

FRAGMENTED LIVELIHOODS: A REFLECTION ON WHY FEW PEASANTS LIVING IN POVERTY JOIN AN ORGANIZATION IN NIASA (MOZAMBIQUE)

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ABSTRACT – This article examines the reasons why peasants living in poverty are unlikely to form or join an organization defending their rights and interests. The study is based on ethnographically inspired fieldwork in the Niassa province, northern Mozambique, and takes peasants' accounts of their livelihoods as the point of departure. The livelihood analysis is placed within a historical and structural process. The article suggests that four dimensions of fragmentation of peasants' livelihoods hamper the conditions for collective organizations. Firstly, every peasant household is, at any given point in time, engaged in a number of different livelihood activities to ensure its production and reproduction. Secondly, the composition of these activities varies between households. Thirdly, the activities are constantly changing. Fourthly, there is socio-economic differentiation among peasant households. These four dimensions make it difficult to identify central and enduring interests and conflicts peasants are engaged in that could be the foundation for their collective organization.

Keywords: Peasant union; peasant livelihood; livelihood analysis; Mozambique; Niassa.

RESUMO – MEIOS DE SUBSISTÊNCIA FRAGMENTADOS: UMA REFLEXÃO SOBRE AS QUESTÕES QUE LEVAM POCOS CAMPONESES EM SITUAÇÃO DE POBREZA A PARTICIPAR NUMA ORGANIZAÇÃO EM NIASA (MOÇAMBIQUE). Este artigo examina as razões pelas quais os camponeses que vivem em pobreza têm pouca probabilidade de formar ou integrar uma organização que defenda os seus direitos e interesses. O estudo é baseado em trabalho de campo, inspirado pela etnografia, na província de Niassa, no norte de Moçambique, e tem como ponto de partida os relatos dos camponeses sobre os seus meios de subsistência. A análise da subsistência é inserida num processo histórico e estrutural. O artigo sugere que quatro dimensões de fragmentação dos meios de subsistência dos camponeses dificultam as condições para as organizações coletivas. Em primeiro lugar, cada família

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camponesa está, em qualquer momento, envolvida em várias atividades de subsistência diferentes para garantir a sua produção e reprodução. Em segundo lugar, a composição dessas atividades varia entre as famílias. Em terceiro lugar, as atividades mudam constantemente. Em quarto lugar, há diferenciação socioeconômica entre as famílias camponesas. Estas quatro dimensões tornam difícil a identificação dos interesses e conflitos centrais e duradouros em que os camponeses estão engajados e que poderiam constituir a base da sua organização coletiva.

Palavras-chave: União de camponeses; meio de vida camponês; análise de meio de vida; Moçambique; Niassa.

RÉSUMÉ – MOYENS DE SUBSISTANCE FRAGMENTÉS: UNE RÉFLEXION SUR LES QUESTIONS QU'AMÈNENT PEU DE PAYSANS EN SITUATIONS DE PAUVRETÉ À REJOINDRE UNE ORGANISATION À NIASSA (MOZAMBIQUE). Cet article examine les raisons pour lesquelles les paysans vivant dans de situations de pauvreté ont peu de chances de former ou de rejoindre une organisation défendant leurs droits et intérêts. L'étude est basée sur un travail de terrain d'inspiration ethnographique dans la province de Niassa, au nord du Mozambique, et s'appuie sur des comptes rendus des paysans sur leurs moyens de subsistance. L'analyse des moyens de subsistance s'inscrit dans un processus historique et structurel. L'article suggère que quatre dimensions de la fragmentation des moyens de subsistance des paysans entravent les conditions pour les organisations collectives. Premièrement, chaque foyer paysan est, à un moment donné, engagé dans un certain nombre de différentes activités de subsistance pour assurer la production et la reproduction. Deuxièmement, la composition de ces activités varie selon les ménages. Troisièmement, les activités changent constamment. Quatrièmement, il existe une différenciation socio-économique parmi les ménages paysans. Ces quatre dimensions rendent difficile l'identification des intérêts et conflits centraux et durables dans lesquels les paysans sont engagés et qui pourraient être la fondation de leur organisation collective.

Mots clés: Union paysanne; moyens de subsistance paysans; analyse des moyens de subsistance; Mozambique, Niassa.

