gender programme of SEKELEKANI, an independent centre that focuses on research and action in communication for development. Trained as a journalist, Velasco was previously the coordinator of the *Associação da Mulher*

na Comunicação Social.[16] Palmira Velasco is currently the only woman writing and publishing consistently on issues relating to natural resources. She travels to different parts of the country where violence and harrassment related to extractive activities are ongoing and when talking to those affected, she is the only person who pays special attention to women's living conditions and the violence they endure in their territories. We recognise the methodological drawbacks of this approach but note that they arise from the challenges of trying to do research in territories marked by armed conflict.

The rest of the article is structured in two principal sections. Our argument is twofold: on the one hand, that the present economic model based on extractivism is not producing wealth and well-being for the majority of the Mozambican people; and on the other, that these economic options are rooted in an androcentric and patriarchal rationality. In the first section, we conduct a critical feminist analysis of the contemporary political economy of Mozambique. The second section addresses the impact of the extractive economy on women and girls, with regard to access to land, sex and gender inequalities, relations between state and society, and pervasive violence. We also identify some of the possible causes of suffering, and some of the ideas of resistance and future alternatives led by women and their communities.

Extractivism in Mozambique

In 2008, global mining companies made major coal sector investments in mineral-rich Tete province. This was followed in 2010 by an even more significant development: natural gas reserves estimated at 150 trillion cubic feet were found in the Rovuma basin, off Cabo Delgado Province in the northern part of the country. This momentous growth of extractive activities is part of a wider process unfolding across much of sub-Saharan Africa, in Central and East Africa in particular. From the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda to Kenya and Tanzania, several states across the region are experiencing natural resource dynamics similar to those of Mozambique. Yet these activities and indeed the commodity super cycle have not led to a meaningful reduction in poverty and inequality in these countries.

Research shows that poverty remains a transversal and important problem (UNDP Mozambique, 2019); UNDP's (2018) human development analysis ranks

the country as one of the poorest in the world.[17] In spite of the growth rates and investments in the last two decades, "improvements in living standards have not been evenly spread across the country, with improvements heavily concentrated in urban areas and in the southern part of the country" (UNDP, *ibid.*).

Several social scientists in Mozambique have shown that the country is undergoing a period of extractivist neoliberal capitalism with heavy impacts on its economy and its social and political life (Silva *et al.*, 2015; Brito *et al.*, 2017; Osório and Silva, 2017, 2018). The country's economy is based on the systematic extraction of minerals and hydrocarbons, and on the intensive exploitation of fishing, forest, agricultural, and soil resources; this determines its place within the political economy of the international division of labour and production. According to Nuno Castel-Branco (2010: 29), "The mode of accumulation in Mozambique is predominantly extractive, and this characteristic was historically acquired and developed over time around specific interests of international capitalism, having contributed to create and consolidate an alliance between national capital and international capital".

The presence of major corporations that lead mining projects in Mozambique shows how attractive the country's resources are to transnational capital. Many extractive activities take the form of megaprojects—large-scale economic projects that are highly concentrated in a few sectors and which attract foreign investment mainly for export (Castel-Branco, 2010). Eduardo Bidaurratzaga and Artur Colom (2019) highlight the close connection between megaprojects and the extractive economy. This is evident in coal exploitation in Tete province, natural gas exploitation in Inhambane and Cabo Delgado, hydrocarbons in the Rovuma basin in Cabo Delgado, and the production of aluminium in the Mozal smelter in Maputo. The authors argue that an economy based on extractive, intensive exploitation and megaprojects severely restricts the creation and development of other production chains based on small and medium proximity economies which generate jobs and income. Consequently, economic diversity and endogenous production networks suffer drastic impacts or are destroyed.

Although financial-extractivist capital carries out capital-intensive operations, it does not have the capacity to create jobs for most people in the places where such projects are implemented. A major reason is that these businesses require skilled labour, which in most cases cannot be found locally and in the short term. Women tend to be more penalised because they hold lower or no qualifications

at all for the jobs available. It is estimated that the megaprojects developed in Mozambique between 1992 and 2010 represent only five per cent of the total available jobs while accumulating 70% of the capital generated (Bidaurratzaga and Colom, 2019, based on data published by UNCTAD, 2012).

Over the past decade, the economic vulnerability of the country has been confirmed by reports showing how the fall of commodity prices in the international market has affected foreign investment:

> FDI[18] flows to Africa slumped to $42 billion in 2017, a 21 per cent decline from 2016. Weak oil prices and harmful lingering effects from the commodity bust saw flows contract, especially in the larger commodity-exporting economies. FDI inflows to diversified exporters, including Ethiopia and Morocco, were relatively more resilient.
>
> (UNCTAD, 2018: 11)

This has resulted in weakened Mozambican capacity to implement redistributive policies, create jobs and properly address calamities such as the 2019 Idai and Kenneth cyclones and the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The country's over-indebtedness is yet another consequence mentioned by Bidaurratzaga and Colom (2019), since an extractive development model requires permanent development of infrastructure (roads, railways, ports and airports) serving these companies and their operations. However, the development of infrastructure does not really benefit territories and populations or the State's participation in the companies. Mozambican debt service increased from 0,34 % of the GDP in 2007 to 4,54% in 2016 while the country's gross debt increased from 37,5% of the GDP in 2011 to 120% five years later (World Bank, 2017). This situation has deteriorated even further due to a lack of transparency in the presentation of accounts concerning these government expenditures (Mosca and Selemane, 2012).

Another risk caused by the massive injection of foreign currency into the economy is what economists like to call the "Dutch disease", meaning an excessive or deregulated appreciation of national currency, which is detrimental to the competitiveness of national export-oriented companies (Bidaurratzaga and Colom, 2019). There has, in fact, been a massive transfer of the benefits generated by Mozambique's intense cycle of extractive activities to international corporations and local elites. Despite tax incentives granted to transnational corporations

operating in the country, the expected benefits, i.e. direct investment in the Mozambican economy and society, are not to be found. There has, instead, been a clear disconnection between the massive presence of foreign capital and the State's financial resources for enacting public policies that make a positive impact on the lives of people and their territories (Silva *et al.*, 2015: 195).

Whilst the mining sector of the Mozambican economy is responsible for no more than four per cent of the country's GDP, the latter grew by 11% in 2016 and is now considered the major driving force for economic growth in the country (AfDB/OCDE/PNUD, 2017; Bidaurratzaga and Colom, 2019). Between 2003 and 2008, GDP grew by about 55%, although "the percentage of the population living below the poverty line decreased only by 7% or even less, having increased in urban areas and in some rural areas" (Castel-Branco, 2010: 21). By 2014, economic growth had reached 7,2% in the first half of the year; yet 46% of the Mozambican population—at least 12 million people—were poor (World Bank, 2014). Mozambique is, therefore, experiencing a very complex socio-economic reality.

Wealth generated in the country, which should be used as a basis for fair redistribution among all Mozambicans, vanishes into thin air. The country and its people are left at the mercy of both gradual impoverishment, accompanied by feelings of injustice and abandonment, and the conflict generated and fed by scarcity of all sorts. This dissonance between economic growth and the improvement of the population's living conditions is one of the factors to be borne in mind regarding the social turbulence or even the violence that the country experiences, particularly in the northern provinces where poverty indices are even higher (Brito *et al.*, 2017; Weimer and Carrilho, 2017).

The contemporary situation may be described as a new kind of colonialism which, although not based on political occupation, operates via the imposition of economic and cultural as well as political relations of subjugation and exploitation carried out by the elites through their enterprises and through transnational corporations. This then is the context in which the living conditions of women and girls have undergone many setbacks.

Cinderellas of our Mozambique Speak and Sew Life Alternatives

Since 2000, many Mozambican non-governmental organisations, in particular those affiliated with *Fórum Mulher* (Women's Forum), have been participating

in national, regional, and international meetings on the mining industry and its impact on countries, with particular emphasis on its impact on women and girls. These regional meetings have provided important opportunities for exchanging information, learning, and disseminating alerts about what is happening in different countries. The meetings also provide opportunities for strengthening the resistance of women's groups so that they can organise themselves and put pressure on their respective governments. Women's demands are that their governments enforce the law and also mainstream gender and women's human rights from an African perspective into extractive activities.

Alliances such as those with Women in Mining Industries (WoMin[19]) have helped women to articulate efforts countering the concept of extractivist development. In Mozambique, WoMin works with the associations *Fórum Mulher*, *UNAC*,[20] *Justiça Ambiental* (JA)[21] and Hikone Mozambique.[22] Women's engagement in research, training and the exchange of information among organisations in various countries within the WoMin network has been crucial for strengthening their ability to challenge extractivist activities in the context of a neo-liberal, capitalist, racist and heteropatriarchal model of development.

The Cinderellas of our Mozambique Wish to Speak

Colonialism of all sorts, including the contemporary, is based on extreme exploitation and the suppression of any counter narrative about its destructive essence. Chinua Achebe (1994) once quoted a proverb that says, "Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter", which alerts us to the critical need to listen to the lion to know what really happens during the chase. But, in this proverb, a layer of silence remains, because it is actually the lioness who goes to hunt and bring back food for the family, including the lion. The story told by the lioness cannot be forgotten or silenced if we want to understand the hunt.

Many feminists (Mohanty, 1991; Mama, 1995, 2001; Amadiume, 1997, 1998; Oyewùmí, 2005; Pereira, 2008; McFadden, 2011; Casimiro; 2014b, 2015; Cunha, 2014, 2017, 2019) have shown how women, particularly African women, have been subjected to various forms of epistemic violence and how this compounds our marginality. Whether political, epistemological, economic or social, the contestation of any kind of single story is one of the most vivid rebellions against patriarchal

and colonial powers. This is why it is our epistemological choice to bring to light some of the words and initiatives pronounced and led by Mozambican women in areas of extractive activities. Together we raise powerful questions regarding the present master narrative on their own country.

The set of impacts and challenges generated by extractivist capital is rather complex, causing a wide range of personal and collective tragedies. Our research shows the impact of the extractive economy on the lives of women and girls in terms of land access, militarisation and violent conflicts, state-society relations, and sex/gender inequalities.

The Montepuez district, Cabo Delgado province, is one of the most fertile regions in Mozambique. Boasting a mild temperature, the main activity in the region is agriculture, producing corn, beans, sesame, tubers, sorghum, and rice. For this, Montepuez is called the province's granary. Market production results in income from the sale of cotton and cashew nuts. The subsistence model, where women are the core element and thus granted some power and authority in the household, has been exposed to continuous risk. Research conducted by SEKELEKANI's team at the ruby mines in the district indicates that:

> A poor northern Mozambican town [was] transformed in a period of five years into a sought-after destination for hordes of citizens of varied nationalities who, given the circulation of relatively large amounts of cash, cause social destabilisation in the local community, destroying families, causing divorces, early marriages, and prostitution, and generating a further spread of sexually transmitted infections. (Velasco, 2017: 11)

Palmira Velasco's words above convey the incredible violence which the women experience daily. The "hordes" refer to the influx of men of all nationalities into the communities, whose behaviour is extremely aggressive against women: harassing, abusing, and raping them at every opportunity. The resulting atmosphere of permanent violence is described by Mariam[23] below:

> *Nós não somos pessoas, nós somos como cabritos. Eles vêm e queimam as casas, levam as mulheres e fazem-nas suas esposas. Para dormir temos que ir para o mato e dormir como os leões. Nós não queremos viver assim.*
>
> We are not persons, we are like goats. They come, they burn the houses, they take the women and make them their spouses. To sleep we have to go to the bushes and sleep like the lions. We do not want to live like this.[24]

Women and men were deprived of their land and displaced to regions where the soil was infertile, lacking water, transportation, and markets. One of the consequences has been a splitting of families, which increases female loneliness and means additional family duties to take on, whilst violence against women goes increasingly unpunished (Osório and Silva, 2017: 153-160). Having lost access to their lands, which puts their food security and sovereignty at risk, some Namanhumbir women in Cabo Delgado province are forced to participate in activities that are complementary to prospection, such as selling water and preparing food.

The current situation created by extractivist capital and its activities in Mozambique has a specific characteristic that deserves special attention: the growing militarisation and aggressive policing of the territories. In addition to the presence of military people, this translates into a violence-based culture of addressing conflict—one of continual threat, dread and the inability to speak out or denounce for fear of being considered to be against development, or to be a government enemy, or even a terrorist. Women and men suffer together from this violence. Yet in these districts and provinces, since women are mainly responsible for subsistence agriculture (work in the *machambas*[25]), they experience particular dramas:

> Women from Olinda, a small island in the Mucupia Administrative Post, Inhassunge district, in the Province of Zambezia, are terrified due to the climate of intimidation and persecution that prevails in the island since a deployment of the *Unidade de Intervenção Rápida* (rapid intervention unit) (UIR) moved here on a permanent basis. Last July the police opened fire on helpless members of the population, causing one death and several wounded people, besides arresting others, including the village leader. The peasants were holding a peaceful demonstration, protesting against the government plan to remove them from their lands which, in the meantime, had been granted to a Chinese company that wants to exploit heavy sands there. [...] They tell us to go to Cherrimane, but the land there is not enough even for the natives, who cultivate *machambas* here in our island. (Velasco, 2018: 3)

The same climate of intimidation is depicted in testimonies of how community consultations processes have been conducted, or not. Although required by law,

community consultations are often not carried out, which leaves communities feeling abandoned or harassed by the State. Instead, the State comes to the defence of investing companies while failing to safeguard the rights and the lives of its citizens. In the few meetings organised by the district or the local authorities with communities affected by some project, the populace is typically told: "*Vão ter escola, posto de saúde, trabalho*" ("You are going to have a school, a health clinic, work"). Or "*Vão ser mais ricos, vão criar barrigas grandes*" ("You are going to be wealthy, to grow a big belly") (*ibid.)*. Raising expectations of well-being further increases their subsequent feeling of powerlessness in the face of unfulfilled promises and the violence of such processes, especially when accompanied by impunity. "*O reassentamento é desterro*" ("Resettlement is exile"), they say. "*Este capitalismo é como uma calamidade: mata*" ("This capitalism is like a calamity: it kills").[26]

This sense of injustice and helplessness was expressed consistently by women in the interviews we carried out. The same unfortunate experiences were repeatedly shared in assemblies, meetings and seminars such as those held in Maputo[27]. During an interview in Maputo, the situation endured by people and communities in Mocimboa da Praia and Palma (in Cabo Delgado province) was described by a woman who wants to remain anonymous, as the epitome of "*Faída*!" ("Profit and greed!").

A second aspect of the extractivist economy concerns the androcentric nature of this capitalist rationality which creates many new problems for women of all ages whilst reinforcing underlying problems which might otherwise have been resolved. Large-scale mining operations are places dominated by a male workforce, where informal and smaller-scale practices carried out by women and children tend to be disregarded. Women and girls are experiencing these problems acutely due to the sharpening of the dominant sexual division of labour. Since women are supposed to provide food and drinking water daily for their families, despite the living conditions, they are under increased pressure and feel overwhelmed by their "duties". There is less fertile land and it is further away from home. Water supplies are poisoned or access to them is more difficult because of the violent episodes related to mining. Women's workload increases as does their vulnerability to sexual abuse. We notice, too, that in the context of scarcity of food and clean water, domestic violence against women and girls increases. At the same time, cultural

norms which prevent females from carrying out certain activities as remunerated jobs or from participating in economic life are being reinforced:

> Trade is male-dominated. Men are the ones who travel to the cities of Montepuez or Pemba to buy products to be resold in the local markets. The few women who are involved in business mostly sell water to artisan miners, usually known as *garimpeiros*. (Velasco, 2017: 11)

The situation in Cabo Delgado is mostly as described below:

> Women in Namanhumbir say that they lack access to paid work at Montepuez Ruby Mining, the mining company. They had hoped that they would be able to improve their life with this job opportunity, as was much trumpeted during community consultations. Most women who have been hired by MRM come from Nampula and Montepuez and they are mostly in charge of kitchen duties, first-aid, and security services (Velasco, 2017: 13).

Practices that are harmful to women's bodies and subjectivities are reinforced and their subaltern position deepened, while the violence perpetrated against them goes unpunished. Their work and responsibilities are relegated to a subsidiary, undignified place, and transformed into intensively exploitative relations in the family, the community and in the workplace. The androcentric nature of this extractivist model activates a disconnection which further emphasises the segmentation between economy and life, reducing women's place and functions in their societies to endless duties with no right to the enjoyment of benefits or well-being. These are concrete manifestations of the destructive power of the hetero-patriarchy that lies at the core of extractivist capitalism.

An additional feature of the extractivist economy is the extreme violence involved in all these processes: military and police violence in conflict resolution; violence against women in the increasing commodification of their bodies in order to survive; the violence of abandonment; the institutional violence of the failure to comply with norms and legislation, and the associated unaccountability and impunity; the violence against subjectivities, depriving people of their memories and self-esteem through the destruction of their territories and their ability to represent the world as theirs. Violence and aggression are other names for this capitalist rationality which informs the current global political economy whose presence can be felt in Mozambique. It is crucial that we understand how this

reality reveals the contradiction between capital and life, or, to use specific feminist terminology, it shows the androcentric nature of contemporary extractivist political-economic rationality which favours and fuels violent, autocratic masculinities among both perpetrators and victims.

It is important that we introduce an element of analytic precaution here. Many of the forms of violence against women and girls identified in Mozambique, such as sexual abuse, forced marriages, early pregnancies and all kinds of domestic violence, are seen by several feminists (Osório and Silva, 2017, 2018) as being rooted in local customs. However, we should not forget that culture and customs are vibrant, dynamic, and constantly reinvented. What we call tradition or culture is, to a great extent, the result of permanent exposure to all sorts of influences and contexts. Thus, it is important to remember that centuries of colonialism and sexual, social, and epistemic violence brought and imposed by this system have played, and continue to play, an active role in the reconfiguration of what is presented as genuine and traditional. By this we mean that there are strong reasons to believe that these forms of violence against women and girls, as well as the problematic relationship with the land, still retain much of their colonial heritage and have not been freed from the contradictions inherent in the western rationality that shapes them (Pereira, 2008).

In our view, Mozambican women, as well as many men, have been subjected to a process of objectification as if they, both women and men, were also natural resources to be endlessly exploited through their work, the abuse they face, and old and new forms of dispossession of their humanity and wealth. In spite of this extremely hostile environment and all the hardships they endure, Mozambican women and girls have been engaged in reflection and action, building alternatives that promote their human dignity as well as the possibility of a future for themselves and their children (Cunha, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2019; Casimiro, 2014a and b, 2015; Casimiro and Trindade, 2019).

The Cinderellas of our Mozambique Want to Break Out of their Glass Slippers

This section highlights resistance by the Cinderellas of Mozambique and also the emergence of alternatives. We draw on different sources of information circulating among the scientific communities, social movements, the media and social media,

and our own empirical research. Sewing these different forms of resistance together requires a rationality that does not waste experiences, a rationality that promotes dialogues which can help restore hope as an epistemological category.

Our research team held three workshops in close collaboration with the Catholic University of Mozambique in Pemba. The knowledge and information generated in these workshops was grounded in lived experiences which included acts of resistance and perspectives on alternatives. Thirty-eight persons participated – intellectuals, local authorities, leaders of civic organisations, and religious authorities. They came from Montepuez, Pemba, Namanhumbir and Palma districts. Only nine women attended the workshops, largely due to lack of security. The women avoided using their names, preferring instead to appear as members of organisations or groups of citizens. The collective voice is much safer for all.

In Table 1, we systematise two elements. Firstly, we analyse the problems and challenges experienced, interpreted and voiced by the workshop participants, living as they do in one of the most critical areas of extractive activities within Cabo Delgado province. The second element lists the alternatives imagined by the women and men involved and the kind of initiatives they have been constructing to counter their own misery and exploitation.

