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From Rhetoric to Practice in South-South Development Cooperation: A case study of Brazilian interventions in the Nacala corridor development program[1]

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Abstract

South-South development cooperation (SSDC) has for long presented itself as pursuing distinct principles and practices when compared with traditional North-South cooperation. Brazilian officials claim that SSDC does not impose conditionality, holds the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, is demand-driven, nonprofit and participatory, among other claims. This article examines Brazilian cooperation practices in the agricultural sector in Mozambique against a backdrop of its discourse. It empirically investigates Brazilian role in the framework of ProSAVANA, an ambitious trilateral agricultural program in Northern Mozambique. The authors identify some sound ruptures between discourse and practice, and argue that Brazilian practices, instead of distinguishing themselves from traditional actors, are rather a precise manifestation of the recent development cooperation trend associated with the mainstream response to land grabbing claims.

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1 Introduction

Important changes have been taking place in the development cooperation architecture as emerging donors have consolidated their programs in recent years. What had traditionally been a North-South relationship, clearly framed by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of economically advanced countries, has now become much more diffuse. Woods, for example, argues that a "silent revolution" is taking place, with an increasing number of Southern donors "offering alternatives to aid-receiving countries" (Woods, 2008, pp. 1220-1221). Although South-South development cooperation (SSDC) is not a new phenomenon or concept, it has gained prominence in a changing international order characterized by the economic and political strengthening of middle-income countries (Muggah & Hamann, 2012). Not only aid from Southern donors has been growing in the last decade, but also SSDC has come to represent a powerful set of developmental principles (Mawdsley, 2012, p. 65).

After decades of foreign aid being poured into Sub-Saharan Africa and no clear structural results being achieved, the arrival of new donors with a distinct discourse and sectorial preferences has aroused expectations that cooperation could lead to significant achievements in poverty reduction. One of the poorest countries in the world, Mozambique, is a case in point. It has experienced consistent economic growth and high levels of foreign aid and foreign investments[4], yet recent official statistics indicate that extreme poverty has not been declining[5]. Growth has been pulled along by a few enclave mega-projects in the mineral and energy sectors financed with foreign investments. These are capital intensive, rely heavily on imported intermediates and export most of their production, which means that they create few jobs and have few linkages to the public budget due to widespread tax exemptions. Therefore, they exacerbate the extractive nature of the Mozambican economy (Castel-Branco, 2008; Virtanen & Ehrenpreis, 2007; Sonne-Schmidt et al., 2009).

For its part, the agricultural sector has been characterized by declining per capita food production and land productivity; it clearly lags behind. In 2008, both food per capita and food per hectare were lower than in 2002 (MPD, 2010; Cunguara, 2012; Cunguara & Hanlon, 2012; UNDP, 2012). Although there is general recognition of the capacity of agricultural development to help reduce poverty, the sector received only 3% of government spending in the first decade of this century and 7.6% of the total ODA (Official Development Assistance) from traditional donors and agencies between 2005 and 2011 (Mosca, 2012).

In a context marked by disillusionment regarding traditional donors' capacity to reduce poverty, by fast Chinese expansion in Sub-Saharan Africa, and by Brazil's recent success in reducing its own poverty, cooperation with Brazil should sound a promising avenue. Indeed, Brazilian

[4] From 1993, one year after the peace agreement that ended almost three decades of civil war, until 2012, average real GDP growth has been around 8% a year, one of the fastest growth rates in Africa, only behind a few oil-exporting countries. Rates have been especially stable in the last decade, and since 2001 annual GDP real expansion has never dropped below 6% (World Economic Outlook Database, April 2013, available at: http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/01/weodata/index.aspx).