RESUMEN – MEDIOS DE VIDA FRAGMENTADOS: UNA REFLEXIÓN SOBRE POR QUÉ POCOS CAMPESINOS QUE VIVEN EN LA POBREZA SE UNEN A UNA ORGANIZACIÓN EN NIASSA (MOZAMBIQUE). Este artículo examina las razones por las que es poco probable que los campesinos que viven en la pobreza formen o se unan a una organización que defienda sus derechos e intereses. El estudio se basa en un trabajo de campo de inspiración etnográfica en la provincia de Niassa, en el norte de Mozambique, y toma como punto de partida, los relatos de campesinos sobre sus medios de vida. El análisis de los medios de vida se sitúa dentro de un proceso histórico y estructural. El artículo sugiere que cuatro dimensiones de la fragmentación de los medios de vida de los campesinos dificultan las condiciones para las organizaciones colectivas. En primer lugar, cada familia campesina, en un momento determinado, participa en una serie de diferentes actividades de subsistencia para asegurar su producción y reproducción. En segundo lugar, la composición de estas actividades varía entre los hogares. En tercer lugar, las actividades cambian constantemente. En cuarto lugar, existe una diferenciación socioeconómica entre los hogares campesinos. Estas cuatro dimensiones dificultan la identificación de intereses, y conflictos centrales y duraderos, en los que están involucrados los campesinos y que podrían ser la base de su organización colectiva.

Palabras clave: Unión campesina, medios de vida campesinos, análisis de medios de vida, Mozambique, Niassa.

I. INTRODUCTION

Few scholars or development practitioners would oppose the statement that the poorest peasants in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are generally unlikely to form or join an organization defending their interests and rights. There is, however, a lack of research on *why* poor peasants do not organize themselves. The point of departure of this article is peasants' accounts of their livelihoods and it discusses how these accounts contribute to the current understanding of the low levels of organization of peasants living in poverty.

Peasants make up the majority of Mozambique's population of around 27 million. Approximately 70% of the population lives in the countryside. The National Peasants Union (UNAC) has around 160 000 registered members, and represents about 0.7% of the population of rural areas. Peasant agriculture is not a political priority and receives little attention in public policy and budget allocations. It has been described as a reserve of unemployed workforce, which is available for the extractive sectors whenever they may need it (Castel-Branco, 2014, 2015). Peasants' current living conditions are a result of decades of policies unfavourable to them, a corresponding lack of attention to investment in peasant agriculture and the withdrawal of the State from rural areas. These changes are structural and have established a state of permanent unpredictability in rural areas.

Studies from several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have shown that farmer organizations and cooperatives are potentially good tools to increase farmers' income and strengthen their right to land and natural resources. (eg., Develtere *et al.*, 2008; Isager *et al.*, 2018; Msuta & Urassa, 2015; Tolno *et al.*, 2015). Confirming that organizations are likely to have positive effects on their members' lives, it is important to examine who is a member, and who is not. The existing literature provides some suggestions such as the correlation between levels of organisation and wealth (Gray *et al.*, 2018), access to extension services, credit and off-farm incomes. (Isager *et al.* 2018; Tolno *et al.*, 2015; Wedig & Wiegatz 2018).

Hence, while organizations *could* contribute to a reduction of poverty, for some reason, those farmers who are in the most need of change appear to be less likely to join one. While there are some ideas on why in the existing literature, the picture is far from complete. This article contributes to the current understanding of the conditions for collective organization, taking peasants' accounts of their own livelihood as the point of departure.

In the next section, the main analytical entry points of the article are presented. The method and empirical material are commented and thereafter the analytical section, building upon the empirical material, is presented. This is followed by a discussion on the conditions for peasant organization. The article ends with concluding remarks on how the analysis of livelihood contributes to our understanding of low level of organization among peasants.

II. ANALYTICAL ENTRY POINTS

The three central analytical entry points in this article are: (i) livelihood analysis framed within an understanding of long-term, structural change; (ii) the composition of

peasants' relations with surrounding actors based on class, culture, kin, and community; and (iii) the necessity to create types of peasants that are context specific and that serve our analytical purpose.

Examining peasant livelihoods offers one way to deepen the current understanding of the low levels of organization among peasant households. This approach analyses a household's livelihood strategies, given that a household has a certain combination of livelihood resources, or capitals, in a specific context, including human, physical, social, and financial resources. The approach can thus capture the factors hampering farmers' organization that have been raised in the literature – in addition to other factors – by providing a holistic view of peasants' lives rather than just their farming practices. (eg., Bernstein & Byres (2001) on the African peasantry, Cavaco (1990) on France, Castel-Branco (2015) on Mozambique in specific, Elesbão (2007) on Brazil, O'Laughlin (2002), and Oya (2005)).

In line with O'Laughlin (2002), this article places the livelihood analysis within a historical and structural process. The diversity of peasants' livelihoods, including waged work and economic activities other than agricultural work, implies that peasants are involved in a number of economic and extra-economic relations in order to ensure their survival, production and reproduction, which is further elaborated on in the fourth section of the article based on the empirical material. Oya (2005) elaborated on the concept of the "successful accumulator", and Mafeje (2003) discussed the roles and functions of the "village capitalist". This person or type is not only an accumulator of financial capital, but also an accumulator of a combination of cultural, social, political, or religious capitals and functions in the community. Hence, there are relations across class structures of kinship, religion, and history, upon which peasants depend to varying degrees.