Table 1. From challenges to the imagination of justice

Problems and challenges	Initiatives and outcomes
Access to the land Lack of access to fertile land. Degradation of urban infrastructure and public spaces.	For communities hosting displaced populations, public claiming of rights concerning land redistribution and access to other resources. *Fórum Urbano Permanente* (Permanent Urban Forum) (PLATIP).
Exclusion and social inequalities Lack of jobs and housing opportunities. Ethnic and tribal conflicts concerning immigrants. Women's subjugation to their husbands in the household. Increase in the number of forced and adolescent marriages. Sexual harassment in schools and within the family.	

Governance and participation	
Corruption.	Training of paralegals to work in all districts.
Lack of transparency; not enough governance monitoring initiatives.	Use of local community radio stations.
Inaccessible accountability mechanisms.	Dissemination and training population on *Lei de Terras* (land law) and *Lei do Reassentamento* (resettlement law), *Lei do Ambiente* (environmental law), *Lei sobre Minas* (mining law), *Lei da Floresta e Fauna Bravia* (forest and wild fauna law), rights and duties of displaced people and right to information.
Absence of law enforcement.	Short courses on human rights and professional ethics.
Communities and local leaders not included in community consultations.	Establishment of a Leaders' Council annual assembly for accountability to members and planning. Municipal Observatory Programmes and Participatory Budgeting Programmes. Public debates - *Fórum Terraço Aberto*. Peaceful demonstrations demanding that communities be shown the respect that they deserve.
Violence	
Rape and sexual violence against women.	Communities report cases of rape. Silence is gradually being broken by reports, claims, and participation in democracy.
Violence against prostitutes and sexual exploitation in mining areas.	A green line is available for reporting and displayed in most sectors. Peaceful demonstrations demanding that communities be shown the respect that they deserve.

As we can see, women and men resist, in the most diverse ways, the threats impinging on their lands, their ways of life, their bodies and their community life, weaving together different life prospects. Within the dominant hetero-patriarchal and colonialist capitalist model, the struggles of these populations, especially of women, are often ignored and left undocumented by both researchers and journalists. The challenges are many and varied, from the domination of women's organisations affiliated with specific political parties to the increasing criminalisation of feminist organisations that raise their voices against crimes and violations, demanding global systemic changes. Many things are yet to be done but the rise in awareness and analytical thinking is already apparent from the contents of this table.

The climate of resistance and opposition to lived and imposed situations has its own voices and specific strategies to which we must pay attention so as to deepen understanding of how things are developing on the ground. At the village of Quitupo, during a meeting with the Administrator and the female Permanent Secretary of the provincial government of Cabo Delgado on 10 August 2013, the populace made it impossible for the meeting to continue, booing the government representatives and leaving the room, as described below:

> During this meeting, a team from Anadarko, the oil multinational, accompanied by two government officials, imparted this news to the local communities 'in a single strike': (1) a DUAT (certificate of the right to use the land) had been issued on their lands benefiting Anadarko AMI1 and ENH Logistics; and, as a consequence (2) people would be removed and resettled in a different region. Quite simply! Since they were getting this news with virtually no previous preparation or information, the populations asked for explanations and, on receiving none, they abandoned the place and the authorities' representatives (Mário and Bila, 2015: 5).

During the First Congress of Displaced and Affected Communities by extractivist projects in Mozambique, organised by the Civic Coalition Against Extractivism (*Coligação Cívica sobre Indústria Extractiva*, 2019), there was a session called "Narration of suffering". Men and women from different provinces of Mozambique narrated their suffering since the first experiences of extractivism in Inhambane, about the ways they were challenged and mistreated by the multinationals and by

government officials, showing how the places where these industries are located have been affected. Maria Sincreia, from Bagamoyo village, Tete province, stated during the meeting:

> *Dantes tínhamos as torneiras a jorrar água, tínhamos os riachos. Agora estamos entre a linha férrea, quando o comboio passa apanhamos a poluição. "Vão ter escola, posto de saúde, trabalho", disseram-nos em 2002. Até agora só temos um posto de saúde.*
>
> Before we used to have taps spouting water, we had streams. Now we are between the railway; when the train passes we catch the pollution. "You will have schools, health centres and jobs," they said in 2002. So far, we just have one health centre.[28]

On 13 February 2019, a team from the *Territórios em Conflicto* project[29] met women and men from Afungi Peninsula, displaced from their communities in Pemba. The Liquified Natural Gas factory is being built in their villages. They recounted the suffering they had endured since they were first approached by Anadarko and government officials. They were so badly treated that they decided to work together with members of the *Centro Terra Viva*. A local leader, a woman who identifies herself as Aicha, contrasted their situation with that of another village:

> *Em 2014 a empresa pediu às pessoas da vila de Mondlane para aceitar as pessoas de Quitupo. Quitupo e Mondlane são família. Mas não nos perguntaram e não são as pessoas de Quitupo que querem sair. Eles vão ter casas e nós? A resposta foi que seríamos tratados por igual e que receberíamos os mesmo benefícios que os de Quitupo.*
>
> In 2014 the enterprise asked the people from Mondlane village to accept the people from Quitupo village. Mondlane and Quitupo are family. But they didn't ask us and it is not the people from Quitupo who want to leave. They will have houses and what about us? The answer was that we would be treated equally and that we would receive the same benefits as Quitupo.[30]

However, nothing was done to support the displaced people and the host communities.

Overall, our research emphasises the remarkable level of perception and detail of people's analyses of the different types of violence that women and girls are subjected to: forced sex work, marriage, imposed illiteracy, harassment, no

power to participate and make decisions, and inequality in access to land. A nearly complete catalogue of physical, structural, and cultural violence is introduced into the discussion. This shows that there is a collective awareness of the extent and intensity of the problem as well as genuine concern regarding the situation and its impact on both women and the community. Among the initiatives identified, however, none is directly related to these issues and nothing is explicitly mentioned concerning concrete forms of protection or cultural change. In our view, this shows how extremely sensitive and deeply societal the issues are, which makes them almost untouchable. The problem is acknowledged but, besides posing difficulties, responses would require exposing the many premises that naturalise women's supposedly ontological inferiority. Apparently, the society is not ready for that.

People's expectations of change lie mostly with the effectiveness of good governance as well as with education as a possible means to change the current state of affairs. In these dialogues, it is interesting to note how there is a strong belief among community members that the Law, the State, the School are key to peacefully and positively solving their problems. This suggests that both the State's social and regulatory functions should be among our concerns when imagining life and emancipation alternatives. Despite the evidence of legal pluralism in Mozambique as well as government regimes which are closely interwoven with customs and other culturally contextualised practices, this appears not to preclude the will of community members for co-existence and the mutual enhancement of the institutions that can guarantee peace, security, social and sexual justice.

In view of the challenges identified, women and girls stressed that one of the key elements of their resistance lies in organisation "*so that they won't be alone and divided.*"[31] This is the women's way of counteracting the government and the companies' divisive strategies, by reinventing forms of association and union among men and women to defend their land, their livelihoods, and their ways of life.

The Cinderellas of our Mozambique want to be seen as women who resist misfortune and play an active role in ending their captivity. They do not wait for salvation by the prince—any kind of prince; they wish to speak out to say what they believe must be said. They speak and yell, if need be, not only to denounce but also to build different, positive subjectivities, personal and collective skills, spaces of liberation and happiness that do not hide or mask the perils in their lives where everything seems to be lacking.

The alternatives identified by the Cinderellas of our Mozambique may not be fully-fledged alternatives. They are signs, incomplete solutions; they are acts of care, for themselves, their land, and the people that form part of their mode of producing dignity, respect, and happiness. Despite the fact that their resistance to the violence of extractivism is unfinished and fragile, the Cinderellas of our Mozambique want to express their ideas, analyses and proposals for change.

The absence of solutions and actions concerning the increasing inequalities between men and women, and the increase in violence against women driven by the extractive activities within the country, shows the genuine importance of these issues for planning and developing collective, feminist life alternatives. Let us summarise two ideas that are at the core of our feminist approach to extractivism in Mozambique. The first has to do with the androcentric nature of western modern rationality that disparages and subjects women, their bodies and labours to the idea of a certain masculinity taken as the measure of all things. The second idea is that, although they are actively present in their societies, acting, thinking, and breaking their glass slippers, the Cinderellas of our Mozambique continue to have to do more than all men and boys to make themselves heard and understood, and to include the terms on which they want to see their lives freed from duress and violence in the agendas of struggle and collective process.

Final remarks

Enormous challenges are being experienced in Mozambique, especially in the northern provinces of the country where extractivist activities are particularly concentrated. In roughly a decade and a half, life there has undergone major changes for most people. The presence of foreign corporations and their extractive activities, the arrival of many people from other places, and, more recently, the extreme violence perpetrated against the populace have caused stupor, a condition of vulnerability that is worsening by the day, generating a feeling of insecurity, besides some perplexity, among the population. The number of areas where these problems emerge is so vast that we believe we are in the midst of a situation that is highly complex and dangerous, with an impact on nearly all spheres of personal and community life.

Our collaborative feminist methodology, centring local women's conditions and perspectives, afforded us an insight into the causes of the daily suffering

experienced by women and girls in contemporary Mozambique. From our academic and activist experiences, we learn that women's knowledges, born of their experiences of suffering, are not only modes of *existence* but also modes of *resistance* that seek alternatives to violence, dispossession, and mourning. With the women, we learn that all oppression must be met with resistance. We argue that there are no victims, only people who are victimised; no silences, only forms of silencing.

Despite all the kinds of victimisation that Mozambican women in northern provinces are subjected to, they do not tend to remain in absolute silence and allow themselves to be paralysed by suffering. We were able to identify varied forms of resistance in the different spaces of extractivist exploitation as well as the emancipatory, liberating emergences that they bring to light. Although the outcomes may seem rather modest in the face of the magnitude and complexity of the problems, increased feminist attention will allow us to understand that hope and perseverance should also be considered epistemological categories that enable us all to imagine the feminist transformation that we pursue. They demonstrate the importance of bonds, of rationalities involved in mutual obligations and the acknowledgement that individual humanity is only possible by recognising the humanity of all women and men, and that there is no individual emancipation without collective emancipation.

Endnotes

1. Centre for Living Earth
2. Centre for Public Integrity
3. Institute of Socio-Economic Studies
4. *SEKELEKANI* – Communication for Development. In the Rhonga language, "Sekelekani" means "Rise Up".
5. *Kuwuka JDA* (*Juventude, Desenvolvimento e Advocacia Ambiental*) – Kuwuka Youth, Development and Environmental Advocacy. In the Chope language, "Kuwuka" means "Wake up".
6. Environmental Justice
7. Southern Cross – Research Institute for Development José Negrão
8. Mozambique Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
9. Civic Coalition Against Extractivism
10. She did not wish to be named.

11. An expression used by Luisa (pseudonym) when interviewed by Isabel Casimiro and Withney Sabino in 2018 during field work for the project "Confronting dialogues: Women's emancipatory trajectories, constructions and pathways in the PALOP's: Guiné-Bissau, Cabo Verde and Mozambique", financed by CODESRIA.
12. Our aim here is not to discuss the colonial, heteronormative potential of the concept of "woman" as a universal category. This has been discussed by Ifi Amadiume, Patricia McFadden, Teresa Cunha, Chandra Mohanty, María Lugones, Sílvia Cusicanquí, Oyewùmí Oyèrónké, among many others. However, we wish to acknowledge this debate and state that we share the criticism produced by these and other feminist authors.
13. These were not organised focus groups, but they functioned as such.
14. All these activities were developed in the framework of an international research project, "*Territórios em Conflito: investigação, formação e acção para o fortalecimento de capacidades e a construção de alternativas de vida*" ("Territories in Conflict: research, training and action to strengthen capacity and construct life alternatives") led by the University of the Basque Country, University Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique, University of Tolima, Colombia and the University of Coimbra, Portugal.
15. Whilst the insurgency in Cabo Delgado appears to have begun with local youths' involvement in Islamist radicalisation (it is referred to locally as al Shabaab) (Chichava, 2020; Forquilha and Pereira, 2020), the situation today is much more complex than two years ago when we carried out our research for this article. Many other actors have since carried out acts of violence, like the Mozambican Defence and Security Forces (FDS) and mercenaries (Russian and South African) engaged by the government. In 2019, the first claims from the Islamic State began to appear regarding responsibility for attacks, although there is no solid evidence for such claims (Forquilha and Pereira, 2020). Additional actors include the security forces of transnational corporations currently exploiting the hydrocarbon reserves as well as the Asian (Pakistani, Afghan) organised crime networks trading with heroin that cross Africa through this continental corridor on their way to Europe and the US.
16. Association of Women in Social Communication (i.e. Communication for Social Change)
17. Mozambique is ranked 180 out of 189 countries analysed.
18. Foreign Direct Investment.
19. http://womin.org.za/who-we-are/what-is-womin.html
20. *União Nacional de Camponeses* – National Peasants Union.

21. Environmental Justice.
22. Hikone Mozambique – Women's Empowerment Association, protecting women's rights in extractive areas.
23. Mariam is the pseudonym of a lady from the village of Macomia, Cabo Delagado province. She agreed to be interviewed by the authors during the International Conference "Islamist Insurgencies in Africa: History, dynamics and comparison", 5 December 2019 and allowed us to use her words.
24. Translation by the authors.
25. Plot of land.
26. Symposium on "Extractivism and Socioeconomic Development – Challenges and Opportunities", Maputo, 12 June 2019. Translation from Portuguese to English by the authors.
27. "Narration of suffering. First Congress of displaced and affected communities by extractivist projects in Mozambique", Maputo, 13-14 January 2019. Transcribed and translated by the authors, who participated in this meeting.
28. Maria Sincreia validated her statement and gave us permission to use it.
29. Project Territories in Conflict. Isabel Casimiro, Alda Salomão, Boaventura Monjane and members of the CTV, *Centro Terra Viva* – Centre for Living Earth.
30. Transcribed and translated by the authors, who participated in this meeting. Its use was allowed without referring to the name.
31. Excerpt of a woman's intervention during the workshop on Exclusion and Social Inequalities, Pemba, 6 February 2019.

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"Walking into Slavery with Our Eyes Open"[1] – the Space for Resisting Genetically Modified Crops in Nigeria[2]

Charmaine Pereira

Abstract

This study focuses on genetic modification of cowpea, a food crop grown predominantly by poor men and women in Nigeria and an important source of protein for the poor. The official justification for genetic modification is that it promotes resistance to the Maruca insect, which is said to be capable of destroying up to 80% of a farmer's crop. The genetic engineering of food sources represents an extension of resources for extractive activities from the traditional extractive sectors (oil, gas and solid minerals) to the commodification of life, all in the relentless pursuit of profit. In this article, I take up the question of what has made it possible for genetically modified (GM) crops to be adopted in Nigeria. I begin by exploring the sources of support for such an initiative, their interconnections and their interests in promoting the development of GM crops. This is followed by a feminist analysis of the intellectual politics of this regime and its contested interpretations of science in relation to the development and promotion of GM crops in Nigeria. Finally, I explore the space for resistance to GM crops in the country. Organised resistance has emphasised the risks of inadequate regulation of biotechnology, the damaging environmental consequences, and the threats to food sovereignty. While this is necessary, it is not sufficient. What is missing are feminist perspectives highlighting the extraction of women's labour underpinning the process, as well as the gendered character of access to, and control over, land in the making of livelihoods.

Keywords: Nigeria, genetic modification, cowpea, biotech corporations, intellectual politics

Introduction

The appearance of genetically modified[3] (GM) crops on the agricultural front in Nigeria is relatively recent. In 2016, the National Biosafety Management Agency placed a public notice in one of the national newspapers announcing that Monsanto, now owned by Bayer, was seeking approval for the environmental release and placing on the market of GM cotton (HOMEF and ERA/FoEN, 2016a). This was the first time that the public was notified of such activity. Neighbouring Burkina Faso had introduced Monsanto's pest resistant GM cotton to the country in 2008-2009, following the threat posed to their high-quality home-grown cotton crops by bollworm. The result was a crop that was pest-free and far more abundant. The adoption rate of the new GM seeds increased rapidly and by 2014, they had covered 70% of the cotton area (Sanou *et al.*, 2018). The problem, however, was that the fibre length of the GM crop was shorter and this was due to the Bollgard II variety of GM cotton used (*ibid.*). Overall quality was affected and there was a problem selling the cotton. Although cotton farmers made more money, the new seeds increased their financial risk, according to a study by the French Centre for International Co-operation in Agricultural Research for Development, CIRAD.[4] By December 2016, Burkina Faso had ended the partnership with Monsanto (Bavier, 2017). Yet it is Bollgard II cotton that is now being introduced into Nigeria.

More insidiously, GM technology is now being utilised in Nigeria to develop food crops. The primary focus of this study is GM cowpea, which was approved for commercial release by the National Biosafety Management Agency in January 2019. Cowpea is a crop grown predominantly by poor men and women; in many places it is viewed as a "women's crop". Women generally derive their main source of income from cowpea through processing rather than farming the crop (ACB, 2015). The main argument advanced by policy actors and scientists in support of developing GM cowpea is that it promotes resistance to the maruca insect, which is said to be capable of destroying between 50-80% of a farmer's crop.[5]

Greater policy emphasis on agriculture has taken place in the context of efforts to diversify the Nigerian economy and shift it from its overdependence on oil. Decades of malgovernance, corruption and impunity have entrenched poverty and unemployment in rural and urban areas. Increasing land scarcity and competition for land and water resources among different ethnic and occupational groups in rural communities, which politicians and elites have manipulated to serve their own interests, have resulted in numerous inter-communal conflicts

(Higazi, 2020; Nagarajan, 2020). The pressures on land have been intensified by environmental decline, particularly desertification in the north and erosion in central states, in addition to deforestation (Egwu, 2015). In recent years, armed conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and farmers in rural communities have escalated rapidly. The state's failure to ensure people's security has enabled armed criminal gangs to take over ungoverned rural territories and there have been debilitating levels of cattle rustling (Ibrahim, 2014). Violence in rural areas includes armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and village raiding; it has resulted in young men being killed, women raped, and farm produce destroyed (Nagarajan, 2020). As Kyari Mohammed and Chinyere Alimba (2015: 168) point out, "banditry is both a symptom and a cause of rural underdevelopment".

Agricultural policy has proceeded as if insulated from the insecurity surrounding people and agricultural production that results from rural banditry. Nigeria's uptake of GM technology is situated within the government's policy focus on agriculture as a business. The Buhari government's Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016-2020)—the Green Alternative—views agriculture as "key to long-term growth and security" via "government-enabled, private-sector led engagement".[6] Yet farmers using GM crops will ultimately be forced to buy patented GM seeds, resulting in loss of control over conventional seeds for all farmers whilst decreasing women farmers' control over production even further. This can *increase* food insecurity and potentially harm nutrition (Austin-Evelyn, 2011). Nigeria's willingness to adopt risky technology that will result in the loss of autonomy on multiple fronts lies behind the depiction of the current situation as one of "walking into slavery with our eyes open".[7] At the 2011 World Social Forum in Dakar, African women farmers demanded locally grown solutions to farming problems. The Dakar Declaration[8] emphasised the importance of retaining traditional farming practices created by women as well as the need to increase communication amongst rural women farmers to implement ecological solutions as opposed to GM products (*ibid.*).

GM crops are conceptualised here as products of an extractivist economic order. While the oil industry is the archetypal extractive industry, extraction as a mode of accumulation (i.e. extractivism) applies to the removal and depletion of other natural resources too, such as farming, forestry and fishing (Acosta, 2013). Five decades ago, India's "Green Revolution" involved the promotion of a package

of GM seeds, agrochemicals and improved irrigation. Not only did the use of GM seeds reduce genetic diversity among crops and increase their vulnerability to pests, it also damaged the soil, impoverished small farmers and contributed to social conflicts, ultimately resulting in large numbers of farmers being displaced from their land (Shiva, 1991). The depletion of genetic and other resources heralded by the advent of genetic engineering has been referred to as "launch[ing] a new phase in the *industrialisation of life* that has already begun to modify food, trade, land use, livelihoods, cultures and the genetic characteristics of the living world" (ETC Group, 2018a: 4, emphasis added). Women's reproductive work not only subsidises the poor wages of workers in extractivist enterprises but is relied upon to make up for the ensuing degradation of natural resources (WoMIN, 2013; Randriamaro, 2018). Women will be the ones expected to deal with the potentially harmful consequences of risky technologies and bear any additional responsibilities of making ends meet as well as caring for the sick and elderly.