[5] In fact, poverty incidence, measured by the national poverty line, still found room to rise, going from 54.1% of the population in 2002-03 to 54.7% in 2008-09 (MPD, 2010). A similar tendency can be observed in more long-term food security indicators. Chronic child malnutrition has seen "little substantive progress" according to UNICEF: in children under five it went from 47.1% in 2003 to 46.4% in 2008/09. Acute child malnutrition actually rose from 5.1% to 6.6% in the same period (MPD, 2010).

technical aid has higher emphasis in the agricultural sector if compared to traditional donors. The sector responded for 22% of Brazilian global initiatives between 2003 and 2010 (RFB, 2011), and for 24% in the case of Mozambique[6]. Brazilian officials have also been one of the clearest voices in the international arena supporting SSDC as an alternative to traditional North-South cooperation[7]. The main arguments are that most Southern donors do not have a colonialist past and do not impose political or macroeconomic conditionalities. Instead, they claim to hold the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and to be in a better position to capture the social complexity of developing countries, due to their own recent experience with development. In government documents, Brazilian rhetoric claims that SSDC should be "demand-driven", "nonprofit, unlinked to commercial interests", "without impositions or political conditionalities", "inspired by the concept of solidary diplomacy" and "participatory". Projects and programs should have a "structural approach" leading to sustainable results and higher social-economic impacts (ABC, n.d.; ABC, 2010; MRE, 2013; IPEA 2011, pp. 32-33).

This paper has two aims. The first is to critically examine some Brazilian cooperation practices in the agricultural sector in Mozambique *vis-à-vis* broader tendencies in the global development architecture after the growing concerns over land grabbing. Second, this paper analyses to what extent such practices are distanced from the principles that Brazilian political leaders claim to endorse with the cooperation. We empirically investigated Brazilian cooperation practices in the framework of an ambitious trilateral agricultural program, ProSAVANA. The research is based on analysis of government documents and 41 semi-structured interviews with Mozambican, Brazilian and Japanese informants working in or affected by the program. These interviews were combined with multi-sited ethnography in Nampula and districts around the Nacala corridor from March to April 2013. A list of people interviewed is provided in the annex.

The article compares the discourse of SSDC and the actual practice of Brazilian development cooperation in ProSAVANA, identifying some sound ruptures between them. It is argued that the program is well-inserted into the post-land grabbing mainstream development cooperation trend, and goes against some of the principles Brazil supports in the international policy arena. Instead of unlinked with commercial motivations, private business interests in fact play an inherent part in the program. It is not demand-driven, as the discourse claims, but was instead proposed by donors. Last, ProSAVANA is hardly participatory, but is instead characterized by top-down and outside-inside conduct. In what follows, we first briefly outline the program in its context. We then show how the actual practices break with the promises in SSDC. Then, we argue that these ruptures are in line with the most recent mainstream development cooperation trend. We conclude by discussing some possible implications of Brazilian cooperation practices within ProSAVANA for Mozambican development.

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[6] Interview with Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) official in Maputo on 13/03/2013.

[7] Brazilian diplomats managed to include a critical paragraph at the Accra Agenda for Action of the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in 2008, synthesizing its view of SSDC: "South-South co-operation on development aims to observe the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, equality among developing partners and respect for their independence, national sovereignty, cultural diversity and identity and local content. It (…) is a valuable *complement* to North-South cooperation" (p. 18, emphasis added, available at: http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf).

2 Cooperation profile and investments in the Nacala corridor

As said above, Mozambique has been facing enormous constraints in its agricultural sector. It has not been able to increase per capita food production for the past decade, and thus has not been able to properly feed its population and increase rural incomes. In this context the ambitious regional agricultural program, ProSAVANA, a trilateral initiative run by the governments of Japan, Mozambique and Brazil, provides a great opportunity. It is a fairly long development project spanning 20 years, allowing structural changes to be carried out in the socioeconomic system in the 19 districts of the provinces of Nampula, Niassa and Zambezia, where some 4.3 million people live.