One way of approaching the question of diverse livelihoods is to divide peasants into types. Scholars of different disciplines have created numerous typologies of peasants. Factors upon which such typologies have been constructed include land ownership, access and size; class; production quantities; farming practices, geographical locations and agro-ecological conditions; and resource ownership, including access to credit and assets (e.g., Carrilho *et al.* (2003), Djurfeldt (1994), Hinton (2008 [1966]), Wolf (1955), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD] (1999)).

Oya (2005) argued that the classification of farmers should be context-specific and tailored to the analytical purpose of the classification: "farmers' taxonomies should be seen as *heuristic* devices to organize the analysis of the processes, structures and agency in the context" (Oya, 2005, p. 294). He recognized that creating sub-types within a seemingly homogeneous type is more difficult than doing so within a heterogeneous group, and that this process requires in-depth qualitative information.

All the factors of the aforementioned typologies are important. Nevertheless, they are insufficient to provide types that are context-specific and tailored to the specific analytical purpose. Furthermore, as the present case involves sub-types within a relatively homogeneous type, qualitative information is needed that is not limited to a single factor. In accordance with Oya's claim that classification is a mid-point in the analysis, we will return to classification after our analysis of the empirical material. Hence, types are not used to structure the empirical material; rather, they are one of the results of the analysis.

III. METHOD AND EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

To capture the complexities of peasant households' livelihoods, while simultaneously placing them within a perspective of long-term structural change, an ethnographically inspired approach was applied in the fieldwork. This approach complements the existing research – which is largely quantitative and focused on specific variables – and contributes to a holistic understanding of peasant households, along with the relations and communities of which they are a part.

Fieldwork was mainly carried out in six districts in Niassa province, northern Mozambique (fig. 1) during seven months in 2015 and 2016. The research is a part of a PhD project in sociology. The research in general and the article in specific makes a contribution to rural sociology as well as to development studies. Life histories, focus group interviews and individual interviews were undertaken with peasants (including members and non-members of peasant associations), community leaders, and key persons within the agricultural sector in Niassa both today and in the past. Although far from all of the interviews in Niassa (which numbered around 120 in total) are directly used in this article, all of the material contributed to the analysis presented here. The fieldwork also included observations of peasant associations' meetings, public consultations regarding investments, family fields and key places in the visited villages (e.g., markets and other public spaces). Pseudonyms are used not to reveal informants' identities. The author is Portuguese speaking, but some interviews were carried out partly in one of the local languages, using a local interpreter. The informants always got to decide upon which language to use and many interviews shifted language depending on the topic treated.

Niassa is situated in northern Mozambique. It was the land of several key moments in the struggle for Independence, but also an example of the state of under-development that the colonial period left to the independent nation. After Independence, Mozambique's first independent president Samora Machel had the vision to transform Niassa into a "laboratory" for the struggle against underdevelopment and for the construction of socialism through state farms, communal villages, and cooperatives. Forced labour was used, including resettlement of people from other regions to Niassa to work in state farms (Johansson, 2019; Pinto de Sá, 1995; Sousa, 2013). Due to the violent conflict between Frelimo and Renamo, most development interventions were interrupted in the beginning of the eighties until the Peace Accords in 1992. For several reasons, the situation of Niassa began to change at the end of the nineties. This was due to some successful efforts from the provincial government to get more attention from the central government as well as from donors. Another influencing factor was the agreement between Mozambique and South Africa to send South African farmers to Niassa to promote commercial large-scale agriculture (Åkesson & Nilsson 2006). Just as in other parts of Mozambique, foreign investments in the extractive sector have increased during the last decade. Investments in large-scale forestry took off in Niassa around 2005. Since then, these investments have resulted in severe conflicts between communities, investors, and local and national authorities regarding land and labour (Johansson, 2020).