In this article, I take up the question of what has made it possible for GM crops to be adopted in Nigeria. I begin by exploring the sources of support for such an initiative, their interconnections, and their interests in promoting the development of GM crops. This is followed by a feminist analysis of the intellectual politics of this regime and its contested interpretations of science in relation to the development and promotion of GM crops in Nigeria. Finally, I explore the space for resistance to GM crops in the country.

Promoting GM Crops in Nigeria

The main agrochemical and seed firms in Nigeria are Bayer and ChemChina. The acquisitions of Monsanto by Bayer (for $63 billion) and Syngenta by ChemChina (for $43 billion) were announced in 2016. Although Bayer is now Monsanto's sole shareholder and has acquired all of Monsanto's seed products and herbicides, Monsanto's name is dropped from the new corporate entity (DeutscheWelle, 2018). The consolidation of financial and technological power in the new agribusinesses is enormous (Howard, 2018). Biotech corporations do not operate on the African continent in isolation, however; they are enmeshed in a transnational web of institutions, networks and partnerships in industry, philanthropy, government, and science.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation puts vast sums of money into agriculture and public health. Each of these fields has changed considerably as

a result of such interventions. Philip Bereano (2017: section 1, para. 8) states that "The Foundation's support for agricultural development favours industrial high-tech, capitalist market approaches." The Foundation's "clear preference for technological solutions over those that address systemic or social ills" (Freschi and Sheikh, 2011: section 3, para. 2), evident in the public health field, also applies to its approach to agriculture. Such an approach avoids dealing with difficult issues such as social inequality, geopolitical relations, corruption at national levels, and human rights abuses (*ibid.*). Using the market to fulfil ostensibly philanthropic goals means there is an expectation of financial returns or secondary benefits from investments in social programmes. Consequently, philanthropy becomes "another part of the engine of profit and corporate control. The Gates' Foundation's strategy for 'development' actually promotes neoliberal economic policies and corporate globalisation" (Bereano, 2017: section 2, para. 1).

The sheer amount of money donated by the Foundation results in the exertion of an inordinate amount of influence on national governments, researchers, the media, and the broader society. The Foundation is the fifth largest donor to agriculture in developing countries (Curtis, 2016). Between 2009 and 2011, the Foundation spent $478,302,627 on agricultural development in Africa. Regular access to world leaders and financial support of universities, international organisations, NGOs, and media outlets has meant that Bill Gates "has become the single most influential voice in international development". Yet "the Foundation's grants do not support locally defined priorities, do not fit within the holistic approach urged by many development experts, and do not investigate the long-term effectiveness and risks of genetic modification" (Bereano, 2017: section 4, para. 2).

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's funding of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is a significant mechanism for the exercise of its influence. AGRA claims to be independent yet has two Gates Foundation leaders on its Board.[9] In order to develop Nigeria's huge potential for agricultural development, AGRA targets smallholder farmers while promoting private sector investment, which is predominantly the domain of biotech corporations such as Bayer and others in the GM industry.[10]

The US government actively promotes GM agriculture in African countries through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID's

advancement of US interests in general are to "promote American prosperity through investments that expand markets for U.S. exports; create a level playing field for U.S. businesses; and support more stable, resilient, and democratic societies."[11] The US government increasingly uses multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements and high-level diplomatic pressure to push countries towards the adoption of corporate-friendly regulations regarding GM crops (GRAIN, 2005). USAID works closely with other donors such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the GM industry. Pro-GM advocacy groups funded by USAID and other donors include the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), whose headquarters are in Nairobi, Kenya, and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), headquartered in Ibadan, Nigeria (*ibid*.).

In January 2001, an international gathering of cowpea scientists and stakeholders at a meeting in Dakar, Senegal, decided that the only solution to the endemic problem of maruca pod borers affecting cowpea was to use genetic modification. That group subsequently named itself the Network for the Genetic Improvement of Cowpea for Africa (NGICA); its website is hosted by Purdue University. Members come from North America, South America, Europe and Australia as well as Africa. NGICA's activities include raising financial support for research to genetically transform cowpea, forming a partnership with the AATF to increase cowpea productivity and uptake in Africa, and helping the AATF gain access to the gene used in cowpea genetic transformation (NGICA, n.d.).[12]

USAID supported NGICA's partnership with the AATF, which is described as an activity that "will directly benefit women, who form the majority of the cowpea growers. [...] It is estimated that 90% of this benefit will occur in Nigeria because it is the largest cowpea producer in Africa".[13] It should be pointed out, however, that whilst women grow cowpea in Nigeria, it is primarily in the context of subsistence farming; women generally do not grow cowpea as a cash crop. It cannot therefore be assumed that women cowpea growers would be able to afford the cost of GM seeds. Moreover, genetic modification of cowpea does not eliminate the need for chemicals since cowpea is affected by insects other than maruca, such as aphids and thrips, as well as diseases such as leaf spots, leaf rust, bacterial blight and fungal diseases.[14] Even if women had access to the chemicals needed to remove all the above, the costs could be prohibitive. The reference to women being direct beneficiaries of GM cowpea appears to be an instrumentalisation of women to serve the interests of this particular partnership.

Transnational biotech corporations and the proponents of genetically engineered crops would be unable to make much headway without the support of national governments. In 2006, the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) was established as a partnership between the AATF and host country organisations. The latter are mostly government bodies which act as secretariats for the Forum. According to OFAB, "the raging debate between proponents and opponents of biotechnology where scientific facts are often mixed with social, ethical and political considerations cause (sic) confusion."[15] As a result, policy makers faced with "a rapidly growing population, declining agricultural productivity, climate change and reduced resources available for agricultural research" are "looking for guidance".[16] OFAB, it appears, is here to provide that guidance. The Forum currently operates in seven African countries—Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda—and is funded by the Gates Foundation.[17] In 2009, OFAB Nigeria was launched by the AATF in partnership with the National Biotechnology Development Agency and the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria.[18]

It is noteworthy that OFAB refers to opponents of GM crops in Africa as "mix[ing]" scientific facts with "social, ethical and political considerations". Yet analysts such as Lodewijk Van Dycke and Geertrui Van Overwalle (2017: 8) point out that "nowadays even agronomists have come to realise that agricultural policy issues do not only involve technical and agronomic issues, but also political, societal and ethical questions." Recognising that policy decision-making is embedded in multi-layered power relations and therefore requires the participation of diverse constituencies, is simply not equivalent to "mixing" facts, scientific or otherwise. Agribusiness thus engages in concerted efforts to marginalise its critics whilst presenting its own partisan stance as value-free and "objective" science.

The fact that extra-scientific relations are implicated in policy directions is clear from the US Government's (2018) Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Country Plan for Nigeria. The Plan states that its goal is to "sustainably reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition" and that, "In supporting this agenda, the GFSS will explicitly facilitate market-led solutions, and emphasise commercially viable participation of private sector actors" (*ibid*., 21). "Direct engagement with the private sector will be critical to the success of the GFSS country plan. [...] Agricultural production will be demand driven, refocusing production-based efforts

within a market based framework that recognizes the market as the driver and requires that investments be aligned with market needs and evaluated against market performance" (*ibid*., 22). The Plan's repeated emphasis on the market and the opening up of food systems to the private sector make it clear that this "sustainable poverty reduction" enterprise is to be embarked upon regardless of the knowledge or consent of local farmers and consumers, whether women or men.

National agricultural research institutions, such as the Institute of Agricultural Research (IAR), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, are increasingly attractive to seed companies searching for new markets. A seed company in India called Mahyco recently collaborated with IAR to produce Bt cotton, an insect-resistant GM cotton. The GM varieties are cultivated in India in large quantities and Mahyco wants to be able to sell its products on the Nigerian market. IAR tested the GM lines alongside the conventional variety all over Northern Nigeria. They reported that the staple lint length of the Indian GM cotton was longer than that of local cotton varieties and the Bt cotton produced was more than double the conventional cotton varieties, which usually produce a maximum of two tons per hectare.[19]

Mahyco, it turns out, has a 50:50 joint venture with Bayer which enables the latter to sublicense its Bt cotton seeds to Indian seed companies. After the Modi government's move in 2016 to regulate the selling price of GM cotton seeds and to cut royalty fees by a hefty 74%, Bayer had threatened to shut down its business in India (Karnik and Balachandran, 2016). Nigeria simply offers an alternative market for Bayer to sell its Bt cotton. Two new varieties of Bt cotton were approved for commercial release in July 2018. The Chair of the National Committee on Naming, Registration and Release of Crop Materials stated that "the release and registration of GM cotton is revolutionary to the agricultural development of the country as it would lead to the future adoption of GM technology in Nigeria of *food* crops" (Offiong, 2018, emphasis added).

In January 2019, the Nigerian Biosafety Management Agency approved a permit for IAR to begin commercial release of genetically modified cowpea, bred to resist *Maruca vitrata*—Pod Borer-Resistant Cowpea (PBR Cowpea-event AAT709A) (IITA News, 2019). The development of GM cowpea comes at a time when both the production and yield of conventional cowpea have been increasing in Nigeria in recent years. This raises yet again the question of why GM cowpea should even be developed at this point. The African Centre for Biodiversity (2015) points to the current convergence of interests between the GM biotech industry—in its efforts

to develop regional seed markets through the harmonisation of seed laws and intellectual property rights—and private sector seed companies, given the attraction of larger markets generating correspondingly higher profits. The following section takes up contestations surrounding the conduct and interpretation of science in the development and promotion of GM crops in Nigeria.

The Prevailing Scientific Ethos

One of the challenges faced by activists resisting GM food crops in Nigeria is the widespread trust in "science". There is a generalised assumption that when scientists speak, "the scientist must be stating a fact, must be socially conscious ... We know that this is not true, a lot of scientists are not pro-people and we are not against science but science must be responsible".[20] This position is not one of absolute condemnation of genetic engineering, given that the technology has been used to benefit people by producing insulin, for example. It is instead, a position that insists on the need to be critical: "whatever science and technology makes possible must be judged for its benefit across the entire stream of life. [...] you must evaluate technologies, especially genetic engineering that you want to use in agriculture. And the question would be, *Why?*"[21]

In this section, I highlight the official construction of a rigid and unwarranted binary between "certainty" and "uncertainty" which is utilised in mainstream assessments of risk surrounding GM food crops. The imposition of such a binary relies on a reductionist notion of "scientific objectivity" that serves technological interests marked by an obsession with control over life. Over two decades ago, in 1993, Vandana Shiva (2014: 23) argued that "the ontological and epistemological assumptions of reductionism are based on uniformity", in which all systems were presumed to be made up of the same basic constituents that could be divided and manipulated. The traditional scientific compulsion towards separation and disembodied objectivity has long been critiqued by feminist philosophers of science, highlighting the impossibility of separating either bodies or technology from nature and the denial of complexity that such efforts represent (e.g. Haraway, 1988; Keller, 1995).

Critical biotechnology researchers point out that genetic engineering does not involve the kind of control over genes that biotech corporations would have us believe. "Each gene may control several different traits in a single organism. Even the insertion of a single gene can impact the entire genome of the host

resulting in unintended side effects, all of which may not be recognizable at the same time. It is difficult to predict this type of risk" (Prakash *et al.*, 2011: 2). Moreover, biotech corporations present the act of extraction of genes from one organism and insertion into another as a relatively straightforward process; this too is not the case. "When genetic engineers create GMO or transgenic plants, they have no means of inserting the gene in a particular position. The gene ends up in a random location in the genetic material, and its position is not usually identified [...] There are already several examples of such undesired effects being identified in the US after approval e.g. GM cotton with deformed cotton bolls" (Prakash *et al.*, 2011: 3).

Efforts to grapple with the uncertainty surrounding the development of GM crops have given rise to the Precautionary Principle in biotechnology. This refers to the need to err on the side of caution in adopting genetically modified organisms (GMOs), given their potentially adverse consequences for humans, animals, the ecosystem and biodiversity.[22] Lying on the border between science and governance, the precautionary approach plays an important role in international treaties such as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.[23] The Precautionary Principle is defined as follows: "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically" (CHE, n.d.). Such an approach "acknowledges the complexity and variability of the natural environment and embodies [a] certain humility about scientific procedures and knowledge. It prioritizes the rights of those who stand to be affected by an activity rather than those who stand to benefit from it" (Prakash *et al.*, 2011: 8).

Contrary to the Precautionary Principle is the concept of Substantial Equivalence, which posits that GM products should be assessed for the potential risks they pose by determining whether "a GM food product is as safe as its traditionally bred counterpart" (Mhyr, 2007: 5). Safety of the GM food product involves "rigorous scientific analyses with the purpose of identifying all changes being introduced to the organism" (*ibid.*, 6). While this approach focuses on changes being made *to* the host, it does not adequately consider changes made *by* the genetically manipulated organism. The latter would include assessments of immunological or biochemical effects, or ecological and socio-economic impacts (Millstone *et al.*, 1999, cited in Prakash *et al.*, 2011). GMO proponents argue that

"there does not seem to be any reason to expect different impacts from genetically modified organisms than from traditional agricultural products" (Mhyr, 2007: 6). This begs the question of why there would have been any modification in the first place if no differences in impact were to be expected. By abstracting the *product* of genetic engineering from the *process* of its development as well as the *practices* inherent in the use of such technology in context—which include a harmful package of accompanying herbicides and/or pesticides—proponents of the concept of substantial equivalence erase significant domains of risk.

This is not a neutral debate since certain financial and political interests are served by asserting "no reason to expect different impacts". Bayer and US regulatory agencies have used the concept of substantial equivalence to facilitate the commercialisation of GM food products by effectively categorising GM food as "generally recognized as safe" (van den Hombergh, 2012: 52). This means that the products require "no labelling, no traceability (of where they come from), no corporate liability in case of negative effects and no ongoing collection of data on health effects" (*ibid*.).

The Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB), Nigeria chapter denies any uncertainty surrounding GM technology. Located in the National Biotechnology Development Agency, OFAB carries out sensitisation workshops, seminars, exhibitions and travel tours promoting GM crops. One of the brochures used for "sensitisation" asserts that "Genetic modification is literally the essential feature of all life on earth. [...] It is, in fact, a feature of our own, human, genetic makeup. We are all 'GMOs' as is every organism on Earth". GM plant breeding is described as "precision breeding", using "methods that are more precise, predictable and controllable than historical methods long accepted as safe".[24] This blatant manipulation of the concept of "modification" inherent in "GM", constitutes disinformation designed to dull potential resistance to the use of GM technology. In the context of the erosion of higher education in Nigeria and weak public capacity for critical thinking, the sustained repetition of OFAB's "information" about GMOs is likely to make considerable inroads into a state and transnational project of manufacturing consent to the adoption and promotion of genetically engineered crops in agriculture.

Meanwhile, staff at the National Biosafety Management Agency do not have the capacity to extract a genome, or sequence, edit or modify it in any way.[25] The

resources for using the technology are highly restricted; the agency's laboratory is a small Portacabin outside its main building. All the GM materials that form the basis for trials in-country are initially developed in the US, Europe or Australia before being brought to Nigeria. After field trials have been conducted in-country, the varieties are sent to "advanced universities" abroad for toxicity tests.[26] Dr. Casmir, a microbiologist at the University of Abuja, points out that it does not make sense to promote GM food crops in Nigeria in the absence of capacity to use GM technology and manage the process of development from beginning to end, including potential mishaps: "there can be no food security without food safety".[27]

In-country trials of GM materials are generally conducted at national research institutes such as IAR at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The Director's overall perspective on genetic modification is that, "As a research institute, we are doing research... we don't have any law that has prevented [a] research institute from doing work on GMO and that is the only way we can even be convinced whether it is bad or good [...]."[28] Research on GM crops is presented by the Director as inherently neutral and objective, its benign character being underpinned by the existence of a bureaucratic regulatory entity, the National Biosafety Management Agency. As feminist epistemologists have shown for some time, however, science does not operate in a social or political vacuum. Instead, it operates within gendered power relations that shape which questions are worthy of study, whose views count as "knowledge" (e.g. Harding, 1987; Keller, 1995). Feminist ecologists (e.g. Shiva and Moser, 1995) have pointed out that proponents of GM technology have undermined their own claims to "objectivity" by exaggerating the technology's benefits to the exclusion of very real risks.

In 2013, over 300 scientists, physicians, academics and experts signed an open letter declaring that "claims that GM foods are safe for human health based on the experience of North American populations have no scientific basis", given the lack of epidemiological studies of health effects in people consuming GM food (Hilbeck *et al.*, 2015: Discussion, no. 2). The lack of labelling and monitoring make it "scientifically impossible" to carry out such studies in the US. Furthermore, "claims that there is a consensus among scientific and governmental bodies that GM foods are safe, or that they are no more risky than non-GM foods are false" (*ibid.*: Discussion, no. 3). There is also no consensus on the environmental risks of GM crops, including the effects of Bt crops on non-target organisms and the effects of

herbicides used alongside crops genetically modified to tolerate herbicides. Target pests have developed resistance to Bt toxins. "As with GM food safety, disagreement among scientists on the environmental risks of GM crops may be correlated with funding sources." (*ibid.*: Discussion, no. 6). Those scientists who were most likely to have a positive attitude to GM crops tended to be ones with industry funding and/or who were trained in molecular biology; they were of the view that GM crops did not constitute any unique risks. Scientists receiving public funds and working independently of GM crop developer companies as well as those trained in ecology "were more likely to hold a 'moderately negative' attitude to GM crop safety and to emphasize the uncertainty and ignorance involved" (Hilbeck *et al.*, 2015: Discussion, no. 6).

In cowpea, the genetic transformation involved the insertion of a soil bacterium called *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) which confers resistance to maruca in maize crops. Bayer provided the genes and the initial development of a GM form of cowpea was carried out at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Canberra, Australia. The researchers developed cowpea lines with the Bt (Cry1Ab) gene that conferred resistance to maruca pests in the lab. Bayer patented the Bt gene used to transform cowpea and licensed it to the influential African Agricultural Technology Foundation for use in Africa. The AATF selected the countries in which the GM cowpea would be tested, namely, Nigeria, Ghana and Burkina Faso. In Nigeria, the research was led by IAR in partnership with the AATF and other collaborators, including CSIRO; Purdue University, USA; the Network for Genetic Improvement of Cowpea for Africa; the Programme for Biosafety Systems, facilitated by the International Food Policy Research Institute; and IITA (IITA News, 2019). The Rockefeller Foundation and USAID funded this cowpea transformation project (Fatokun, 2009).

Far from being an initiative marked by the active involvement of local farmers, their organisations and others knowledgeable about the complexities involved, this cowpea intervention was driven by a network of institutions in the transnational biotech industry. In South Africa, the Cry1Ab Bt gene has been discontinued since the same Bt gene, used in cultivation of Bayer's maize (MON 810), resulted in huge pest resistance and infestation. What is notably absent from the biotech discourse is the existence of less invasive biological treatments for maruca and the other pests that attack cowpea, treatments which could be developed further

for use with cowpea (ACB, 2015).

IAR's field trials of GM crops used the following criteria for selecting participants: "farmers that are well experienced and have stayed for a very long time growing cowpea".[29] None of the field trials of GM cowpea with farmers included women, despite women cowpea farmers being estimated by the researcher to comprise roughly a third of all cowpea farmers in the North. The fact that this was not viewed as a problem points to the malestream tendency to regard the significant population of farmers as those growing crops for cash—largely men—as opposed to those growing them for subsistence—largely women. Research is clearly needed to establish what prevails on the ground.