ProSAVANA is by far the biggest Brazilian development program in the area of technical agricultural cooperation in Mozambique (Table 1), including when comparing with other trilateral initiatives. Its first phase, from 2011 until 2019, is organized around three components. The first is a technological one (ProSAVANA-PI), executed mainly by the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) in cooperation with the Mozambican Agrarian Research Institute (IIAM). It is to be implemented from 2011-2016 and has a budget of USD 13.5 million. A second component, the Master Plan formulation (ProSAVANA-PD), executed together by Oriental Consulting (a Japanese consulting team), FGV Projetos (a Brazilian consulting company), and Mozambican counterparts, is being implemented between 2012 and 2013 with a total of USD 7.7 million. A third component, focusing on agricultural extension and models (ProSAVANA-PEM), was still in its formulation phase in mid-2013 and should run until 2019, with a preliminary budget estimated at around USD 15 million[8]. At present, the last component is running about a year and a half late. At the beginning of 2013, it began to become clear that the main agricultural development model supported by the program would integrate large-scale foreign investments with small-scale local farmers in a contract-farming scheme. Small-farmers would get inputs (such as improved seeds, fertilizers, inoculants, pesticides and extension services) from investors in exchange for their production.

[8] For a more detailed description of ProSAVANA, see Chichava et al. (2013).

Table 1. Budget, duration and type

Ongoing Brazilian programs in the agricultural sector in Mozambique

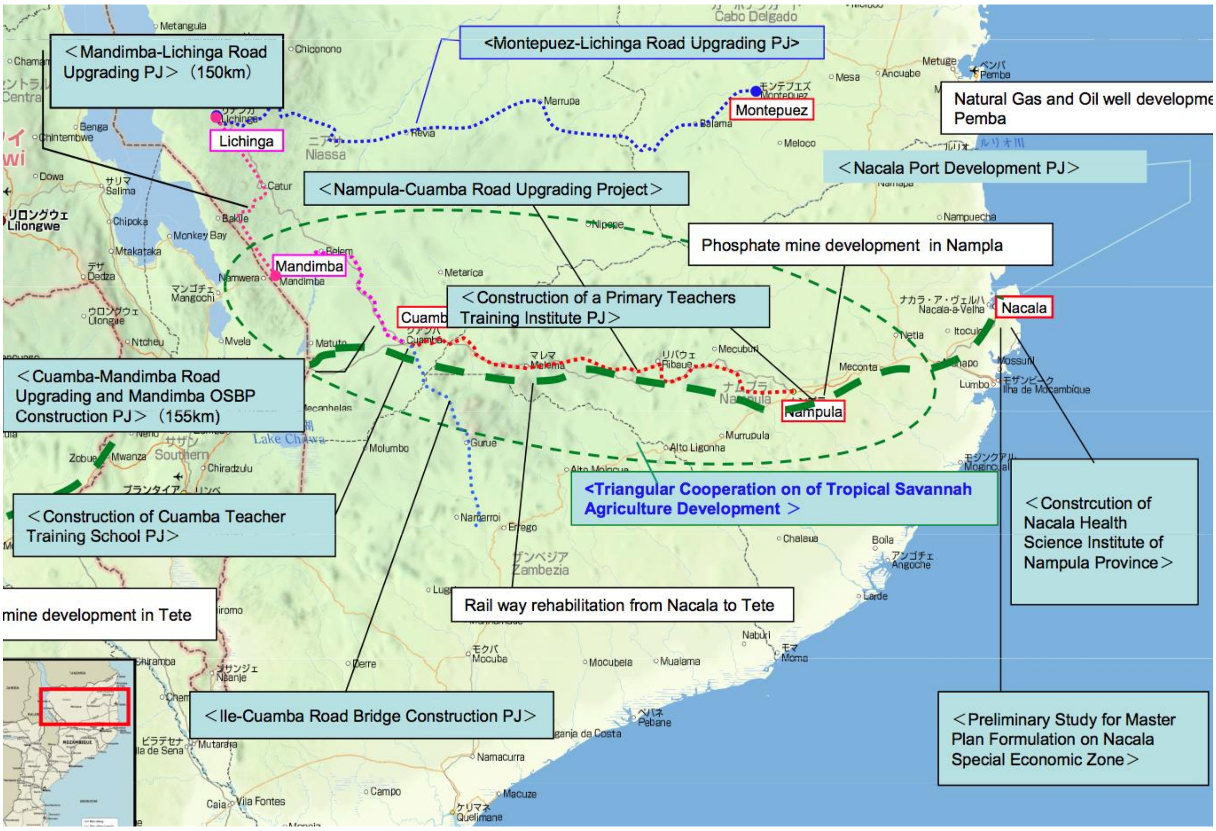
Project name	Total budget	Duration	Type
Technical Cooperation			
ProSAVANA PI+PD+PEM*	36,207,210	2011-2019	Trilateral (with JICA)
Plataforma	14,688,802	2010-2014	Trilateral (with USAID)
Food Security	2,406,724	2011-2013	Trilateral (with USAID)
Food Acquisition Program	500,000	2012-2013	Multilateral (with FAO and WFP)
Traditional Seeds	363,500	2011-2014	Bilateral
Concessional Loan + Technical Cooperation			
More Food Mozambique	97,590,000	Signed in 2011 but the loan has not been released as of mid-2013	Bilateral