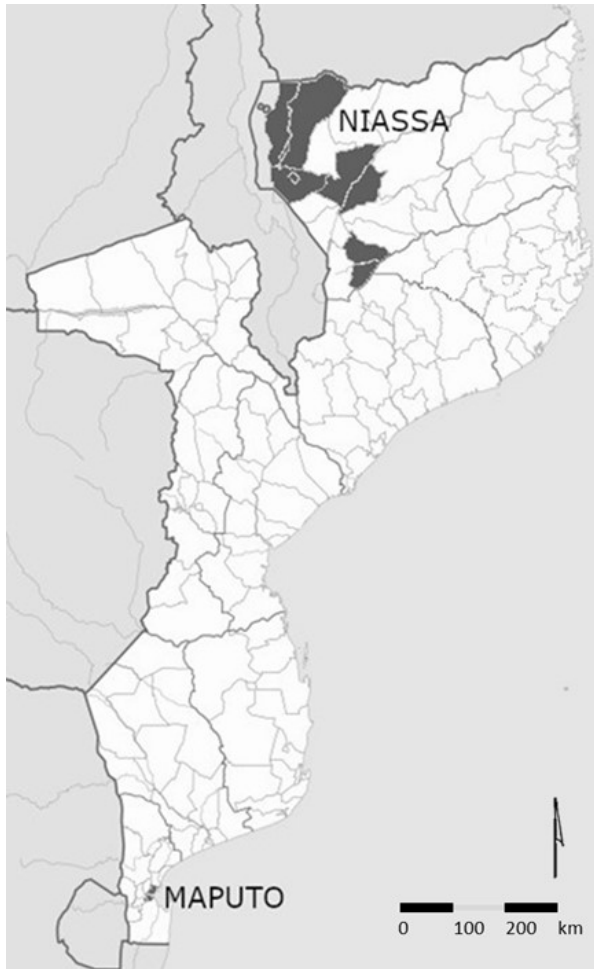


Fig. 1 – Map of Mozambique with fieldwork districts highlighted.

Fig. 1 – Mapa de Moçambique com os distritos do trabalho de campo destacados.

Despite significant improvements, Niassa is still a fairly isolated place, which together with the other Northern provinces, is lagging behind the rest of the country in terms of development (see, for example, Instituto Nacional de Estatística [INE], 2021). Basic infrastructure such as roads and communication, are still largely absent. The province is considered by its population as abandoned by the central government. The presence and outreach of market actors for agricultural commercialization is weak or, in some locations, non-existent. The average family field – hereafter called a *machamba* – is around 1.5 hectares. Agricultural productivity is low, and the hoe is often the only tool available. The usage of animals and improved inputs is marginal, as is access to public and private rural extension services.

IV. PEASANT LIVELIHOODS

The following section presents an analysis of peasants' accounts of their livelihood strategies. In the last section, this analysis is used as a point of departure to analyse the conditions for peasants' collective organization.

1. Unpredictable socio-economic conditions

One of the locations for the fieldwork in Niassa was Aldeia Samora Machel in Unango, Sanga district. The interviews and observations in this village provided a panorama of the main unpredictable socio-economic conditions in peasant households. They revealed a variety of livelihood challenges, along with corresponding strategies that the peasants had developed in order to cope.

The first household I met was that of Mr. Machava. He was around 60 years old and lived with his wife and seven children. He told me that he did not go to school, and that what he knows, he "learnt working with the land". For most of the year, the household manages to eat three meals a day, but the quantity and content vary.

Mr. Machava's household has a *machamba* of around 2 hectares where they grow maize, different kinds of beans, pumpkin, sweet potato, and ground nuts. Most of the produce is for the household's own consumption, but in good years, the surplus is sold to local traders, or, more rarely, to a trader travelling through the village. The price is set by the trader and is non-negotiable. The family also produces charcoal that is sold to a vendor who comes to the village with a truck. Our meeting was in November; the villagers explained that they would suffer from a food shortage this year due to drought because all the beans and almost all of the maize was dry, and the household would not be able to sell anything.

Mr. Machava and his neighbours spoke about various *patrões* (English "masters"), who had come to the village over the years to do larger scale agriculture. A retired military officer had a field "over there" – while pointing towards a nearby slope. The people working there had not received their salary for nine months. Mr. Machava commented that people would be hesitant to work under those circumstances, especially since the employer had links to the government: "Where are people going to turn to complain, if the government itself acts like this?". One of the neighbours reported:

I had a *patrão* last year. He was a colonel, a commander, a big boss, but during that time, many things failed in my life. I just saw the others during harvest, harvesting at the *machamba*, but me nothing. I thought, no, it is better not to have much but at least produce. This thing with having to buy maize now for 200 to 250 [metical]¹. It is not worth it. Like that, work is not worth it. Here, at least the *machambas* have good land, have good soil. I left that *patrão*, because I didn't manage, I didn't manage this price of the maize. (Mr. Machava)

I asked whether he had work all year round at the *patrão*, "No, it was just between December and June". He explained that he received 1500 meticais monthly.