At the tail end of each trial year, IAR researchers invite farmers to identify the varieties they would like to plant. Most of these farmers are men; only about one in four are women. Women are invited to these sessions "because women are the ones that know better in terms of processing".[30] While it is generally accepted that women are predominantly involved in cowpea processing, their exclusion from the field trials does raise the question of what is counted as "experience" in cowpea farming, as opposed to processing. Were women cowpea farmers' experiences with subsistence production not considered relevant, even though women are likely to have "stayed for a very long time growing cowpea?" The more significant question, however, is the meaning of "inclusion"—a point that is more often raised in the political sphere (see e.g. Hassim, 2005; Salo, 2005). Given the terms of inclusion in this instance, women cowpea farmers' participation in the field trials would not have erased the problematic character of the development of GM cowpea in Nigeria and within that, the role of field trials. In the next section, I turn to the space for resisting GM crops in Nigeria.

Resisting Genetically Engineered Crops in Nigeria

One of the most active campaigners against GM crops in Nigeria was Juliana Odey, otherwise known as Mama Cassava; she had grown cassava for over a decade. Odey was the Cross River State Coordinator of the Cassava Growers Association of Nigeria and later became a member of its Board of Directors. She was actively involved in mobilising rural women over the need to cultivate cassava and its benefits (Bassey, 2013). Her activism seemed to be grounded primarily in her agrarian status, not necessarily in articulating gendered dimensions of this experience. Odey was determined to attend the Public Hearing on the Biosafety

Bill, organised on 9 December 2009 by the Joint Committee on Science and Technology and Agriculture, of the National Assembly in Abuja. "She has never flustered in saying LOUD and CLEAR that 'Nigeria and indeed the whole of Africa does not need GMOs!' Farmers can feed the world and she is ready to galvanize women in Nigeria to campaign against GMOs" (*ibid*.). Drawing on generational politics, Odey told legislators on one occasion at the National Assembly, "You are my children, listen to me, don't give us poison".[31] As Odey was an elderly woman, National Assembly members felt obliged to listen, even if they did not like what she had to say.[32] Sadly, Juliana Odey died on 10 December 2013 (*ibid*.).

The leading civil society organisation challenging the promotion of GM crops in Nigeria is Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), an ecological think tank "advocating for environmental justice, climate justice and food sovereignty in Nigeria and Africa" (HOMEF, 2018: 4). HOMEF's pan-Africanist agenda is clear from its tracking of activities related to food politics in other African countries, particularly resistance to GM crops, and circulation of this information in its awareness raising work. The organisation's political perspective is that exposing the systemic roots of environmental and food challenges requires the "scaling up of class struggle through the globalisation of peoples as against the globalisation of capital" (*ibid*., 7, 9). The "exploitation of nature" is viewed as "a reflection of the unjust relations between people and the social, political, gender, economic crises in society" (*ibid*., 5). HOMEF works in alliance with several women's organisations within the coalition that has formed around HOMEF's activities. This is a broad-based coalition, comprising environmental justice groups, health organisations, poverty eradication groups, farmers, student and youth groups, community development organisations and faith-based organisations. The involvement of women and their organisations in the coalition and in HOMEF's activities is important in itself, but it is not synonymous with these activities being informed by feminist analysis and an awareness of gender relations in agricultural crop production.

It is instructive to consider what such a feminist analysis might look like. GM crops pose several threats to smallholder farmers' abilities to make a living but not all smallholder farmers will be affected similarly. While activists in the Nigerian context have linked considerations of food security to farmers' livelihood security in terms of potential economic, health, environmental and ecological risks, what

has not been addressed are the social relations of production and their gendered dimensions. Feminists have drawn attention to ways in which livelihood activities and outcomes for women and men are inextricably connected to land and labour relations. Livelihood outcomes are gendered in diverse ways, shaping the divisions among and within livelihoods, burdening women disproportionately with unpaid domestic and care work, producing inequalities in access to, and the control of, land and labour, and perpetuating gender inequalities in livelihood outcomes through policies (social and economic) as well as institutions (such as markets and households) (Tsikata and Amanor-Wilks, 2009; Tsikata, 2009).

In the case of smallholder farming and subsistence production, women's labour is a critical resource given the small size of plots and basic equipment used for farming (Tsikata, 2009). When the use of GM crops and/or the accompanying agro-toxics (herbicides and pesticides) affect crop yields and/or biodiversity on family plots, and households have insufficient land for household subsistence, women may be caught between competing demands—the need to earn income and the need to maintain subsistence production as well as increase domestic and care work to ensure household survival. When women do not own the land on which they farm, the death of their spouse leaves them open to physical and economic abuse. Gender analysis would highlight the differences among women shaped by their relations with men, kin, intra-household dynamics, property rights and access to, and control over, resources. The more precarious women's working conditions become, whether in the field or in the office, the more vulnerable women become to sexual harassment and sexual violence, notably by those in authority (Henry and Adams, 2018). Efforts to counter the hegemony of GM crops in current agricultural policy would benefit from research that addresses the implications of these interwoven power relations for women.

Resistance to GM crops in Nigeria has involved collaborative efforts at multiple levels: engaging the state through legal and policy advocacy, movement building by mobilising communities against GM crops, and public education on GM technology and GM crops. HOMEF has been a key force in these efforts, working closely with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and the GMO-free Nigeria Alliance. HOMEF's knowledge production supports its activities at these different levels.

Activists have stressed that the regulatory context in which GM crops are being promoted and consumed is marked by official disregard for food systems, biosafety and people's wellbeing. The general weakness of the regulatory framework has been emphasised by HOMEF's (2015) review of Nigeria's National Biosafety Management Agency Act, 2015. The overall orientation of the Act is that there is no need to question whether GMOs are an appropriate development for the country or not. HOMEF's starting point, however, is that there should be "a national discussion on the Big Question: Do Nigerians want GMOs or not?" (*ibid*., 10). The Act has no checks and balances against the Agency's absolute decision-making power, and no oversight from a parent ministry. The Governing Board is constituted by representatives of the private sector, National Biotechnology Agency, the Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment, and the Biotechnology Society of Nigeria. These are the very entities whose activities, technology and products the law should be regulating. NGOs, meanwhile, are to be represented by one member only while farmers and consumers are excluded (HOMEF, 2015).

Policy advocacy has taken the form of written objections to Bayer's application for confined field trials of GM maize in Nigeria (HOMEF and ERA/FoEN, 2016b; Ezeamalu, 2016a) and to Bayer's application for the release of GM cotton in the country (HOMEF and ERA/FoEN, 2016a). Concerns were raised on the grounds of threats to health, environmental justice, social and economic inequalities, and numerous issues relating to safety and risk assessments (HOMEF and ERA/FoEN, 2016a and 2016b; Ezeamalu, 2016b). Over 70 organisations supported the objection on maize; on cotton, over 90. Relatively few groups work actively to counter GMOs, however, given the technical nature of the knowledge required. Yet many people are concerned and want more information: "when people have gotten to know about it, the response has been massively against GMOs".[33]

Activists have also stressed that policy alternatives to the current mode of practising agriculture would do well to address the needs that farmers have identified for themselves—more effective storage, improvements to agricultural production, more food processing, and more seed banks. Although there are some seed banks in place, they are seriously underfunded.[34] Larger ecological problems, such as desertification in northern states have to be treated as such; they will not be solved by the commercialisation of GM crops. Traditional farming practices, such as intercropping, should be recognised as agroecological practices, which

are superior to the use of GM technology in agriculture because "agroecology promotes the dynamic existence of the biosystem and the ecosystem".[35]

HOMEF's mobilising of farmers and rural communities has been ongoing since 2005. A rally in the capital, Abuja, on 17 December 2018 drew hundreds of people in protest against the uncontrolled entry into Nigeria of GM crops and products. The organisers contrasted the latter with Tanzania's inspirational decision in November 2018 to immediately end all ongoing field trials of Monsanto's GM lines in the Water Efficient Maize for Africa project and to destroy their "remnants". The project was carried out by national research centres and supported by the Gates Foundation; it was terminated for its illegal use in pro-GM propaganda (ACB, 2018). The Abuja rally aimed to renew calls for a ban on GM crops and products in Nigeria, and push for action to protect food systems and biosafety more effectively (HOMEF, 2019).

Public education has been a focus not only for HOMEF but also for groups such as the GMO-free Nigeria Alliance as well as the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa. The audiences of strategic interest are the media, farmers, and lawyers, since these are all constituencies that need to be critically informed about GM technology and the implications of promoting GM crops in Nigeria.[36] Critical biotechnology scientists are also involved in using the media—radio and TV—to engage members of the public. Biotech corporations have huge resources which they use to travel deeply into rural areas, offering farmers free GM seeds and thus locking them into GM crop usage. This accentuates the need for farmers to be adequately informed so that they recognise when they are being offered GM seeds and are aware of the associated risks.[37]

International networking and action on food governance via the UN system is another arena of resistance to the promotion of GM crops in Nigeria. AFSA is a network of networks, present in 52 out of the 54 countries in Africa, and recognised by the UN. The principle of "food sovereignty", first articulated by the peasant movement, La Via Campesina, makes explicit the power relations inherent in decisions and practices concerning who eats what food. By contrast, "food security" is about putting food on the table, not about the right to determine the process of getting food to the table. AFSA holds conferences and meetings to discuss food systems, community rights and GMOs. Membership within Nigeria comprises youth groups, women-led farmers' organisations such as the Cassava

Growers' Association, and women's environmental organisations, groups which also support HOMEF's activities. Internationally, AFSA has alliances with La Via Campesina and the World March of Women, and also works with SOFI (State of Food Insecurity), whose African chapter is in Kenya.

Activists are also promoting awareness of new and more dangerous forms of biotechnology. Gene editing techniques are being used to engineer even more invasive forms of genetic modification—gene drives—which will create new gene drive organisms.[38] The process involves gene drives consistently forcing their genetically-engineered traits onto future generations of that species by replacing all offspring that lack genetically-engineered traits. Gene drives are currently being promoted for disease control, mainly of malaria, in West Africa. The hidden commercial goal, however, is agribusiness where numerous patents are awaiting conclusion. Publicly-announced gene projects in the US are led by the US government's military research agency (Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency), the Gates Foundation, the Tata Trusts, and the Facebook-backed Open Philanthropy project (ETC Group, 2018a). NEPAD supports the development of gene drive organisms for malaria treatment and has received funding for such work. Given that gene editing technology is even less well understood than first generation genetic modification, and the potential risks are considerably higher, a wide range of African CSOs have called on African governments to support the moratorium on the development and use of gene drives (ETC Group, 2018b). Dependence on risky technologies that extract profit at the expense of genetic resources, and women's labour and wellbeing, while enabling the militarisation of food and agriculture, is simply unacceptable.

As we work to resist the hegemony of GM crops and technology, it is worth reflecting on Andrews and Lewis' (2017: 9) reminder that "there is no social movement and political space that does not include food. By unearthing the ways and assumptions around food in these spaces, we create a lens to see which food is produced, who cooks and feeds us, who organises the food and who pays for it". Food provides a route to examining the workings of power with regard to patriarchy, capitalism and the ecological crisis in the contemporary neoliberal order. Embedding such questions about food in multiple movements and spaces affords the opportunity to explore connections to life and each other, and their associated meanings in the process of "reclaiming seed, land, body and agency" (*ibid.*, 7).

Concluding Thoughts

The speed at which genetic engineering, in its first generation and emergent forms, is proceeding in Nigeria makes it imperative to open up larger societal conversations about the industrialisation of genetic resources. What does it mean for government to make top-down policy decisions of this sort without consulting local farmers, food crop growers and others working the land, particularly women? What are the implications for governance when corporate interests are being served in the name of "development"? What informs the choice of crops selected for genetic modification and what are the implications when those selected are food crops like cowpea and cassava, which predominate among the crops that women grow? Addressing these questions necessarily entails also opening up questions about social and economic inequalities, particularly rural underdevelopment—the systemic problems that a narrow technicist focus on biotech avoids.

The transnational mesh of biotech corporations, private foundations, international development agencies, scientific institutions and networks, and African governments supporting the promotion and development of GM crops constitutes a formation in which component elements are positioned in differing relations of power relative to one another. While the relations among many, if not most of these different elements are generally co-operative, in some instances they are decidedly conflictual, as we saw in the case of Tanzania. Recognising the specificities and complexities of these diverse contexts and conditions is necessary to identify potential spaces for exposure and contestation.

The assumption that science and technology are sufficient to provide solutions to complex problems is misguided. Questions such as what kinds of technology would support positive change or what kinds of science would most benefit different categories of women as well as men are neither scientific nor technological questions. The broader picture of today's realities is one of massive social change, growing national and global inequality, and shrinking resources, which combine to produce ever increasing social dislocation. Engaging these realities requires a combination of critical feminist thinking and a broad understanding of changes across time and space, within and across local, regional, continental and transcontinental boundaries, with eyes open to the invigorating possibilities of alternative futures. This is the kind of cross-bordered feminist knowledge production and action that we need to inform our quests for more

liveable lives and wellbeing—journeys in which gender justice lies at the heart of social and economic transformation.

Endnotes

1. Adapted from a statement by Dr. Ifeanyi Casmir, Dept. of Veterinary Microbiology, University of Abuja, in an interview on 8 November 2018: "Our traditional seeds are superior to what is being handed down to us, we are gradually with our eyes open, entering into slavery ..." All respondents interviewed consented to their views being recorded and used in this study.
2. I would like to thank members of the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group for birthing the overall project of which this study is a part. Thanks are particularly due to Akua Britwum and other members of the Methodology Workshop who gave feedback on the original idea, and Tina Andrade of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for her immense support. Jibrin Ibrahim, my life partner, inspired numerous discussions on GM crops in Nigeria, helped me with contacts for interviews, and participated in those held at the Institute of Agricultural Research, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Kingsley Umuenyen provided research assistance and transcribed the research interviews.
3. I use the phrases "genetic modification" and "genetic engineering" interchangeably.
4. Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement.
5. Interview with Dr. Mohammed Lawal, IAR, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 18 October 2018.
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7. See endnote 1.
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Towards Building Feminist Economies of Life

Donna Andrews

Living in Crisis

This anthropocene[1] era with its accompanying avarice has significantly contributed to the destruction of the ecological integrity of our planet. Mainstream neoliberal economics valorises economic growth and fosters the super exploitation of minerals, metals and nature by transnational corporations. Its associated policies severely undermine social and economic protection, with dire ramifications in many countries.

Proponents of mining-for-development constantly evoke and legitimise Hardin's tragedy of the commons – namely, that communal ownership of the commons leads to environmental degradation – despite evidence to the contrary and the obvious finite limits of nature. The gains, argued by advocates of new forms of extractivism, privatisation and enclosures, remain elusive. The enclave logic of extractivism is prone to volatility and capital flight and is heavily reliant on external finance (Acosta, 2013). Therefore, states often give transnational corporations (TNCs) exclusive rights and control over non-renewables in order to lure and retain foreign direct investment (FDI). This control distorts the allocation of resources, fosters corruption and state collusion, heightens violence and militarisation, criminalises anti-mining activism, and dislocates communities (Thematic Social Forum on Mining and Extractivist Economy, 2018).

This extractivism occurs in the midst of multiple converging crises. *Deep economic inequalities* are evident from rampant hunger and food inflation, the ever-growing wealth gap, and the feminisation of migrancy, labour and poverty. *Social oppression* can be seen in the disproportional violence against women, blatant misogynist aggression and sexism, gross human rights violations, rampant xenophobia and racism, horrendous homophobia and vicious attacks against queer bodies. *Ecological destruction* is visible in rising carbon emissions, shrinking biodiversity and outright ecological degradation, the destruction of water bodies and the attack on ocean life.

Our Feminist Challenges

As feminists, the challenges we confront are multipronged since the neoliberal extractivist model exercises control through various sectors, institutions and policies. Confronting extractivism requires feminist alternatives on all fronts – trade, finance, budgeting, law, agriculture and technology at international, regional, national, local and household levels. Thus we try to contain the expansion of the social reproductive burden foisted on women and the new enclosures of our commons. We build alliances and solidarity as we strive to put forward feminist alternatives in these sectors. Yet, faced with so many areas, we tend to specialise, identifying strategic entry points but risking inferences to hierarchies of demands, struggles and issues. The tactics we employ, often with insufficient cognisance of our positionality, seek to marshal the "masses", reinforcing masculine forms of organising and resistance, and making us susceptible to the binaries and divisions that we resist.

One of the starkest impacts of patriarchy in the extractive industry has been the pervasiveness of violence, gender-based violence and sexual favours women have to exchange for work and pay (WoMin, 2013; Benya, 2015). Our task is to expose this and demand protection and policies that strongly assert non-tolerance of sexism and misogyny. Another impact is the extensive abuse, evictions, subordination and violence enacted against women working on farms and through the piecemeal nature of their work (Andrews, 2018). Our demands are for equal pay and the rejection of labour brokers. On the continent, the lack of security of tenure which women have on the land as small-scale and subsistence farmers is critical, as is, for instance, the lack of secure access with regard to fishing quotas, forest harvesting or waste materials. Feminists illuminate these challenges and demand security of tenure, equal access and greater support for women.

Feminist are hard at work to aid the defence against attacks on forests and lands, seeds, water bodies and oceans. Their biodiversity and ecosystems give women living in these communities their autonomy, livelihoods, source of food and medicine, identity and belonging. The defence occurs on numerous fronts and our challenge is that we often do not place equal value on its various aspects. Energy is disproportionately directed at major events and conferences, often donor driven. Some reforms are essential even though they in no way

address structural issues. For example, women in mine-affected areas demand better corporate social responsibility, compensation, access to finance records and disclosure of revenue, an end to tax shifting, environmental legislation that improves their health, equal distribution of water and electricity, decent housing and infrastructure. Women affected by the environmental pollution, loss of land and food production, and high levels of HIV infections in coal mining areas, demand a stop to all coal mining and effective social labour plans and accountability (MAC: Mines and Communities, 2016; Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, 2019; Hallowes and Munnik, 2016, 2017).

Negotiating a "Necessary Evil"

Radical feminist political economists have long pointed out that the extractivist model of development externalises social and ecological costs onto women. The bodies of colonised women, particularly those in rural areas, mining townships and mine-affected slums, disproportionately carry the socio-economic and ecological burden of injustice of this extractivist neoliberal model. Women's struggle for survival has brought into sharp focus how state, family and market mechanisms are deployed by patriarchal capitalism to entrench the subsidisation of social reproductive unpaid labour. This free and invisible work is the bedrock of society, and with the constant withering away of social protection and social services, the heavy lifting women do is manifold. The extractivist model is highly subsidised through women's unpaid social reproduction work and cheap labour which is often invisibilised and absorbed by the periphery.

Yet the social and ecological costs of extractivism are seen by many as a necessary evil—the price for development, redress, modernity, advancement and progress. Redistributive arguments and demands premised on socio-economic justice call for making "mining wealth serve the people". This call does not recognise the enormous accompanying ecological, social and health hazards carried mostly by women in mine-affected communities (Andrews, 2017). Nor does it recognise that women ought then to be the primary beneficiaries in the process of extraction. Women who suggest an end to coal mining, fracking or the building of mega dams face a battery of challenges by non-governmental agencies and organisations who insinuate that they, along with the community, solidarity organisations, activists and protagonists, are being unreasonable and

are standing in the way of improving living conditions, employment and the plight of the poor. Women opposing extractivist activities are often confronted by state machinery and corporations, and met with violence.

Often too, women who resist attacks on their lands, forests and water bodies, and oppose prospecting by mining companies are seen as "fierce" and their struggle, symbolic. When they move their resistance beyond protests into policy spaces, demanding the Right to Consent and Right to Say No (The WoMin Collective, 2017), progressive policy activists frame their arguments unfairly, as if these were simplistic "back to nature" discourses. Rather than enabling genuine engagement, those "in the know" misinterpret these women.

Many groups face the perils of negotiating mining-for-development. Progressives agree that without serious regulation and protectionism, the promises of FDI, jobs and "sustainable development" are elusive. While radical feminist political economists illuminate the disastrous impact on women, unionists and many socio-economic justice groups support industrialisation. For them, these are core sectors of employment which could improve wages and living conditions, and they are defending the neoliberal onslaught on jobs and wages.

We must ask ourselves: can extractivism or neo-extractivism ever occur without acts of violence and alienation? Can it render decent wages and work that is not harmful to health and potentially deadly? Can profits be derived without ecological destruction, alienation and exploitation of waged labour or unpaid social reproduction?

Protecting our Only Home

The extent and the severity of the ecological crisis and the imminent dangers that it presents compel one to reassess whether striving for a just and equitable world is compatible with endorsing the necessary evils of extractivism. More so, the current nexus of crises begs one to ask: who benefits from the glut of consumer goods and bears the cost of over production and consumption? Vandana Shiva (2013: 3) situates the "war against the earth" by putting forward that it "has its roots in an economy which fails to respect ecological and ethical limits—limits to inequality, to injustice, to greed and to economic concentration".

This perspective obliges one to seek alternative relationships with the earth in the face of such ecological and social destruction. How we re-conceive of our relationships with each other is a fundamental aspect of this. Relations of

exploitation and alienation cannot be altered without simultaneously changing our relationship to nature and each other. This understanding has to be grounded in the acceptance that nature is finite and is the only home we have—a war against earth is a war against ourselves. Women who are inextricably linked and care daily for our home teach us that this task is continual and cannot be outsourced or commodified—it is critical to our and future generations. This task rests on a diverse and rich knowledge system that is freely shared from generation to generation. Women's defence against the war on earth demonstrates an alternative paradigm which prioritises the care and protection of the source, and an appreciation for the lessons from the ecosystem and a deep listening to its wisdom.

Acts of resisting and rejecting the dominant way of living and the exploitation of women, people and nature transpire in many ways—the protection of our home requires both small and large acts. It must be recognised that women ensure the health of the society (Andrews *et al.*, 2018) and that this work must be shared equally.

Possibilities for Economies of Life

Key to resisting the extractivist system (Fakier and Cock, 2018) is to create economies that are life affirming. Deploying a new language and values for how we wish to live is essential (Princen, 2005; Gibson-Graham, 2006). These include alternatives that embody the logic of sufficiency rather than efficiency (Princen 2005, 2010; Alexander, 2010; Mellor, 2019). Adopting key principles such as intermittency, protecting the source, and sufficiency espouse alternatives and new imaginaries for being and living in the world. Approaches which place value on transforming self, community and the world at large, offer rich and affirming meaning-making processes. These assist concretely in developing alternatives that are materially specific but also collectively powerful (Gibson-Graham, 2006). This also requires us to closely examine the mechanisms of the economy, in particular its social and political dimensions, and to identify the alternative economies that run parallel to it (Federici, 2012). We need to ensure that these alternatives are not subsumed into the dominant commodified market form and reject the mantra of "there is no alternative".

Feminists offer localisation and solidarity economies at local and regional levels that are mutually reinforcing and equitable to enable self-provisioning. These alternatives are proposed to ensure national self-sufficiency (Dar es Salaam Declaration, 1989) and sovereignty. The subsistence economy has put forward that we produce only what we need, that we utilise our resources mindfully and ensure we work sparingly and within the finite limits so as to engender regenerative practices (Mies and Shiva, 2014). This economy seeks to "subordinate" the role that the market plays, and specifically the "atomized, self-centred individuality of the market economy" (Mies and Shiva, 2014: 319). Importantly, this alternative economy proposes that new relationships are built upon "respect, co-operation and reciprocity" and based upon the "recognition that humans are part of nature" (*ibid.*). These new relationships ought to be established between women and men, and must be premised on non-exploitative and non-oppressive relations.

Many ecofeminists have suggested that "control over nature" as the dominant perspective be replaced by a relationship which is "in harmony with nature" (Merchant, 2003). Anna Tsing (2015: vii), however, reminds us that "[t]he time has come for new ways of telling stories beyond civilisational first principles. Without Man and Nature ..." and then asks us "[w]hat do you do when your world starts to fall apart?" This question confronts us as feminists. We are challenged to deploy the "art of noticing" to see what emerges from the ruins. In doing so, we are able to recognise the power of the "salvaged" as well as "gift economies". Tsing (2015: 133) argues that we are multispecies beings, deeply interconnected and entangled, yet disconnected and alienated, hence "allow[ing] the making of capitalist assets".

Our feminist struggles guide us to defend and protect our commons, bodies and ideas, and to resist the evaluatory processes inherent in mainstream economics and positivist social science views of success. The latter include demands that we concretely show the alternatives—how they can be modelled and operationalised as well as their scalability. These types of questions are red herrings and bludgeon us into paralysis. We reject a one-size-fits-all approach and the machismo of the blueprint. Our work strives to continually bring to the fore the social construction of ideas and assumptions through historical material processes. It is to unearth the hidden and taken-for-granted work, the suppression and exploitation taking

place. This work simultaneously acknowledges the subversive roles and ever more complex identities women inhabit. It recognises how women negotiate power and perform certain roles. We do this work to make visible the machinery of alternatives and possibilities that women enact every day, despite the patriarchal capitalist system.

Endnote

1. The idea that the earth is embarking upon a new geological era in which human beings are, for the first time, having a significant impact on the planet's geology and ecosystem.

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For "M.O." and the Legacy She Left Us: A Tribute to Professor 'Molara Ogundipe

Adedoyin Aguoru

As a young academic at Olabisi Onabanjo University in 2005, I watched with growing interest as the Department of English prepared to receive a renowned visitor. It was Professor 'Molara Ogundipe and there was so much excitement in the air. Samson Dare, then Head of the Department of English, spoke so glowingly about her that I could not help but feel caught up in the excitement. Breezing into the department on that day in 2005 wearing black casual trousers and a flowery top, Ogundipe was brimming with confidence, vivaciousness and vitality. She could not be ignored for a second! Accompanied by her mentees, she politely enquired about the developments in the department, proceeding on an immediate tour of departmental facilities and the Faculty of Arts.

My interest was ignited further when I learned that she was the first person to head the department and had laid its solid foundation. She had actively engaged its students and staff in a collaborative and decisive manner. The department's curriculum was adapted from that of the premier university, the University of Ibadan, where Ogundipe was the first to be awarded a First Class degree in English. She subsequently pursued a teaching career at the English Department in Ibadan before offering many years later to be foundation Head of English at the newly established Ogun State University (now Olabisi Onabanjo University) in Ago-Iwoye in 1982. Apart from her curiosity-inducing feminist theory, Stiwanism (Social Transformation in Africa Including Women), Ogundipe possessed several awe-inspiring qualities that were evident from her personality as well as the things said and written about her, and even from what was left unsaid.

I was trying to work out her significance for the department and the university, which had continued to earn her such tremendous accolades decades after she left the shores of Nigeria. She was, I was told, deeply involved in the lives of students—academic and social—to the point of sacrificial commitment. Ogundipe bridged the generational and institutional gap between lecturers and students, making it possible for her students to be the best they could be. She

related with them more as a friend than as a professor. Kollington Ayinla, the Fuji maestro, had at some point during Ogundipe's tenure as head of department, come to perform at one of the students' annual activities. Ogundipe was reported to have had oversight of the students, staying with them throughout the performance and sharing in the jokes, drinks and dancing all night long.

She had also established co-curricular activities during her tenure as head of department. These included intellectual and critical engagements, dramatic performances, poetry rendition and musical arts, all of which forged strong links among the staff, students, and the entire university community. These activities gave birth to the Kollaj Festival, for which the erstwhile Ogun State University was popular in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Kollaj Festival was the annual culmination of an extremely popular and well-received creative tradition called the Writers' Workshop. Every Wednesday, students and lecturers gathered in the late afternoon to read, perform, render and critique poetry, prose and drama, mostly written by young undergraduates. This experience, and the feedback they received, produced several budding writers (Aguoru, 2005). Participants were also afforded a platform to exhibit their musical and theatrical talents. The workshop became known for attracting established writers, artists and scholars from different parts of the country. Among those hosted at the workshop were the late Ken Saro-Wiwa and Harry Garuba, Niyi Osundare, and Tunji Oyelana. Some of the students who cut their teeth at the workshop have since attained international prominence. Lola Shoneyin, the author of the internationally acclaimed novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives,* is a product of the Writers' Workshop. Other participants have also emerged as leading actors and actresses in Nollywood.[1] The Writers' Workshop and the Kollaj Festival remain among Ogundipe's flagship legacies.

Ogundipe, of Soyinka's days in Ibadan, was a literary giant and an activist. In Wole Soyinka's (1994) *Ibadan: The Pekelemes Years*, he refers to a certain woman as "M.O." In his (1996) review of this book, Gbemisola Adeoti wonders whether this is 'Molara Ogundipe, a contemporary of the founders of the Ibadan Mbari Club.[2] In 2017, years after I had moved to the University of Ibadan, Ogundipe attended a programme at Trenchard Hall in honour of Christopher Ifekandu Okigbo, the Nigerian poet who died in 1967 fighting for the independence of Biafra. Flanking her at the high table were Wole Soyinka, Bekederemo Clark and other notable

figures and literary scholars at the University of Ibadan. Her graceful presence and interventions at the programme spoke volumes about her contribution to the identity of the woman in society as well as to the much-debated global role of a woman in institutions of higher learning.

Ogundipe's essay on her theory, Stiwanism, is a direct response to the controversy surrounding the relevance of feminism as a theory to Africa and a response to the claim that feminism is a foreign enterprise in which African women need not engage. Through her reflection on Stiwanism, she addresses these and other theoretical, critical, and creative feminist concerns in Africa. Her work has spurred more women to theorise this sensitive construct in the context of a continent that is patriarchal in all ramifications (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

'Molara Ogundipe was born on 27 December 1940 in Lagos, Nigeria. Her father was a missionary and her mother taught English and Mathematics at a teacher's college. Ogundipe's secondary education was at Queen's Secondary School, Ede. From there, she went on to the University of Ibadan, which was at the time affiliated to the University of London. Thereafter, she proceeded to Leiden University in the Netherlands where she gained her doctorate in Narratology.

Having been taught by experts, Ogundipe was an excellent teacher. She taught English Studies, Writing, Comparative Literature, and Gender Studies, from the perspectives of cultural studies and development, at universities across continents. She remained a leader in feminist activism and gender studies in Africa for decades. She established and was the first Director of the Foundation for International Education and Monitoring, which is dedicated to teaching young women the principles of feminist theories and gender equality. Ogundipe was not only a theorist and a literary critic, she was also a poet. Obi Maduakor's contribution in Henrietta Otokunefor and Obiageli Nwodo's publication on *Nigerian Female Writers* (1989) noted at that time that Ogundipe and her counterpart, Catherine Acholonu, were the only female Nigerian poets bridging the gap between the "...menfolk and the women in (Nigerian) poetry" (1989, p. 75). To Maduakor, Ogundipe's poetry is marked by undisputed Marxist and metaphysical tempers along with poetic experiences that are national, continental and international. As a poet, Ogundipe did not only write about the titans of poetry who were nurtured in Ibadan— Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo and J.P. Clark—but she took her place eminently among them in her own right.

Ogundipe's publications include "Those Rags... My Rags of Time," in *Okike* (1979), "The Nigerian Literary Scene" in *Kiabara* (1980), and "Song to the Black America of the Sixties" and "Yoruba Love", both published in *Okike* (1981). "Song at the African Middle Class", "Africa of the Seventies", and "To a Tree in a West African Savannah Country" (1982) are all published in *Okike* No. 22. *Sew the Old Days and Other Poems* (1985) is Ogundipe's collection of poetry. *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformations* (1994) is her book-length contribution to African feminist theory while *Moving Beyond Boundaries* (1995) is a book she co-edited with Carole Boyce Davies. It was in *Re-Creating Ourselves* that she first discussed "Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context" (1994, 207-242). Several of her essays appear as contributions to books and anthologies, such as Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson's *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* (2007) and Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (1984). Her poems also appear in the anthology *Daughters of Africa* (1994), edited by Margaret Busby.

Ogundipe, who passed away on 18 June 2019, is survived by two daughters: Dr. Isis Imotara Leslie, a political scientist who teaches in the United States, and Dr. (Ts'gye Maryam) Rachel Titilayo Leslie, who explores religion in Africa and the significance of African legacies for global culture (Stakahashi, 2017). Beyond Ogundipe's daughters, who bear the torch of the light she represented, several other daughters of Africa, whom she influenced with her profundity and Stiwanism, continue to be positively driven and keep the fire aglow.

Endnotes

1. A term referring to the Nigerian film industry.
2. The Mbari Club was a cultural centre set up in Ibadan in 1961. The term "Mbari" is Igbo, referring to creation; the Club was named by Chinua Achebe. Members included Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, and J.P. Clark, among others.

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WoMin – The Journey from Research Initiative to an African Ecofeminist Alliance

Maggie Mapondera and Samantha Hargreaves

Introduction—the political background to and rationale for WoMin's existence

> Oil was identified about five years ago in Nwoya district [Uganda]. They have started to install infrastructure and the [extraction site] is under tight security. Since people discovered the oil, there has been land grabbing... so now people are buying up the land—government officials, prominent businesspeople—in the name of investment. If these powerful figures discover that the people don't have land titles, we will just wake up and find ourselves with nothing. For women, the situation is tough. It is the women who are displaced. The men will take the compensation money and find their own way to cope: concubines, drinking, drugs. But now the women with children have to find a place to live, like squatters. To survive, many are forced to become casual labourers on big plantations owned by these top government officials, and they are paid peanuts.[1]

> Ever since Tendele [coal mining company] started to mine here in Somkhele [northern KwaZulu Natal, South Africa] in 2006, my grandmother started to cough and when she went to the doctor, it was said that she has a layer of coal on her chest. She was asked if she lives next to a mine, and she said Yes. The doctor then gave her a letter to take to the mine for the mine to pay for her medication... but the mine always said they will get back to her and they never did till we lost her... she passed away in 2016.
>
> (Ngobeni, 2018)

These are snippets of stories addressing the experience of millions of women across Africa who carry the externalised costs of a development paradigm founded on the large-scale exploitation of natural resources. This extractivist model has been privileged as the development pathway out of poverty for many countries in Africa.

These projects prioritise corporate profit over the well-being and livelihoods of local citizens. And they result in the externalisation of significant environmental and social costs to the nation, to local communities and to women who routinely suffer a disproportionate burden of harm because of a patriarchal division of labour and their unequal power to make decisions in their families and communities.

The typical costs are forced displacement from land, the destruction of land and natural resource-based livelihoods, ecological damage and climate change in the long-term, the grabbing and pollution of key resources such as forests and water bodies, increased care work linked to ill-heath of family members, and increased interpersonal violence, specifically violence against women. Governments, corporations, development banks and financiers seduce communities with promises of jobs and basic services, but these rarely come to pass and almost never benefit women in communities. The benefits are typically channelled to leading members of ruling parties, powerful actors in the state, and local elites such as traditional leaders, councillors and businesspeople. In the words of a local woman activist organised under SOFLECO (*Solidarité des Femmes sur le Fleuve Congo*– Women defending the Congo River), which is contesting the construction of the Inga 3 hydropower dam in the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

> …. With Inga 1 and Inga 2 we didn't get any benefit. We can't feel any benefit from it. Nothing at all. Nor do we have any rights. They don't respect our rights, mainly SNEL [national electricity company]. They replaced the government. SNEL and the government have become siblings, maybe an older brother and a younger brother. The dam is now for their benefit. They are the ones who know the entry and the exit of the money. It's as though the village didn't have any power, as though the village didn't have any dam. However, the village has a big dam which sends power to foreign lands.[2]

Whilst extractives, energy and large-scale infrastructure development projects are posited by governments, financiers and development banks as the road to development, women and their communities across the region are contesting this development logic. These frontline communities are saying "NO!" and defending their development sovereignty. Their resistance is often met with violence and conflict as corporations and governments collude to force community compliance with large-scale extractives and infrastructure projects. The violence perpetrated upon women by the military, police or private security firms of extractives corporations often takes a highly sexualised form. This gendered violence combines

with other forms of violent repression to instil fear and quell the resistance of dissenting communities. WoMin reads this violence as one expression of a deeply oppressive extractivist economy which exploits people, land and nature for material gain. See the Rise against Repression online platform which contains cases and testimonies of land and environmental defenders across the continent contesting large-scale natural resource extraction.

In the diamond fields of Marange, Zimbabwe activist Gladys Mavhusa describes how the mining activities disrupted her and her community's way of life, and put women in danger:

> They displaced us from our lands and stripped away our freedom of movement. When our land became a restricted area, it meant that there was a boom gate to enter our town. This is where public transport would stop and the "officials" there would perform strip searches. Women would be searched in our mouths, our ears, everywhere, including private parts. Sometimes these officers did not change their gloves, using the same one on many women to the point that some of us began to develop infections. (WoMin, 2017)

In these stories and experiences of the egregious impacts of extractives lie the genesis of WoMin. The group was launched in October 2013 as a regional alliance to support women's organising and movement building to resist destructive extractivism and propose the needed development alternatives from an African Ecofeminist perspective.

The early (her)story of WoMin

When WoMin started building in 2012, there was a dearth of analysis, thinking and concrete work on women, gender and extractives, specifically mining, oil and gas extraction, across the continent. Important work on women, land and food—research, organising efforts and campaigns—had been ongoing for many years, but from the start it was determined that this would not be a primary area of focus for WoMin. Our first step was to review the available literature, mainly on the continent but also beyond, and write six papers addressing key themes and issues related to women, gender and extractives, namely, the impacts of extractivist projects on women's lives, livelihoods and communities. The foci included land and food sovereignty, artisanal mining, women's bodies, and women miners. The

research drew on a wide body of literature spanning, *inter alia,* HIV and AIDS, migration, the land and agrarian question, violence against women, and women's health. The papers were a critical entrée to the extractives terrain and have since been synthesised (see WoMin, 2020a).

In parallel with this first research effort, WoMin undertook a regional scoping of organisations and initiatives related in some way to the question of women, gender and extractives. This process would not have been possible without the support of the International Alliance on Natural Resources in Africa (IANRA), which was our host for the first few years and had a wide base of members across the continent. Friends and allies in ActionAid International, the Greengrants Global Fund, and some early funders of WoMin played a critical linking role at this time. From this process we were able to identify a preliminary layer of potential friends and allies for the WoMin Alliance, many of whom were invited to the first ever continental meeting on women, mining and extractives. This meeting took place in October 2013 in Johannesburg and drew together more than 60 activists from across the continent, as well as Brazil, Canada and the Philippines. This convening offered an important space for sharing, deepening analysis, and mapping out a programme of work together. WoMin and the first collection of research papers were launched at this regional convening (WoMin, 2013).

In the two years to follow, WoMin supported alliance members to conduct feminist participatory research in eight countries. The research was successfully concluded in seven countries—Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe—and the reports were published as a collection.[3] This research was critical for a number of reasons. It (a) drew the attention of organisations to the neglected question of mining and its impacts on women; (b) encouraged new organisations to explore a neglected area of work; (c) placed organisations in a new relationship with women in communities, now asked to play a leading role in participatory enquiry; and (d) helped to deepen knowledge on women, mining and extractives at a continental scale. The research was not without its complications, given that WoMin as a regional organisation could only provide support to prioritised countries from a distance due to significant capacity constraints. At this time, WoMin had one full-time staffer and three part-time consultants in the team. As a result, the quality of the research process and outputs varied greatly, as many organisations were challenged

by a radically different positionality relative to women in communities, and a research process that required commitment to, and some experience in, feminist and participatory analysis and practice. Despite these constraints, the process offered a route to galvanising interest and deepening knowledge on the part of participating organisations and community partners.

The research was later consolidated into a series of short pamphlets and a synthesis paper setting out the key findings of the research—"that the impacts of extractive industries on land, water and food systems, the communal wealth from which women sustain livelihoods for families and communities, are so damaging that in the long term, the cost of mineral and oil-based development tend to outweigh benefits" (WoMin, 2015). This finding challenged the analysis and promises for Africa's regeneration through mining, as outlined in the preeminent "strategy for Africa's industrialisation in the 21st Century", the African Mining Vision and accompanying policy documents.