But do you know, missus, I prefer a thousand times to suffer to make my *machambas* than to wait for 1500 meticaís. To have little but at least produce. But he was not a bad person, he was a good person. It was just the salary that was very small. (Mr. Machava)

He told me that when he worked with another *patrão* between 2003 and 2005, he didn't manage to keep his own *machamba*:

No, I didn't manage, but at that time, my wife was still alive, and she took care of the *machamba*. Because I, at that *patrão*, only rested for two days a month. There was no Sunday. So, my wife worked at the *machamba* producing maize and beans. (Mr. Machava)

Three main unpredictable socio-economic conditions can be identified in the accounts of the neighbours in the village. First, surplus is sold on a market that is defined by the buyer – not just in terms of price, but also with regard to its very existence. *If* the trader comes, he sets the price without negotiation. Second, peasants are forced to take up employment in a labour market where there is no possibility to negotiate conditions. Although such employment provides the necessary monetary income, it places the peasants at risk, since they have less time for their own food production. Furthermore, the paid work relationship is at odds with the very logic of being a peasant – to wait for 1500 meticaís at the end of the month instead of producing food for your own household. Third, the peasants depend on a relationship that is hierarchical, with the higher positions accumulating in the same person (e.g., the retired military officer). In the following sections, each unpredictable socio-economic condition is examined more thoroughly, going beyond the village of the Machava family and their neighbours.

2. Relations between the peasants and the agricultural market actors

The production of agricultural commodities to be commercialized takes different forms. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Machava and their neighbours commercialize the possible surplus mainly of crops that can also be consumed within the household. Hence, they do not produce primarily for the market. A second form is to plan for the commercialization of cash crops that cannot be consumed by the household. A third form is to produce crops through out-grower schemes. The level of risk increases from the first to the third form, as do the need for a workforce and the possibility to make a profit. The poorer households are less likely to have the necessary workforce to grow cash crops or take part in an out-grower scheme, but all peasant households need an income to cover expenses for food, education, communication, and health. For most households, it is not possible to store produce and then sell it later to get a higher profit, due to accumulated expenses and immediate needs, the uncertainty of market access, and inadequate storing facilities. Hence, the poor pay more and sell for less.

The peasants sell to local traders coming to their village and are basically unable to negotiate the price. Later, as harvest approaches, produce becomes scarcer and the price increases, the middle-men sell basic food stuffs, such as maize and beans, back to those

peasants who did not manage to save and store enough food. During the year, small quantities of commercialization take place at the local markets and along the roads, as the peasants sell to passing travellers. In December, during part of the fieldwork, there was a severe food shortage due to little and late rain. This implied pockets of food shortage and a possible upcoming famine in Niassa province, as well as in several other provinces. The peasants expressed their incredulity that someone who had not managed to save maize from the last harvest would possibly be able to pay the current price of maize. They were aware that the price – already high – had not yet reached its peak, since there were still some four months to harvest.

Peasants are in a difficult position when negotiating with a buyer; furthermore, the buyer's appearance is unpredictable. The following incident is an example of this predicament. It is April and a peasant's *machamba* in Manhamba, Lago district, is being prepared for a second season of beans. The peasant invited us (I am paying the visit together with a teacher colleague and a group of students) to have a grilled corn cob on a pile of dried beans under a thatched roof next to the *machamba*. He said that they used to grow tobacco. There were two different tobacco companies, which stayed for a total of eight years. Then the companies disappeared, and the peasants changed to beans as a cash crop. There was no guaranteed buyer for the beans, and they were worried that their crops would not be sold. Many of the respondents shared similar reactions to unpredictable market opportunities. For example, a buyer of a cash crop may appear, giving the peasants the opportunity to sell part of their production; but the opportunity could suddenly disappear in the following year.

Out-grower or concession schemes present opportunities for the better-off peasants. Such a set-up with a company guarantees a market for the peasant for at least one season. However, it is difficult to negotiate within out-grower schemes, precisely because there is only one buyer; in addition, the peasants may become indebted to the buyer through receiving inputs, and sometimes loans to pay day labourers, or *ganho-ganho*ⁱⁱ workers. Although peasants can negotiate the price in theory, this is not always the case in practice. Out-grower schemes – such as those in Niassa, involving crops such as cotton and tobacco – demand a guaranteed additional workforce in order to manage not only the crop cultivation, but also food production on the *machambas*. The better-off peasants may have more options than the poorer ones, but they are still subject to risk and still rely on the decisions of others, such as the concessioners and companies behind the out-grower schemes.

A peasant in Unango, Sanga district told me that he had heard that soya beans were being produced, and that some people were making a good profit from this product. Nevertheless, there were complaints. First because the promised price per kilo was low and second that the price promised by the company providing the inputs as well as being the buyer, was far from kept when the selling took place.ⁱⁱⁱ

Cotton is one of the main out-grower schemes in Niassa. There is a sign at the entrance of the Cuamba district in southern Niassa, stating: "Cuamba, the Capital of Cotton". In the outskirts of Cuamba, I visited an experimental field belonging to JFS/SAN

(João Ferreira dos Santos/Sociedade Algodoeira de Niassa). This was a block farm – a new trial involving 21 producers on a total area of 200 hectares, with each producer having at least five hectares. The producers were residents of nearby communities. At the experimental block farm, I interviewed a cotton producer who was cultivating ten hectares of cotton:

It is everyone on his own. In the past, we had an association, and we cultivated the same *machamba*, then we went back. But João Ferreira dos Santos [the director of the cotton company] said that no, I will divide [the land into sections] for each of you. So, with ten hectares and a person who never weeded so much, we were surprised, how would I succeed? He [João] came with hoes, other materials, and money to help us. The problem was the bad luck that we did not have rain this year, now the return on the money will be difficult. (Cotton producer)

Here, the producers were provided with loans from JFS/SAN to pay *ganho-ganho* workers; these loans were to be paid back to JFS/SAN later, in the form of produce. Due to the “bad luck” with the rains, the producers asked the director if there could be exceptions in regard to payments, but he refused. The female peasant explained that another producer had estimated that she would receive an output from four out of the ten hectares that she had planted. She had used *ganho-ganho* workers and was provided with credit to be able to do so. Hence, she was indebted, but nevertheless positive about the presence of JFS/SAN: “they have changed the place a lot, and everybody can see that. You can buy inputs, *capulanas* (textiles) and cooking oil in their store, it is SAN that has the store”, she said, pointing to the building next to the field with a JFS/SAN logo.

These peasants’ accounts show that the company has no interest in sharing the risks related to production. These risks are outsourced to the producers – or rather, in the end, to the *ganho-ganho* worker, who is likely to be paid less if the production fails. In other words, the peasants with the contract outsource or subcontract parts of the risk to poorer peasants who act as *ganho-ganho* workers. The number of peasants growing cotton can differ by several thousand from one season to the next.^{iv}

Independently of forms of commercialization, food crops, cash crops or out-grower schemes, the peasants find themselves in a position that is insecure and unstable. Nothing is guaranteed, and they have no right to payment for their agricultural work and several interviewed peasants question why they cannot have a guaranteed salary – just as any other category of worker, including public servants.

3. Different forms of employment

Different forms of employment are one component of the livelihoods of peasant households. In addition to the importance of rural employment as a livelihood activity, it is crucial to examine it as part of local social relations and power structures, including its effect on the social fabric. Three main forms of salaried work will be discussed in this section: *ganho-ganho* work, semi-formal work with local employers, and employment at forestry companies.

Ganho-ganho represents an important source of income, especially for the poorest households, since it does not require peasants to be away from their own *machamba* for a long period of time, which would bring greater risk of food insecurity. *Ganho-ganho* labourers are usually employed by the day and paid by piecework. When asking both employing and employed peasants about the conditions for *ganho-ganho* work, both sources made it evident that payment varies, is volatile and depends on what the employing peasant is prepared to pay. The worker has no choice but to accept. All parties emphasize that the employing peasant is still a peasant. There are no signs of protest against the precarious situation of *ganho-ganho* workers.

The interviews indicated that the use of *ganho-ganho* labour is increasing at the expense of the traditional system of mutual help, or *ajuda mútua*, between peasant households^v. This shift is not only a question of a change in socio-economic differentiation, but also a change of underlying social logics and a change in the social fabric. *Ganho-ganho* is primarily a financial relationship that ceases at the end of each working day. *Ajuda mútua*, on the other hand, is a continuous chain of interdependent daily relationships, which ensures bonds between peasants.

Another employment possibility is semi-formal work for a local employer, such as a restaurant, farm, bar, or small shop. At a hostel in Metangula, Lago district, I had a conversation with the workers. They were all young sons of peasant families. They explained that their work conditions and treatment were poor, salaries were withheld and that workers were often randomly accused of misconduct. The husband of the owner was a retired senior public servant, which according to the workers made protests even more difficult. Although servants may feel forced to leave a job, there will be hundreds lining up to replace them, especially among the younger generation aspiring for a non-peasant life. Hence, there was little or no incentive for the hostel owner in this case to reconsider her treatment of the workers. The workers' exploitation is built upon their lack of options; furthermore, it is not only their work that is exploited, but their life aspirations of not being "just" a peasant, as their parents.

In most of the interviews with peasants, short-term paid jobs were mentioned as something that might appear one year but not the in next, just as they were described in the accounts of the neighbours in Unango. In the last decade, Niassa province has been receiving a number of large-scale forestry investors who are establishing pine and eucalyptus plantations. These forestry plantations provide a third form of income opportunity for peasants. In districts with plantations, the peasants' plots are just a few metres away. In some cases, the plantations reach the very doorstep of their houses. During the first years, the plantations offered jobs to an estimated 7000 people. This number was heavily reduced after a couple of years, once the most labour-intensive land preparation and planting had been completed.

When interviewed, a peasant in Mussa, like many others, expressed criticism of the current seasonal work, which the companies mainly used in order to clean the plantations.