In the very early period of building—2013 to 2014—we also undertook learning exchanges and supported regional participation in the two World Social Forums in Tunisia. WoMin convened two more regional platforms: a sub-regional women and coal exchange, "Women Stand their Ground Against Big Coal" (in Johannesburg and several field sites in South Africa, in January 2015) and a regional meeting in October 2015 on climate, energy and food, held in Port Harcourt, in the Niger Delta. WoMin's work on energy and climate, "Women Building Power" (WBP), was birthed from these two important regional convenings. In both these spaces, we established very firmly our politics of centring affected women's voices and leadership, with the NGOs playing a secondary and supportive role.

WoMin was hosted by IANRA from 2013 until January 2016, when WoMin started to operate as a fully independent organisation. WoMin's independence was decided by its oversight group of twelve women activists from eight countries, nominated at the October 2013 launch meeting. In January 2015, this group, which gave strategic guidance to WoMin in the absence of a governing body, determined that WoMin should be built as a women-led, women's rights alliance firmly oriented towards women's organising and movement building regionally. WoMin registered itself as a Trust in July 2015 and, by January 2016, had an office, a set of basic organisational and finance policies, and the rest of the architecture required to function as an organisation.

From 2014, WoMin started to consider how best to support feminist movement building through political formation. In August of that year, we cooperated with the southern African Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) and the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA) to convene a regional dialogue and exchange between key feminist political education and leadership formation efforts in the region. The space drew together WoMin, the RWA, Fórum Mulher[4], JASS (Just Associates) and Akina Mama wa Afrika[5]. Out of this grew a March 2016 WoMin feminist movement building school which was undertaken in partnership with JASS. The school would not have been possible without their collaboration, generosity, and openness to supporting the formation of a new feminist organisation. The collaboration was important in provoking WoMin in respect of its feminist orientation, its understanding of the sources of women's oppression, and its thinking about movement building in the context of extractivist capitalism.

Subsequent schools have built on lessons and provocations made in this early history and evolved in directions which are well aligned with our social ecofeminist political positioning. We have used these schools to deepen analysis of women's pivotal role in social reproduction and how this labour undergirds capital's accumulation process, women's relationships to food, land and natural resources, and how extractivist capitalism disrupts these ways of life and ways of sustaining livelihoods. Other foci include understanding the architecture of the global finance system and how local struggles are implicated within this, understanding the systemic violence of the extractivist economy, and creating space for well-being and collective care through one-on-one counselling and collective support.

The middle-years – WoMin evolves organisationally and politically

Between 2014 and early 2016, WoMin operated on a skeleton staff of two, supported by various external consultants. By the end of 2016, a year of quite rapid growth and transition, we had expanded to a team of seven, with two staff based in Zimbabwe and one staff member working out of her home base, Cameroon.

Since WoMin's inception, we have grappled with many questions related to the building of a feminist organisation. How should decisions be taken? How should staff and resources be managed? And what are the implications for accountability within and without? This commitment to feminist principles

has shaped organisational policies and many internal systems, but we still have a long road to travel. We have stumbled and made errors, like any organisation, but there has been a genuine openness to reflect, learn, explore, and make the needed adjustments. In early 2019, it became clear that we needed to return to important conversations about what feminist organisation is and how we could deepen the advancement of our political vision and commitment internally.

WoMin's work also evolved politically, starting in 2015. Coinciding with our decision to build as a women's rights, women-led alliance, the WoMin oversight group adopted a four-pronged programmatic or thematic strategy. The first arm is the focus on energy and climate justice, launched as "Women Building Power" in 2016. Our second prong is work on women's rights of consent with respect to large-scale extractives and development projects. Our third area of work is focused on extractivism, militarisation, securitisation and violence against women. WoMin's fourth work focus addresses the cross-cutting organisational commitments to advance feminist organising and movement building. The key tools supporting these processes are the feminist schools and feminist participatory action research. Allied to this is the work on ecofeminist post-extractivist development alternatives to dominant extractivism.

In all of WoMin's work historically, a position asserted at the very first convening in October 2013, we advance alternatives to the dominant development model which is profit oriented, destroys ecosystems and exacerbates climate change, exploits cheap and unpaid labour, oppresses women and people of colour, and is deeply violent. The support to feminist organising and movement building is about advancing alternative power and a different way of living and being with each other; it is therefore a central part of the alternative for which we strive. As we organise, so too do we work to build a living example of the world we dream of. The work on consent rights—specifically, the right of communities, and women within communities, to give or withhold consent for large-scale development affecting their land, livelihoods and bodies—is a core part of the development alternative. We imagine a world in which communities, societies and, very importantly, women within them, exercise democratised inclusive decision-making and a right to define and claim "development" on their own terms. Our Women Building Power work creates space to collectively craft women-centred, localised and democratically controlled renewable energy systems.

Our work on alternatives is powerfully held together by our focus on the "Just Transition", read from an African Ecofeminist perspective. This work is at an early stage, involving collaboration with more than ten other organisations and collectives committed to building a regional charter on development alternatives, as defined by the majority of African women (WoMin *et al.*, 2018).

We have also journeyed far in defining our organisational identity: are we a women's rights or feminist organisation? WoMin's positioning has been under debate since October 2013, when the regional convening ruptured into intense debate and open conflict about whether feminism should be a central facet of social and economic change in families, communities, societies and the world. Different streams of thought emerged in the discussions; some felt that there was no need to take on an explicitly "feminist" agenda and felt that holding a progressive, Marxist analysis was enough. Others suggested that a "women's rights" approach would be adequate. There were also those who felt that feminism was a Western-imposed concept that could not speak to African experiences. Our discussions over many years have led us to nuanced and not fixed positions on our political positioning. In different contexts, women activists and their organisations and movements may not be able to publicly embrace a feminist position. The threats and risks for activists may be too great. We have full respect for this stance. In other situations, an explicit feminist positioning may undermine the possibility for tactical alliance in a project or campaign. For political reasons, therefore, we may not always assert an explicit feminist position.

Our understanding about feminism has also evolved to respond to the ideas and perspectives of the grassroots women we are connected to, through 37 sites of resistance[6] across 11 countries. These sites of resistance are varied, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where we are supporting communities and allies resisting the Grand Inga Project, to Sendou, Senegal where women activists and their NGO partners are organising against a coal plant. The women at the forefront of these struggles hold the most radical positioning amongst all of our partners and allies. It is women in communities who are confronting the power of corporates and the state; these women meet the greatest risk to their livelihoods and very lives. They are brave, clear and determined to oppose large-scale extractive development which is destroying their families and communities. They are also determined to defend their way of life on the land and its connections with nature—the basis

of their very survival. Their clarity of perspective and position has shaped the emergence and ongoing development of WoMin's ecofeminist orientation.

The next iteration of deep change—WoMin matures and grapples with a world in crisis

The questions or challenges we were tasked to navigate in 2019 and beyond have become quite explicit. The first of these has been our transition to a stronger campaigning orientation. Our work to date has focused on giving support to organising and movement building, forming networks, engaging in research and learning, building clear political positions, and forging alliances. Our task in 2019 onwards has been to maximise our campaign-building efforts which link active struggles in dozens of sites across more than ten countries. Campaigns are key to maximising our role and positioning as a regional alliance.

In early 2019, WoMin was engaged in building two campaigns. The first was ***Right to Say NO***, a multi-organisational campaign asserting the right of communities, and specifically women within them, to claim their development sovereignty and give or withhold consent for large-scale projects. The second was a focused ***energy campaign*** which would target regional and international institutions and be forged hand-in-hand with friends and allies. The African Development Bank (AfDB) emerged as a possible target of this campaign, given its involvement in financing and co-financing extractivist projects across the continent, such as the Sendou Coal Plant in Senegal. We started investing quite heavily in strengthening an African network of CSOs and movements targeting the AfDB. Extensive campaigns scoping research was undertaken which, combined with work and perspectives from women organised under "Women Building Power", would inform decisions about the focus, set of demands and form of this energy campaign. In addition, the ***charter-building process addressing a just development agenda*** for African women has been a wide organising effort which will eventually translate into a campaign.

Since the first half of 2019, WoMin has undergone several shifts in its strategy and approach. Firstly, the evaluation of WoMin's first five-year strategy was implemented during 2019 and informed the development of a new five-year organisational strategy (WoMin, 2020b). The new strategy largely built on the approaches and work established during the first cycle, with the formalisation

of a fourth programme area addressing existing work on the "Alternatives to Development".

Just as we had started to implement the first operational plan under the new strategy, COVID-19 struck. By early March, we had withdrawn from all regional processes and halted staff travel. We embarked on the development of a Pan-African ecofeminist political economy analysis of the pandemic, which informed the development of a new COVID-19 strategy that would shape our approach in existing programmes, enable transformations in our ways of working and guide us in the building of new efforts.

Three major shifts in WoMin's analysis, approach and work are evident over the last nine months. Firstly, we have begun a new project called "Organising in a Time of Crisis". This aims to build resources and support for allies and partners that will enable new ways of working, organising, and acting in and through the perpetual crises related to climate, environment, conflict and war, migration, pandemics and failed economies. Secondly, given the significant transition into online working that COVID-19 has prompted, WoMin has invested in the technology, tools and skills we need to facilitate meetings, exchanges, training and public events online.

Thirdly, in the early period of the pandemic, WoMin identified the question of debt crisis as a critical question to take up with other groups. Debt impedes the ability of governments to mobilise financial resources to respond to the pandemic; the debt crisis is directly linked to resource extraction which spirits African wealth out of countries through illicit and licit financial flows, and which fuels new rounds of resource grabbing as countries hock their resources to settle debt and secure new loans. The call for debt cancellation must be argued for on the basis of the growing climate crisis and historically differentiated responsibility for carbon emissions causing climate change. WoMin has built a new partnership with the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt and to date, we have cooperated to build a political statement which has more than 300 signatories and established a loose Pan-African network. WoMin has also advanced the development of a month of action to Cancel the Debt, which will run from 20 February to 20 March 2021.

These new efforts and shifts in ways of working have been triggered by the COVID-19 crisis but will be sustained as WoMin, its allies and partners, and the women we stand with, navigate a world and an Africa in crisis.

Endnotes

1. Names were changed to protect the security of persons who gave this interview. Activists Alice and Sarah tell their story at the National Association for Progressive Environmentalists, Kwataninza Farmers Groups and WoMin: Uganda Feminist School, July 2018.
2. WoMin interview, Democratic Republic of Congo, December 2017.
3. See https://womin.africa/archive/country-studies/
4. Fórum Mulher is a women's rights network in Mozambique. They work to promote women's autonomy and solidarity, and advocate for women's economic, social, reproductive, and political rights through coalitions at the local, regional, and national levels.
5. Akina Mama wa Afrika (Kiswahili for "African women") is a feminist Pan-African development organisation based in Kampala, Uganda. The central pillars of the organisation's work are feminist leadership development, research and documentation, policy influencing and movement building.
6. A site of resistance could be a single community or many communities, all unified in their response to a large-scale mining, extractives or infrastructure project. WoMin is closely connected to, and supports, movements and organisations in 11 countries: Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

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Global Rights – Gender on Extractive Agendas

Abiodun Baiyewu

This Profile focuses on Global Rights' work on natural resource governance. Global Rights is a non-governmental organisation based in Nigeria that works on a spectrum of issues, including equitable resource governance, human security and access to remedies, women's rights, and security and human rights programmes. The organisation's programmes address governance failures that exacerbate the disenfranchisement and violations of the rights of the poor and marginalised, women, and victims of discrimination (Global Rights, 2014).

Gender is a crosscutting theme across all Global Rights' thematic work. We could rightly be described as a feminist organisation engaged in mainstream human rights work. At the same time, that would raise the question whether it is possible to do human rights work without mainstreaming gender. The aim of this article is to give a glimpse of our work and explain why gender must matter on extractive agendas.

Our natural resource governance work is contextualised in an extractive-rich country in which commercial quantities of either hydrocarbons or solid minerals—sometimes both, are found in virtually every state. While the concentration of hydrocarbons is greatest in the southern parts of Nigeria, solid minerals are spread throughout the country. Gold, tin, columbite, tantalite, lead-zinc[1], manganese, uranium, iron ore, industrial minerals such as kaolin and clay, and precious stones such as ruby, sapphire and beryl are some of the solid minerals regularly mined in Nigeria. Although Nigeria's hydrocarbon industry is well developed and accounts for about 86% of its total exports (OPEC, 2020), its mining sector is still largely underdeveloped. Mining companies account for only 20% of the sector, while the remaining 80% of mining operations in Nigeria is artisanal. As a result, and because of poor governance of the sector, mining contributes a paltry 0.18% to the national Gross Domestic Product (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

While these figures appear to suggest that mining in Nigeria is not lucrative, a holistic view of illicit financial flows from the industry suggests otherwise. For example, experts suggest that Nigeria loses annually at least $1,54 billion to illegal

gold mining alone (Ikyaa, 2016). The daily illicit trade in blue sapphire is worth over N100 million (approximately $260,000) in Taraba State alone (Magaji, 2018).

The environmental consequences of mining on the country are, however, not commensurate with its contribution to the economy. Virtually all states of the federation face environmental mining damage ranging from water pollution to soil degradation, toxic effluences released into the atmosphere, deforestation and, on a few occasions, landslides. Whether the mining is done by large corporations or artisanal miners, mining host communities inordinately bear the costs of this poorly-regulated industry and sometimes pay for it with their lives. In addition, while mining is a male-dominated industry, it is women who bear the brunt of its environmental and economic consequences due to their societal roles as primary caregivers, as well as the effects of traditional land holding structures and patterns of subsistence livelihoods.

When Death Knocks

What do you say to a dry-eyed mother who has lost four children to artisanal gold-mining-related lead poisoning? How do you ensure that her pain is heard beyond her community and that she is able to participate in preventing further deaths there? These were questions my colleagues and I were confronted with in the Zamfara State lead poisoning disaster. It resulted in the deaths of more than 700 children, between 2010 and 2012, with at least 2,500 others receiving treatment for elevated levels of lead in their blood. The disaster was also responsible for several miscarriages and the loss of thousands of economic livestock in the communities affected, further impoverishing already struggling families.

The Zamfara gold-mining-related lead poisoning is the worst recorded incident of lead poisoning in the world (Pure Earth, 2011). It resulted from the processing of gold nuggets by artisanal miners in homesteads in addition to regular mine sites, in order to meet demands by middlemen to Chinese prospectors. Unlike most other parts of the world, the gold alluvial stream in Nigeria coexists with large lead deposits which are highly toxic when ingested. The lead dust from the nuggets therefore contaminated the homes in which they were being processed and resulted in the infection of the blood streams of children and even adults in the communities across Zamfara State.

In rural West Africa, as in most of the Global South, when we go into

communities, we first have to engage with the leadership of the community to gain their acceptance. Zamfara State was no different. We met with all-male councils which, while they did their best to describe the challenges faced by their communities, could not imagine that the women had experienced the crisis differently than they had. When we requested to speak with the women, the leaders would ignore our request, saying that the women would not give us any new information. I, in particular, was told I was a "man" and so could not interact with the women unchaperoned, in spite of the fact that I am female! A man! In this part of the country, women are rarely seen and never heard. Men could speak at decision-making levels; women could not. Men control money, women do not. Men are free agents, while women are perpetual minors, subject to the authority of their fathers until they get married, and thereafter, to that of their husbands. Since none of these gendered characteristics applied to me, therefore I did not tick the boxes for "woman", in their context. The nuances of their gendered social classification of me are the biggest signs of the gender inequity in their community.

Father after father narrated how their wives informed them that their children were ill and how they immediately took charge and took the children to the healers or the clinic, where most of the children eventually died. Speaking with the health personnel at the clinic, we were told that, unlike the mothers, who had been the primary caregivers till disaster struck, most of the fathers could not provide accurate information about their children's symptoms, the timelines of their decline, nor any other fundamental details about their children that might have helped the immediate healthcare responders. Our early town hall meetings had women watching from the fringes, not culturally attuned to making their opinions heard in public forums.

But as we began to speak with the women individually in the privacy of their homes and to engage some of the women at the town hall meetings that were more liberal regarding the participation of women, we heard a very different perspective on this disaster from the one the men (completely believing their version to be true) had presented. Woman after woman shared with us how they felt helpless, unable to save their children. "We had realised early that the sickness was not like the occasional cholera outbreak, but that it began when the men started to bring the nuggets home to grind, but no one listened to us", one woman whispered as she narrated how she lost three children to gold-mining-related lead

poisoning. It was in the muted tones of a cluster of women that we also learned that the milling machines were given to their husbands by middlemen to Chinese prospectors. "I warned my husband that he was bringing death home. But did he listen?" Women said to us, "Will you teach us how to stop the wind that causes these deaths?" "You tell us government is responsible for protecting our rights to a healthy environment, but how do we hold them accountable here at Anka, so far from where government is in Gusau? And remember we are just women." And so, the learning and capacity building began.

The tragedy in Zamfara did not insulate us against the deep sense of grief that we faced again in a repeat incident, barely 18 months later, when another 28 children died in Shikira community in Niger state in exactly the same circumstances as in Zamfara. Once more, we were confronted with women who had lost their children and livestock to artisanal gold-mining-related lead poisoning and who felt disenfranchised—invisible and helpless in the face of their tragedies.

These catastrophic losses are not the only points where we have been challenged with the gendered inequities that confront extractive host communities. We struggle with these at virtually every turn of our work on natural resource governance across the country.

Gendered Impacts

There are differences in the way mineral extractive activities affect men and women in host communities. For instance, extractive activities are predominantly skewed to favouring the employment of men both socially and, in Nigeria, legally. The Labour Act (CAP L1 LFN 2004) precludes women from working in underground mines for no apparent reason other than their gender (S. 56(1)). So, while men may have new employment opportunities, the women in the communities frequently speak of having their traditional livelihoods disrupted by these same extractive activities. In most rural communities, where extractive activities are almost always situated, women engage in mainly agrarian livelihoods and, according to them, the loss of their lands to mineral extractive activities also often means the end of their agricultural livelihoods. In certain instances, when their men leave their farmlands to engage in mining activities, women are forced to combine their spouses' agricultural lots with their own, thereby doubling their labour burden without attendant benefits. The women point out that when such spouses, especially

artisanal miners, migrate seasonally from their communities to new mining sites, the burden of caring for their families in the absence of their spouses also becomes particularly challenging.

A major complaint the women never fail to make is that their tasks as primary caregivers also become more onerous when extractive activities degrade their environment and pollute the water sources on which their communities rely. For example, Okobo community in Kogi State lost its only potable water source at the onset of coal mining in its communities. Women from that community led us on foot for an hour to watch them fetch water from a neighbouring community, and then walk another hour back, resulting in wasted "women hours". They also tell us that the effluences produced by extractive activities leave them struggling to find ways of protecting their families from dust and other emissions, and their wards fall ill more frequently. They struggle with lower crop yields due to soil contamination and the degradation of their community's topography, which also often results in accidents in which their children fall into abandoned mine pits. Sometimes these pits get flooded and children drown in them. The effects of their changed topography are not just physical but also impinge on their culture and everyday lifestyle; until they explain these nuances, one might be oblivious of their impact.

The influx of migrant mine workers (single men, or men unaccompanied by their families, often from outside the communities) into a host community engenders a spike in insecurity for these women and their wards as they become more susceptible to different types of violence. This includes narcotics-induced sexual violence, and the pillage of entire communities by bandits seeking to rob miners of their nuggets (Global Rights, 2013). Mining companies, in a bid to secure their operations, often employ physical structures such as electric fences and security forces, which may further compromise the safety and wellbeing of women in these communities. The decrease in traditional livelihoods and increased demand for transactional sex may increase the prevalence of venereal diseases as well as unplanned pregnancies in the community. Households that have lost their livelihoods or now have to depend on a reduced or single income struggle to keep their wards in school. As many women explain, they had to encourage their underaged children to work at mining, especially as artisanal miners, to augment their family's resources. The surge in migrant populations also strains the social infrastructure in the communities. Roads degrade faster and potable water may be

rationed, with mining companies and their staff having access to the greater share. Rents rise astronomically due to the increase in demand; schools and hospitals (where they exist) are unable to meet the needs of the enlarged populations. Additionally, the general costs of goods and services undergo massive hikes due to inflation occasioned by increased demand and limited supply. Needless to say, women, and the families they provide primary care for, inordinately suffer the consequences.