There, they pay little, it is *capinar* [weed] there during rainy season, and then they send the person away. The person will be in constant crises. It is better for the person to

work in his house to be able to give food to the children. Enough. Chikweti came here through the *régulos* [traditional leaders], they were given money and they gave away the *machambas*. There are many families here that were left without *machambas*. And they [the companies] arrived here in the name of the government, so working against them is dangerous, and they will even put us in jail. It was the government who sent the company, so it is better to give them the land.

The man in Mussa was not among the poorest and had alternative income from the commercialization of maize and other crops. He was also a *Shee* – a local Muslim religious leader. This position allowed him and the members of his household to choose not to work for the company, which might not be an option for poorer households with less alternatives. The vulnerability of the poorer farmers increases as they try to ensure at least a minimal cash income, despite the known risk.

These three illustrations of peasant employment are all characterized by the same conditions. Firstly, the peasants are forced to take on employment, due to their need for a cash income. Secondly, there is an oversupply of workforce, so the conditions are set by the employer. Thirdly, households only have a limited amount of time for wage since work they must combine such work with their own food production.

4. Accumulated positions

In the village of Meluluka, which is located by the shore of the lake in Lago district, I interviewed a focus group of fisher folk and peasants. Fishing is mainly done with small, hand-made canoes, although some comparably bigger boats are also available in the village. I was told that a *chipambe* is a person who rents a boat from another person to go fishing. Upon their return, the *chipambes* must pay half of the amount they receive for their fish to the owner of the boat. I was given an example of the fishing of *usipa*. Suppose there are around nine people in the boat, and they receive around 5000 meticaís for their fish from one good day's fishing – which seems to indicate an uncommonly good catch. Hence, 2500 meticaís is divided between nine people, while the owner of the boat – who did not join the fishing expedition – receives 2500 meticaís.

The *chipambes* needed access to the boat in order to earn an income and were not in a position to negotiate what to pay the owner of the boat. The owner was also working in an NGO-funded water-access project. During a later meeting at the district fishery department, I was told that the boat being hired by the *chipambes* had been provided to the owner through a favourable loan from the public authorities. Only a small part of the actual cost of the boat had to be paid back. Hence, the boat owner was accumulating positions with NGOs, with local authorities and within the community. Thus, if they were to question the rent for the boat, for example, the *chipambes* would be stirring up a possible conflict with the organization supplying and maintaining the village water source, as well as poking at connections with the local and district government officials. Furthermore, the villagers' mobility greatly depended on the boat owner, who owned the means of road transport as well.

V. THE CONDITIONS FOR PEASANT ORGANIZATION

This analysis of the peasants' accounts of their diverse livelihood reveals a wide range of examples of exploitation and peasants' awareness thereof. However, little collective organization is taking place to defend peasants' interests. When taken together with previous research, this empirical material suggests the following main grounds for collective organization among peasants in the given context: (i) the production of a certain crop; (ii) the selling of labour; and (iii) land and territoriality.

In order to continue the analysis of how to understand the reasons for the low levels of organization, we now return to the discussion on classification and types. Similar to Oya's case, the case examined in this article concerns the differences that are present within what could be labelled as a single type: the small-scale farmer. It is estimated that there are 3.8 million farms in Mozambique, of which 72% are less than 2 hectares and 99% are less than 10 hectares (TerraFirma, 2013). Based on the qualitative analysis and the specific context, the following four criteria emerge:

- Production pattern balance between household consumption and market;
- Commercialization patterns;
- Degree of capitalization (especially related to market access);
- Labour relations.

These are used to construct three types of peasant households, labelled as follows:

- Poor and continuously precarious households;
- Poor households;
- Poor and relatively stable households.

The types are accounted for in table I.

In Mozambique, the majority of peasants can generally be classified into the first two types. Nevertheless, the third type is important in order to understand social relations and mobility when identifying village capitalists. All three types are involved in a number of livelihood activities and need to ensure food security and to sell something – whether products or their labour – to guarantee a monetary income. However, there is variation not only between the types, but also within each of these three types, which we will now examine.

Not only are the compositions complex, they are also constantly changing. The handicraft activity may change from baskets to bricks, the charcoal selling opportunities vary and hence so does production, companies and concessioners come and go and possibilities to commercialise vary with climate conditions. The different compositions result in varying and shifting relations with market actors, such as cotton concessioners, forestry companies, and local employers. They also cause varying and shifting relations with fellow villagers. Yet another variation is that different households of the same type will have different livelihood compositions at any point in time.

Table I – Types of peasants.
Quadro I – Tipos de camponeses.

Type Criterion	Type 1: Poor and continuously precarious households	Type 2: Poor households	Type 3: Poor and relatively stable households
Production pattern balance between household consumption and market	Produce mainly for household consumption. Possible surplus may be commercialised but produce placed on the market is foodstuff that can also be consumed within the household.	Produce for both household consumption and the market. Commercialized crops can be either food crops or cash crops.	Produce for household consumption, and regularly plan for and commercialize agricultural produce to obtain an income.
Commercialization patterns	Limited opportunity to store and sell produce later. Little market access, no opportunities to negotiate prices with vendors. The household is engaged in complementary economic activity.	Some opportunity to store and to negotiate due to mobility, mobility and access to information. The household is engaged in complementary economic activity and might own a small informal business.	Able to store and plan commercialisation, including negotiation with traders. The household is engaged in complementary economic activity and run informal business.
Degree of capitalization (especially related to market access)	The household have no means of transportation and limited access to markets beyond the closest road. They own a radio and, in some cases, a mobile phone.	The household has a bike and maybe even a moped, providing access to markets. They own a radio and at least one mobile phone.	The household owns means of production, such as a boat, pump or tractor and have means of transportation, maybe even a car. Steady access to mobile phone.
Labour relations	Members of the household work as <i>ganho-ganho</i> workers but the household do not employ a <i>ganho-ganho</i> worker. When offered, they take on casual and precarious employment with no possibilities to negotiate conditions.	The household sometimes employ <i>ganho-ganho</i> and sometimes work on another peasant's <i>machamba</i> . The household may have access to steady paid work. They are able to choose not to take on another type of job, due to their income from agriculture.	The household employs people to work at the <i>machamba</i> but do not do <i>ganho-ganho</i> work themselves. The household has a fairly secure source of income from a paid job. The household has a couple of employees in their small-scale businesses.

I suggest that four dimensions of fragmentation contribute to the difficulties in identifying specific and enduring common interests among peasants that would make a more comprehensive collective organization possible:

- At any given point in time, peasant households are involved in a number of livelihood activities;
- The composition of livelihood activities within a specific household varies over a relatively short period of time;
- The composition of livelihood activities at a certain point in time varies between households of the same type;
- Socio-economic differentiation is increasing, as indicated by both statistics and peasants' own accounts.

The first three dimensions of fragmentation result in a situation where peasants are involved in a number of activities, with a number of counterparts in which peasants are possible "capital's other". Everyone is changing over time. Fragmentation causes relations to be individual rather than collective, and possible collectivities are obstructed.

The lack of central, enduring, and collective relations and conflicts undermines the possible impact of and interest in a collective effort. For several of the activities, such as small handicrafts, there is simply no one to organize in relation to. For other activities, there are clear targets to organize against, such as the concessioners of cotton and tobacco and the forestry companies, but the relations are unpredictable and unstable. Peasants' awareness that they are expendable to employers or buyers further hampers their organization.

The fourth dimension has a slightly different character. Although the concern is still differentiation and separation among peasants, this dimension contributes to a clearer formation of the interests of marginalized groups within "poor and continuously precarious households". However, peasants are unlikely to become the (capital's) "other" to someone with a key position in the social structure upon which they depend. There may even be family relations involved. Poor and continuously precarious households are unlikely to protest against poor but relatively stable households. Hence, although the fourth dimension *could* provide the conditions for collective interests and organization, it does not, due to interference from extra-economic, social, political, and cultural relations.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this article, I have argued that one reason why peasants living in poverty do not form or join organizations to defend their material interests can be found in the effects of the multiple and complex fragmentation of their constantly changing livelihoods. The low degree of class homogeneity of peasants should be understood primarily as a result of several dimensions of socio-economic differentiation. Thus, peasants, as a collective, do not have a common, stable, and general relation with "capital". Instead, every peasant household has specific, multiple, and rapidly changing relations with a set of property owners, employers, buyers, and sellers of commodities, and means of subsistence – relations that are constantly changing. This finding challenges the perception of rural areas as unchanging and provides instead a picture of peasant livelihoods in constant flux. This article has demonstrated that peasants' livelihoods serve as a reserve not only for the extractive industries, as suggested by Castel-Branco (2014, 2015), but for all other sectors in the social economy.

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ⁱ At the time 250 meticaís equalled around 3.9USD and the minimum monthly wage for agriculture work was 3183 meticaís, equal to 49.4 USD (República de Moçambique, 2015).

ⁱⁱ *Ganho-ganho* is a Portuguese term that is mainly used in Mozambique,

ⁱⁱⁱ The soya bean case was confirmed in an interview with the company providing seeds and promising a market. Due to weak cash flow and unexpectedly high adherence, payments did not occur as planned.

^{iv} Data provided by the director of JFS/SAN. In an email (22 January 2016) he later provided the following numbers for producers: 26 400 (2015), 31 900 (2014), 23 350 (2013) and 41 480 (2012).

^v See Åkesson & Nilsson (2006) for the importance of *ajuda mútua*.