The mining sector is stacked against women with subtle and blatant forms of gender discrimination. In Nigeria, less than 20% of women farmers own the land on which they work (Munn, 2019). Most of them gain access to these properties through marriage or their extended family structures, with the ownership rights vested in the male members of such families. The implication of this is that women are effectively precluded from the right to reject mining activities on their land or to receive compensation and other benefits which may accrue to a male landowner in areas where mineral extraction is occurring. At the same time, women lose their sources of livelihood. For these same reasons, women say that they are often excluded from discussions between their communities and mining companies which are aimed at generating community development agreements. These gendered differences point to the erroneous assumption that the host community from which mining consent is being sought and with which the Community Development Agreement is made is a homogenous group. It is further assumed that as a homogenous community, the benefits of the foregoing agreement will be equally extended to both men and women, whose needs are assumed to be similar. The women in such communities insist that they are not.

Moreover, any support designed to assist small-scale and artisanal miners is unlikely to benefit women. For example, S.91 of the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act (Act No. 20, 2007) mandates the provision of skills, technology and extension services to small scale and artisanal mining, which ordinarily should benefit both male and female miners. However, women are mainly involved in the supply chain and not actual mining, from which the Labour Act tends to preclude them (see S.56 (1)). As a result, women are unlikely to derive benefit from the foregoing provision unless the supervising ministry develops a clear policy of affirmative action for women miners. With respect to large-scale mining, women rarely participate in such operations due to the foregoing reasons and lack of access to capital.

Nothing About Us Without Us

"Nothing about us without us"[2] is a popular slogan which affirms the democratic norm that policies should not be formulated without the full and direct participation of persons or groups that will be affected by the policy. While the slogan often has most civil society and development experts nodding and declaring their allegiance to this principle, it is rarely followed in practice. Many times, we forget (and sometimes are too lazy) to share control of interventions with the persons most affected.

The question is, how do we do that in a strongly patriarchal society, in which even the government is a part of the system stacked against women? How do we hope to put women in the front seat of decision making on issues that affect them, especially in communities where female literacy is as low as two per cent and poverty is endemic? The first and most important thing we do is that **we listen.** We listen to the women's perspectives on their problems. **We learn** first-hand from them how they are affected. We watch and learn what is most important to them—how they would rather live as opposed to how we desire for them to live. **We share** our knowledge of the laws and policies as they stand, and of the proven impact of the mineral extraction activities in their environment. **They facilitate** the design of interventions through a **solutions lab** technique—a facilitated learning and collective problem-solving technique in which we engage our partner communities in jointly identifying the underlying causes of problems and in designing interventions. **We follow** their lead. Walking hand in hand and side by side with the women in the most affected communities, insisting that **their voices** must be heard, we amplify the voices of the most vulnerable. Nothing can be more empowering.

Endnotes

1. Lead-zinc is a mineral that is a mixture of two distinct compounds. Because lead is a soft metal, it usually combines with another mineral. This is why we have lead alloyed with gold which has led to incidents of poisoning in Nigeria (see Pure Earth, 2011).
2. The saying has its origins in Central European political traditions. Loosely translated into Latin—"*nihil de nobis, sine nobis*"—it was the political motto that provided the name for and helped establish Poland's 1505 constitutional legislation, *Nihil novi*. This was the first transfer of governing authority from the monarch to the parliament (Davies, 1984). It subsequently became a byword for democratic norms; its English form came into popular use in disability activism during the 1990s (Charlton, 2000).

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Feminist Solidarity in the Resistance to Extractivism and Construction of Alternatives:

Charmaine Pereira speaks with Marianna Fernandes and Nzira de Deus.

Charmaine Pereira spoke to two of the feminists organising a path-breaking transnational project of feminist mobilisation and solidarity building across three former Portuguese colonies—Mozambique, Angola and Brazil. The discussion focused on what was involved in bringing together women from these three countries for a week-long workshop in Maputo to share experiences and strengthen feminist solidarity in struggles against extractivism. All participants were actively engaged in such struggles and women's efforts to construct alternatives to extractivism were integral to the overall process. The workshop organisers were feminists from *Fórum Mulher*[1], World March of Women, *MovFemme*[2], *Ondjango Feminista*[3], and WLSA[4], based in Mozambique, Angola and Switzerland, and the workshop was organised with support from Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). The edited conversation below took place via Skype on 28 August 2019 in Maputo, Geneva and Abuja. Marianna Fernandes, a Brazilian based in Switzerland, is an active member of the World March of Women, a feminist anti-capitalist movement. Nzira de Deus is the Mozambican National Co-ordinator of the World March of Women and works at *Fórum Mulher*, a member organisation of the World March of Women. Further information about the workshop content is available in Fernandes and Manusse (2020).

Charmaine Pereira: Can you tell me how the idea of this solidarity meeting and consciousness raising event was born?

Marianna Fernandes: It was in the context of the Feminist Reflection and Action meetings.[5] People from Brazil, Mozambique and Angola worked together in one group and we started discussing how useful it would be if we could put grassroots women from these three countries, which have such historical ties, together in a workshop to discuss their struggles. And not only their struggles but what

alternatives are being built, because there *are* alternatives to the current models of exploitation of nature and of people. So, we talked about it—that it could be something interesting to do and emphasising from the beginning that our goal was to put grassroots women in dialogue together.

Nzira de Deus: We are in a region where most of the countries speak English and we speak Portuguese, so it is not easy to strengthen our struggle and to connect with other countries that are English-speaking. We saw this as an opportunity, especially for rural women, to share their analyses and experiences of what is happening on a day-to-day basis and hear about the challenges that women from other countries are suffering. Brazil, especially, is so far away that we think that the problems are only in our countries, or in our region, but this was an opportunity to see that the problems are also in other continents. The idea was to bring together this diversity, not just in terms of language but also region and continent, and reflect, build alternatives and strengthen solidarity among us as women, as people, and have some hope to change our countries.

CP: Can you tell me how you went about choosing the rural women? Where were they coming from?

ND: Marianna chose from Brazil, I chose from Mozambique, and Cecilia and Sizaltina chose from Angola. In Mozambique, we started by looking at the regions that are affected by extractivism and at women at the forefront of the struggles, and at women who were already working with us in these debates and reflections on the situation in the country, or region, or community.[6] We started to map these women. The women were also part of other movements like Via Campesina, and they were connected with us, Via Campesina and the World March of Women. They share the same ideology and vision of the world we all want. So, we picked these women and invited them to join us and share what is going on and how they are facing the challenges in their environment.

MF: It was similar for us. It was very important that the women participating in the workshop were actually at the frontlines of the resistance to transnational corporations and extractivist enterprises. And we wanted the women to be representative of Brazil's diversity. Of course, we had a limited number of people we could bring but we tried to have some regional diversity and also bring women that are engaged in the frontlines of resistance. These are places where there are concrete struggles happening: places where these women are actually facing

challenges such as massive agribusiness enterprises, or having their livelihoods threatened by the possibility of the construction of huge hydroelectricity power dams, or women who are struggling against discrimination and the emergence and strengthening of racist public policies being implemented by the current right-wing government in Brazil. It was really important that these women were representative of the context that Brazil is living right now.

CP: And how many women did you have from each of the countries?

ND: From Mozambique, I think there were about 12, because we had a lack of funds to bring more. We had five from Brazil and two from Angola.

MF: I think there were more from Mozambique. There was one day that we went for a visit to a co-operative of peasant workers. There were the women in the workshop but also women that we met on our way and in the activities that we did outside. So, I would say that between 30 and 40 women were somehow touched by this experience.

ND: And from Mozambique, they were not just from Maputo but mainly from outside, in the communities that are affected by extractivism. So, Cabo Delgado, Tete, Manica—they are not from Maputo. We had to bring them to Maputo.

CP: How long was the event altogether?

MF: Five days, plus the day that they arrived and the day that they left.

CP: Were there any challenges in deciding who should come?

MF: The challenge when selecting the participants from Brazil was the limited space. We wanted to bring more, certainly, but we also wanted to be careful that the women who would attend would be able to participate fully and we did not want them to feel out of place. Four out of the five had never left the country before. Some of them had never even left their villages. You can imagine that this was not an easy task for us, the organisers, because it meant that we needed to give much more assistance than just the workshop time. For example, three of them had to get passports; they did not have passports. So, there were many logistical and bureaucratic difficulties that demanded a lot of organisation from us. One of them lived in a rural neighbourhood where, in order to get her passport, she needed to travel over I don't know how many hours of road, but she couldn't travel alone, so we had to have someone pick her up. There were many challenges in this sense. We also tried to observe diversity in terms of age, ethnic background and type of struggle in which the women are engaged.

ND: For us, we tried to mix them but also to have women from different regions. Mozambique is a large country. The women who were coming from outside had to take a bus to leave their community. We do not have good roads and it is very difficult to travel by road. From the community to the village and from the village or the province level to take a plane and come in to Maputo—it was a very stressful experience, especially for the women of Cabo Delgado. This is a province that was, and still is, suffering armed conflicts and the government does not know which groups are attacking the communities. So, for the women to have this mobility was also not so easy. Our army has been asking people, "Where are you going, who are you?" And people are also afraid to move because they do not know who is who. It is a very critical context that we have here. We have already moved into a conflict context; people are being killed and most of them are women.

CP: Is that primarily in Cabo Delgado?

ND: Yes.

CP: Although all three countries have Portuguese as their official language, were the participants all Portuguese-speaking?

MF: The Brazilians were all Portuguese-speaking, their first language is Portuguese. But I think that there was a little bit of difficulty with the accent. Brazilian and Mozambican Portuguese have different accents and I know that this posed a challenge for some women. But I think that, overall, it went well because we tried to use methodologies that were very participatory: the women worked in groups and would discuss amongst themselves, and then present to the other women. We tried to reduce the communication problem that could emerge. But I know sometimes the Mozambican Portuguese was hard for the Brazilians to follow and maybe vice versa. But it did not stop the workshop from happening (laughs)!

ND: For Mozambique, Portuguese is not the only language that we speak. In rural areas and communities, we have local languages. The women that attended the meeting speak Portuguese. Not at top level, because they were not so literate, but they were able to talk and I believe that it was enough. In other circumstances, if they had been able to express themselves in local languages, I believe they could have been even more outspoken. But I think they were very comfortable and they tried to participate actively. And it was not difficult to understand the Portuguese from Brazil since we have contact with the Brazilian community through television; we see a lot of soap operas. We are very familiar with Brazilian Portuguese, which

is very nice to hear. For us, it is soft, it's like music....

MF: That's nice (laughs). I will share that.

ND: It was funny because we understood that the women from Brazil saw us differently, like, "You speak Portuguese, but in a different way". It was interesting.

MF: It was certainly interesting to see the contrast between the situations. For Mozambique, since they have Brazilian soap operas and maybe they receive a lot of information about Brazil, the language might not have been a big challenge. But for the Brazilians, it was a challenge. Unfortunately this says a lot about how, although these are countries – *people* more than countries – that share a lot in terms of their history, their current struggles and their creativity, still, in Brazil, we hardly hear about Mozambique or Angola. So, I think that this is also a victory of our initiative: we started building bridges. Of course, there are other bridges, but we started one through feminist solidarity. I think that is very powerful.

ND: Yes, definitely.

CP: And the five days that you had together, how did you organise that time? *(Both laugh)*

MF: Everyone got very tired afterwards. Our workshop theme was "Feminist Solidarity in the Resistance Against Extractivism and the Construction of Alternatives". So, we tried to break down the theme into crucial issues. The first thing that we saw was the need to discuss sexual division of labour and the organisation of systemic oppressions, like capitalism, racism and neo-colonialism, and how these are connected with patriarchy. This was already like one-and-a-half days. After that, we also wanted to discuss how the body and the territory are connected. This is not necessarily because of an innate association between Woman and Nature, but because of the sexual division of labour and the way women interact with nature through their multiple forms of labour, be it productive, reproductive, visible or invisibilised. So we wanted to have this discussion about how our body is our first territory, and how the system that exploits nature is the same system that exploits women's bodies, sexualities and labour force. These were key issues that we wanted to discuss and we tried to dedicate one session to each of these issues. And of course, to alternative-building.

ND: We tried to create a dynamic that involved presentations but not PowerPoints, just talk, combined with group work. We ate together many times.

MF: Yeah! This was the most amazing part!

ND: We had moments of celebration, and we had the opportunity to walk around, not just stay in one room. Work inside, work outside. We tried to combine different spaces and do different things. We had a party too, which was very nice.
MF: Many of the sessions happened under the mango tree of the FES office. We had a lot of dancing, of course. When it comes to Brazil, Angola and Mozambique, there is dancing, clapping and music for everything. I really think that a strong point of this workshop was the methodology.
ND: Other strong points that stand out were going to the field, visiting a community where women had the opportunity to explain what was going on in that association or community. Interacting with other participants and eating the food prepared by the women in that community was also very interesting. We had these interactive moments that were very powerful. We talked, we agreed, and sometimes we agreed to disagree. Sometimes we had a common understanding on some points, and other times we would say, "OK, we don't understand". But it was very relaxing and very spontaneous. I think it was very strong in that way.
CP: Were there some issues on which you disagreed?
ND: On the understanding of some concepts. I remember when we were talking about agroecology.
MF: Yeah!
ND: We had a debate on "what is what", how we understand things, and we came to a certain perspective, especially on this point, about what is, in fact, agroecology.
CP: The debate on "what is what", was that about how you come to an understanding of anything?
MF: I think it was interesting because sometimes we had different names to refer to the same thing, or sometimes we used the same names to talk about different things. What was interesting was that it was not a conceptual discussion, it was a discussion of our practices based on our daily experiences, on things that we live every day. So, I remember, for instance, in the discussion about agroecology, that some of us were saying, "Agroecology is something new", and then others recalled, "No, agroecology is just rescuing ancestral knowledge that was taken from us and which we are now claiming". In this sense, there was a healthy disagreement. In the end, we were basically talking about the same thing.
CP: So, embedded in the process of talking about practices and experiences, you were also discussing concepts?

ND: Yes, that's what we wanted to say: we were discussing how we understood the concepts, the practice versus the theory, and how we felt about this. For us in the movement in Mozambique, working with women who are not so literate, it was very important for them to be able to name something, to say, for example, "OK, I can simplify things. The short name for all of this is agroecology. So if I am preserving the natural environment, and I am engaged, I understand the importance of women's participation, decision making, and I put all this information in one package, all of what I'm doing, the name for this is agroecology". Because sometimes we see a lot of words being used to explain one thing. When we finished giving an explanation, we would use a word that is theoretical. So, to talk about the patriarchal system, we would say, "We don't want the men beating women, we don't want violence, we don't want to be exploited." To end the discussion, we explained that the name for these practices is patriarchy. It was very interesting to have this discussion. Brazil has a long history of talking and reflecting about this and Brazilian feminists are very articulate in how they explain things. For us it was very important to talk about the concepts.

MF: To reinforce what Nzira has just said, among the Brazilians, there was someone who could read but could not write. We needed to be sure that this would not stop her from fully participating. Sometimes we are very colonised in our imagination of what knowledge is, right?

CP: Yes.

MF: So, we also tried to get out of this by understanding that just because someone cannot write, it does not mean that she has no knowledge. On the contrary. For example, as soon as we stepped out of the room and started moving in the field, this woman would name a lot of the plant species that she saw. I can read and I had no idea what I was looking at. She was able to name them and give their uses. We were valuing our diverse knowledges, putting them together, without saying that one is more important than the other.

CP: That is a really critical point, I think, and as you said, the methodology you used was central to that. I want to know how, through this five-day event, you were able to surface two other concepts: gender and power. How did they come out in the course of your interactions?

MF: We did not use the word "gender" much. I don't recall us using the word "gender". I don't know if you remember this, Nzira.

ND: No, I don't remember.

MF: But that does not mean that gender discussions were not there, of course they were. We used a lot of other categories, such as "sexual division of labour" and "patriarchy". And we talked about "woman" a lot. I think that when the discussion about "power" came about, it ended up being a discussion about gender as well. For instance, I recall very clearly the discussion about power; it was when we discussed violence, domestic violence, or the types of violence a woman has faced. Many of the women knew that the reason men were inflicting violence on them was *because* they were women. This came out in many of the testimonies, because a lot of women shared very delicate stories with us there. I think that the discussions about gender and power were both grounded in concrete experiences at the level of each woman but at one point we realised these are shared experiences. Everyone in this room, at one point or another, had faced violence somehow.

ND: I think that another moment for discussing power was when we talked about the power of the international corporations and also countries that have tried to control all the natural resources of other countries. We talked about the capitalist system and how it works and why it happens like this. So, we talked about power related to the corporations and to domination, the move to dominate the Global South and why and how we have to resist. And why this is happening. And also, a bit about justice.

CP: When you did get to talk about resistance, how did you do that?

MF: The women were talking about their communities. We would talk about, let's suppose that a corporation was doing X, and they would say, "In my community, it happened in this way ..." and someone else would say, "Oh no, in my community, what we see is [...]". The discussion was based on the context, so what was their struggle? If it was against agribusiness, if it was against mining, if it was against hydroelectric dams – what is the diagnostic of the reality that they live? And then, what women are doing there to face the problem. In the case of Brazil, they are practising agroecology in one territory. In another, the women organise in women-only groups where they try to influence local politics. They are joining national movements of women. These were the moments when we shared what we are doing to resist. And there is no ready-made formula to resist, it depends on the context. But one thing that became clear is the power that we have when we share, when we learn what other women in other territories are doing, their situation may be a little bit different but overall there are many similarities in the

way that extractivist industries and companies operate. When we learn that others are resisting in other territories, this has a very powerful effect.

ND: When we talk about resistance, we emphasise that it's not wrong to understand the importance of preserving our natural resources, our environment and our land or of defending our territories; it is important for us and for future generations. And we are not buying the discourse that says, "This [the status quo] is development, it's our future". So, resistance is also understood as the possibility to question, to raise our voices and make demands. This is what we as Mozambicans do. When you're not contesting what the government and companies are saying, if you keep silent, that means you're accepting what they are saying, or assuming that what government and companies are bringing are the best for us. Resistance is also understood for us as the possibility to choose and decide, particularly decide what we want and what is best for us. It is also understanding that this can come with consequences because the system wants to move in one direction, but we believe that our direction and way of doing things are the best ones. Another form of resistance that we talk about is defending our seeds; we don't accept the use of GMOs. We say that our native seeds are the best; we know how to preserve our seeds, we don't want to use GM seeds. Another aspect is building solidarity: when we come together and support each other. We do it a lot when we see companies that are coming to privatise common goods like water, we contest, and we say "No". We use our bodies to say "No", because this is a common good and we need to use this water for everybody, no one can come and privatise it. We have groups that mobilise themselves to go to stop privatisation efforts, saying "we're not going to move ourselves from this place until you stop". This has happened in Mozambique in certain communities. These are some examples that we can count and as Marianna says, they are based on our lives and our experiences and what happens in our contexts. When we take some actions, or even when we do not take action, we're conscious that this action that we are or are not taking is to stop a proposal that we disapprove of.

CP: Are women very engaged in the struggle against GMOs in Mozambique?

ND: Yes, yes, women are very engaged in this struggle. Government had already started to take on some of the GMOs, testing and giving GM seeds to farmers. We've been contesting this and the rural women gave a declaration to the president, saying something along the lines of, "We do not want GMOs, why are you forcing

us? Our demands are here, please follow the demands because we are the people, we are the farmers, you have to respect what we want". So, from that step which the women took, the president retreated. Now, what government has said is that they want to appoint one person to sit at the table and talk. They understand that women have the capacity to analyse the phenomena, the context and the steps that government and companies are taking and say, "No, this is not what we want". The women have knowledge already; they also know what is happening in other countries and communities. So, they are engaged in the process and they have a clear position on what they do and don't want.

CP: There are anti-extractivist groups and movements out there in different countries. What would you say is distinctive about a feminist approach to extractivism?

MF: It is a tricky question. A lot of the women who are engaged in struggles against extractivism may be organised in women-only movements and also in movements where the majority are women or where the group is more mixed. Does that make them less feminist? I don't think so. But I also think that it is important to be attentive to the feminist dimension, to push this agenda. It's thanks to feminism that women are now able to say that the system that allows extractivist companies to come into a given territory and steal the sources of water and appropriate land and do all of these things is the same system that profits from keeping women's labour unpaid or underpaid or devalued. I think that feminism is what allows us to claim for societal change and not merely reforms, because we know that some agendas do not contemplate issues related to equality, issues related to feminist agendas. It will only be possible to stop all these things that we are denouncing regarding extractivist enterprises in a world where women are not oppressed. Otherwise, it is not feasible because the problem is systemic. When women are engaged and are claiming feminism, they make this connection clear. And I think that this may be what distinguishes feminist debates and practices against extractivism from others that are not clearly feminist.

ND: I totally agree with Marianna. I think that a feminist approach is deeper. I think it brings different angles of analysis because it's [about] fighting for a society where we are equal and there is no discrimination. It's fighting for justice, for freedom, for peace. I think that Marianna was very clear. We have different ways of fighting this battle, and different spaces in which to do it. There is no single

feminism, there are feminisms. But there are principles that we cannot negotiate and we have to focus on those principles rather than on the things that we disagree about. If we are together on the principles of feminism, we can move.

MF: Just to give an example, Charmaine, which I think is interesting. I remember one of the women who is organised in a mixed group that is fighting against massive flower cultivation with pesticides that is actually contaminating water and appropriating land on behalf of bigger private companies. And she is in this mixed group of men and women. The women from her community decided that it was important to self-organise in women-only groups. And she shared with us during the workshop that one of her colleagues in the women-only group was being beaten by her husband, who also happened to be in the struggle against the massive flower cultivation enterprise. The women got together and first they approached her to say, "This cannot continue, this cannot go on". But then after that they approached *him* to say, "Look, this makes no sense that you are fighting against the initiatives of the companies to steal our land and our water, and you beat your wife at home. It's contradictory, you cannot do both". So, the women know that it is not OK to fight against extractivism and still come home and beat your wife. On the contrary, the women and men need to be together on the frontline, be equally entitled to political voice, and be equally respected as leaders and activists, to face challenges.

ND: Yeah, that's it. What the women are still asking me is when we're going to...

MF: To do the next meeting! (Laughs)

ND: We could receive everyone here or go to Angola or to Brazil, to see how the women are fighting, how they are resisting, how they are building alternatives. The workshop experience was so powerful for them and they want more. And we are saying, where are we going to find the resources to do this? Because after the workshop...

MF: That is a challenge as well.

ND: Yeah, it is a challenge. After the workshop they felt that they had this sorority. They have this community, they are not alone and they can scream; when they scream, the others in other continents, other countries, they are listening. There is someone there, they're listening there. So, it is very important to have these moments together. It was a very beautiful experience which I had the opportunity to engage, I liked it so much because we were three young women that were

pushing this process. We had another colleague, but she was so busy and we tried to do our best. I felt so proud of us for making it happen. It shows that we are really connected; we were able to engage on this and we also gained some respect.

CP: This conversation and the report of the workshop (Fernandes and Manusse, 2020) complement one another because the report is full of information about the thinking, the analysis and the politics that were being grappled with in a very concrete way during the workshop. Thanks so much to both of you!

Endnotes

1 *Fórum Mulher* - the Women's Forum or Network in Mozambique.
2 *Movfemme – Movimento das jovens feministas de Moçambique* (Young feminists' movement of Mozambique).
3 *Ondjango Feminista* - Feminist Gathering, Angola. Mouzinho and Cutaia (2017) discuss the background to the formation of the *Ondjango Feminista*.
4. Women and Law Southern Africa.
5. The first meeting of the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group was held in Maputo in November 2017; this and subsequent meetings have been convened by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Participants at the first Meeting comprised 27 women—feminist scholars, activists, trade unionists and political party members—from 16 African countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland (renamed by the King as Eswatini) and Uganda. Since 2017, the African Feminist Reflection and Action Group has been working on alternatives to current models of economic development and political participation.
6. The feature article by Teresa Cunha and Isabel Casimiro in this issue presents a feminist perspective on extractivism in Mozambique and women's efforts to resist this and identify alternatives.

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Negotiating Gender in the Global South: The Politics of Domestic Violence Policy, edited by Sohela Nazneen, Sam Hickey and Eleni Sifaki. London, New York: Routledge, 2019.

Shireen Hassim

Three decades have passed since dramatic changes in authoritarian societies – the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of one-party and military regimes in Africa and Latin America – generated feminist interest in formal political institutions. A substantial body of literature in the social sciences began to seriously address the question of what kinds of gains could be made by engaging the institutions of liberal democracy. It is possible now to trace the trajectory of these debates: from the theorisation of the possibilities of processes of transition for inserting feminist (or at least gender equality) claims into democratic pacts, to the building of transnational coalitions, to designing "friendly" institutions (such as national machineries and quotas representation), to studies of the performance of women in parliaments (both celebratory and, inevitably, critical), to studies of the impacts of legislation and policy. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified forty years ago by the United Nations, inaugurating forms of transnational engagement that foregrounded the centrality of formal institutions. Laws, rights, policies and parliaments have become the nexus institutions acting as the depository of feminist hopes and dreams.

In *Negotiating Gender in the Global South: The Politics of Domestic Violence Policy*, the team of authors revisit a central animating question: what conditions, institutions and politics facilitate the introduction and implementation of policies to address gender inequalities? They use a single issue – addressing domestic violence – as a lens to explore the complexities of institutional and political opportunities and constraints, and they proceed from the experiences of activists and policy advocates in the Global South. Both are productive framings. Gender-based violence, it could be argued, is a problem that can be a fulcrum

for broad-based feminist politics with an appeal beyond class and race. As a policy issue, it can allow feminists of various stripes to craft alliances and make the connections between public and private expressions of power. As the book also highlights, it is an issue that crosses the terrains of global norm-setting and local agendas. Additionally, and not least, given the preponderance of theory based on the particular experiences of engaging European and North American political institutions, the use of a series of case studies in the Global South (Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda) to build theory is very welcome. The book also serves as an opportunity to review the literature on the politics of gender equity policies with the advantage of being able to analyse policy interventions over a relatively long period of (feminist) time. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent global campaigns for increasing women's representation in the state, there have been generational shifts in the composition of parliaments, allowing an assessment of presumed virtuous relationships between descriptive representation and substantive outcomes.

The book is rich both empirically and theoretically, and will be a touchstone for work on understanding the nexus of politics, institutions and equality outcomes. It is organised in four parts, with each containing fascinating empirical and theoretical insights. A scene-setting first section establishes the core propositions of the book. Sam Hickey and Sohela Nazneen argue for a "power domains" approach which disrupts the idea that increased inclusion in spheres of formal politics leads to greater influence of gender equality discourses. They expand the conversation by suggesting the need to look at how coalitions develop (or not) across multiple institutional domains, including informal institutions. Sophie King and Eleni Sifaki provide a well-written and clear outline of how a global norm against gender-based violence emerged and rooted itself in a growing network of transnational and regional women's networks with the United Nations as the core.

This nicely sets up the next section, which takes readers into thickly argued case studies that address how domestic violence policies emerged, and what kinds of coalitions and interests came into play. Josephine Ahikire and Amon Mwiine, looking at Uganda, update Ahikire's earlier work on the Domestic Violence Act. Jennie E. Burnet demonstrates the importance of political

commitment and will in the implementation of the laws in Rwanda. Lilian Artz and Valerie Grand-Maison trace the three-decade-old process of attempts to finalise and implement legislation and policies in South Africa. The Ugandan and South African cases show how easily the issue of gender-based violence morphed from being a transformative one to an ameliorative project. Both explore the poor implementation and incoherence of policies. By contrast, in Rwanda, Burnet offers a relative success story in which strong political commitment and political will translated into effective judicial and policing mechanisms. All three are countries characterised by high levels of representation of women. One key difference that is only hinted at in this section (and picked up later by Georgina Waylen) is that of colonial trajectories of institutional development. Another, also barely analysed, is the strongly technocratic-authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state.

In Section Three, attention shifts to countries that have strong informal institutions countervailing the politics inside the state. In these chapters, we see how certain kinds of gains can be made in the context of states wishing to signal modernity or compliance with global norms. However, as Nazneen shows for Bangladesh, elite consensus may not lead to actual policy implementation. In Ghana, Beatrix Allah-Mensah and Rhoda Osei-Afful demonstrate the difficulties women's movements face in negotiating the terrain of electoral politics where formal multiparty competition is underpinned by clientelism rather than competing substantive policy agendas. Similarly, Asmita Basu shows how powerful competing discursive social frames can hinder the implementation of gender equity policies in India, especially when gender concerns clash with other socially powerful identities.

In the final section of the book, the editors draw together these themes, in part by bouncing them off the influential comparative work of Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon. Here they make the argument that transnational actors may have had much less influence on local agendas than assumed, because of the wariness in the Global South towards ideas that are seen to have Western provenance. More important, they suggest, were South-South influences and networks. Hickey and Nazneen reiterate scholarship in the field of gender quotas, which shows that dominant party systems (especially those with proportional representation electoral systems) are more likely to drive equity agendas in contexts where there

are contending social groups. They also suggest the importance of understanding how democratic political settlements are reached and sustained for predicting the fate of gender equity advocacy. These are cogent arguments but I was not convinced that they are particularly novel; the inclusion-influence relationship has long been questioned by scholars tracing the impact of women's entry into parliaments but that literature is not systematically addressed in the book. History matters - of course. As scholars in the Global South have long argued, attention to the deep trajectories of institutional development and political organisation and mobilisation are key to understanding feminist politics. Most comparative studies of gender elide those histories, aiming at theory building that valorises broad tendencies and patterns. Despite the hat tip to deep history in several places in this volume, there is inadequate attention to scholarship that is country-specific and yet makes exactly the theoretical arguments that are presented here.

Georgina Waylen and Anne-Marie Goetz reiterate those points (although not in the way that I am suggesting) in their reflective chapters at the end of the book. Waylen makes the case for deeper institutional analysis, and Goetz cautions that the book overplays the inclusion-influence thesis. Both draw attention to other areas of scholarship: Waylen to areas with different colonial trajectories, and Goetz to the rich literature on political settlements and peace-building.

This reader would have valued a more explicit and critical approach to the framing of gender-based violence itself. The chapters in the book are striking in their demonstration of the political and discursive plasticity of this nexus problem of patriarchy, especially in the context of colonial capitalism. The notion of domestic violence has both positive and negative consequences that mimic a central tension in gender equity work between transformative anti-patriarchal emphases and more patriarchally compliant approaches that may stabilise the heteronormative society. How do feminist movements frame their claims when the colonial state and legal system were so deeply implicated in violence, not only against women but also against men? Indeed, what was the feminist content of women's organisations in different contexts and how were competing understandings of the projects of gender equity navigated? How does the postcolonial state recast institutions from oppressive to emancipatory, and with what tools? Can LGBTI groups and women's movements become allies, and with what opportunities and costs? These aspects of politics are not firmly put on the table.

Finally, readers of *Feminist Africa* have been part of a long conversation on the power relations in knowledge-building projects. They will be interested in how successfully this volume, excellent in so many respects, builds theory from the South (and not just theory about the South). I hesitate to be too critical. This book is a very important addition to scholarship on the state, social movements and policy making. Yet it retains the logic of asymmetrical power: a section that lays out the main theoretical questions written by Northern-based scholars, followed by deep empirical chapters mostly by scholars from/in the South, followed by theoretical reflections by Northern scholars. Citations of work by scholars in the case study countries, while extensive (and incomplete), are not citations to theory but to examples and historical detail. It would take another long review to show how many theoretical arguments were made by scholars in the South; for example, Sylvia Tamale's cautionary tale of women entering parliaments, and it is inappropriate in this case where – truly – the team writing this book has given us a scholarly gift. But it is time to pay attention to the politics of theoretical attribution and citation.

Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons, Witnesses, by Hilary Matfess. London: Zed Books Ltd., 2017

Títílope F. Ajàyí

Women and the War on Boko Haram is a bold and coherent effort to decolonise victim narratives about women's roles in, and experiences of, the conflict in Nigeria's northeast. Before this book, although there had been a growing focus on women as perpetrators and enablers of violence by scholars like Freedom Onuoha, Elizabeth Pearson and Jacob Zenn, women were primarily seen (as victims) through the lens of the students abducted by the group known as Boko Haram from their Chibok school in April 2014. But Matfess' book is not just about women; it offers critical and insightful commentary on the broader underlying conflict and suggests informed management strategies. *Women and the War on Boko Haram* also shows how the essentialisation of women's conflict experiences, their exclusion from response strategies, and disjointed state and humanitarian responses are prolonging the conflict unduly.

Following a detailed historicisation of violent extremism in northern Nigeria and the specific instance of the Boko Haram conflict, Matfess analyses women's roles in terms of the three main categories - *Wives, Weapons Witnesses* - which make up the second part of her colonic title. These are presumably for analytical convenience as readers quickly come to see that each category is fluid and multisectional. In breaking open the bounds of roles played by women in this conflict, it is significant that she begins with the category of wives because this was "frequently identified as a conduit into the group for women" (105). Matfess weaves multiple narratives about wilful and unwilful matrimony, the latter being really a euphemism for organised/systematised rape, showing that although some women and girls joined Boko Haram voluntarily, many were co-opted forcefully. Women were abducted to perform several roles, but the task of reproduction was paramount as a strategy to produce the next generation of fighters (123-124).

In the second broad categorisation of female roles, the weaponisation of

femaleness by state and non-state actors is multifaceted. The chapter (Five) dedicated to this begins with a discussion of how Boko Haram seized the now famous Chibok captives from their government school in April 2014. However, Matfess is quick to assert, as does Pereira (2018), that this public mass abduction is one of many that form part of a deliberate strategy of violence against women and girls aimed at impelling them to comply with Boko Haram's religio-cultural dictates (80). This is crucial because, as Matfess discusses, the Chibok abductions and transnational movement for their release accorded the girls a "mythic" status (80-81) that galvanised global activism in their support. At the same time, this status reinforced their symbolic value in the eyes of their captors and prolonged their captivity. A similar dynamic informed Joseph Kony's resolve to prolong negotiations over the Aboke Girls, kidnapped in 1996 from their school in northern Uganda by the Lord's Resistance Army, the moment he realised how famous they had become (De Temmerman, 2001). As I discovered during recent fieldwork, the mythification of the Chibok girls has caused rancour and led some to question the authenticity of Bring Back Our Girls which has campaigned primarily for their return.

Women and girls were also directly and indirectly involved in acts of violence, although Matfess foregrounds direct acts of violence. These range from the disciplining and alleged killings of disobedient female captives to female suicide bombings. She points out that stigma from being associated with Boko Haram and rejection and/or disdain by communities, state actors and social workers have led women to downplay their autonomy regarding the group (96). Such stigma is also obscuring the women's access to much-needed help. While Matfess does not include activists in her conceptualisation of women as weapons, it is fitting to consider NGOs like the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria and the Bring Back Our Girls networks running the campaign pressuring the government to remedy its protection lapses by rescuing the Chibok girls and all other female captives.

Matfess is not explicit about the composition of the category she designates as "witnesses to the violence and post-conflict rebuilding processes" (1) but all the women and girls she describes throughout the book, and many others, belong here in varying ways. Three main points draw together her discussion of women's multiple roles. First, these roles are not static or linear; women occupy

multiple roles simultaneously and shift around within the matrices of roles as their positionalities modulate. Second, several factors mediate women's roles in, and experiences of, the conflict, including age, religion, marital status (this includes the rank of Boko Haram husbands) and attitude to the group's norms and ideologies. Finally, and importantly, Matfess problematises women's agency, illustrating with excerpts from life histories how different women exercise this as much in what they (choose to) do as what they choose not to (101-109). This is important because the question of choice, and the constraints on it given the narrow options available, are often inflected by fear.

On the broader conflict and responses to it, the book outlines in Chapter Six the massive scale of the humanitarian crisis engendered by the conflict before exposing evidenced inconsistencies in state and humanitarian responses to it. Matfess points out that, compared to Syria and Sudan, the "international community" has been restrained (145, 179-181) and thus complicit in humanitarian response shortcomings that "disproportionately affect women" (183-185). This is surprising given that the crisis was labelled by UNICEF as one of the worst in the world (145) (Withnall, 2016). These shortcomings include "haphazard" approaches to humanitarian aid that encourage dependency, worsen the breakdown of interpersonal relationships and "undermine women's social, legal and political empowerment" (187). For its part, the Nigerian government's actions are disjointed as reflected in arbitrary arrests and unlawful killings of suspected extremists (151), a "clumsy" demobilisation programme (159) and "opaque" screening and deradicalisation processes (153), as well as prolonged and unlawful detention of terror suspects in unsanitary conditions at the notorious Giwa Barracks (155-157). This apt indictment is compounded by corruption, low bureaucratic capacity to coordinate interventions, among myriad actors, scarce resources, abusive and predatory agencies, and military appropriation of conflict narratives through state censorship and control of the media. The absence of "nuanced policy" for women and girls betrays a gender blindness that cuts across all aspects of the government's counter-extremism strategy.

Citing research on the "importance of female inclusion for social stability and durable peace" (192), Matfess rightly identifies the critical need to empower women as a way to mobilise their agency and inspire their greater involvement in politics in order, ultimately, to enhance their resilience to violence and "build

more stable, peaceful societies" (192). However, she does not discuss the need to approach this holistically alongside efforts to create space for better gender parity in the domestic context by targeting repressive mindsets about gender ideologies. Recalcitrant ideologies have militated against more equitable participation of women after violent conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and other post-conflict contexts in Africa, showing that policy and structural alignments with global norms and frameworks are not enough to make women more equal (in the aftermath of conflict). She acknowledges the need to avoid considering women in isolation, in light of how male disempowerment can lead to post-conflict intimate partner violence based on men's feelings of inadequacy amid changing gender roles (197-198). Such violence is currently occurring in northeast Nigeria (Nagarajan, 2017). However, I would add that it is equally important to address contextually-coloured mindsets that construct "deeply entrenched and internalised" norms about proper roles for women (188) which make some men feel emasculated by their women's new economic power.

Matfess' suggestion that the international community can "intervene" in the gender-progressive recovery from Boko Haram and "facilitate the expansion of norms" of women's empowerment (213) is troubling on two grounds. It evokes imperialist arrogations about the "West" as custodian of global norms that bind the rest of the world. It also overlooks, as she herself states on page 211, that this approach has failed in the past and that the most successful interventions have been driven by the agencies of domestic actors and civil society constituencies. With particular reference to improving the landscape of women's rights, history shows that the impulse must come from within, given past and present frictional encounters between domestic and global norms and frameworks. This is partly due to domestic views of global norms and their implementation as foreign imports whose uncritical application has caused backlashes that are delaying progress.

Relatedly, while it is instructive to acknowledge recurrent ideological and operational patterns between the strategies of Boko Haram and those of groups like the Lord's Resistance Army (97-98), it may be too reductionist to lump the groups together for analytical convenience in order to assign definitive labels (98). These end up essentialising the characteristics of the entities labelled in this way.

A final omission is the absence of discussion of women on the other side of Boko Haram, as responders to violence. These comprise female hunters, female

members of the Civilian Joint Task Force, female members of the National Security and Civil Defence Corps, and women security personnel (police and army), who share in the precarity of all females in conflict but confront specific challenges that stem from their situatedness within diverse security frameworks. Nonetheless, *Women and the War on Boko Haram* is a compelling, richly informative and enjoyable read, based on wide-ranging interviews, and is highly recommended for audiences with an interest in women and security in contexts of violence.

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