*ProSAVANA-PEM does not yet have an approved budget. Estimation is based on non-official technical staff forecast.
Source: ABC and MDA (personal correspondence). For details on the programs, see, for example, Chichava et al. (2013), Cabral & Shankland (2013) and Patriota & Pierri (2013).

As the agricultural body of the broader Nacala corridor development plan, ProSAVANA is located within a large web of foreign private and public investments that are taking place in the region (Figure 1). If all these investments materialize, they will represent one of the most impressive and concatenated infrastructure development initiatives in this part of Africa. They include investments from the Brazilian mining company Vale, which are not officially related to the program but are still highly imbricated in practical terms (see the following section). In addition, a number of other infrastructure projects are being financed by the Japanese government, such as modernization and expansion of the Nacala Port and upgrading of the main roads along the corridor, including the routes Nampula-Cuamba, Cuamba-Mandimba and Mandimba-Lichinga, totaling more than 650 km. From a Japanese strategic interest perspective, these investments, like ProSAVANA itself, aim at increasing world food production and thus stabilizing global food prices – an understanding shared by different ProSAVANA staff members in both private and public meetings[9].

[9] The Mozambican national coordinator for ProSAVANA, for instance, publicly shared this understanding in a meeting with members of civil society held in Nampula on 21/03/2013.

Figure 1. Foreign financed investments in the Nacala corridor



Source: JICA and ABC, 2011

Notwithstanding these opportunities, ProSAVANA has become by far the most contested Brazilian program in Mozambican civil society[10] and has provoked a number of critical academic papers[11]. The highly opaque management and incoherencies in the scarce information that has been shared with the public, combined with delays in launching the program's "social part" (extension services for peasants), have induced a wave of criticism and fear related to land grabbing, resettlements, reduced food security and growing inequality. Why is this? Should the Brazilian cooperation not be welcomed by recipient countries once it embraces principles such as no links to commercial interests, a demand-driven approach, and a participatory framework? We show in the following section that ProSAVANA does not follow some of the most salient principles of SSDC, rendering the criticisms both understandable and legitimate.

[10] All major national social movements have publicly expressed their concern over the program. Their mobilization culminated with an open letter signed in May 2013 by 23 national organizations and directed to authorities of Mozambique, Brazil and Japan in which they call for the immediate suspension and revision of the programme ('Carta Aberta', available at: http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/22136). See also the pronouncements from the National Peasant's Union (UNAC) published in October 2012 (http://www.unac.org.mz/index.php/7-blog/39-pronunciamento-da-unac-sobre-o-programa-prosavana), from the Platform of Civil Society in Nampula (Plataforma) published in November 2012 ("Reflexão, Inquietações e Recomendações sobre o ProSAVANA") and from Environmental Justice/ Friends of the Earth Mozambique released in January 2013 (http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/21566).

[11] See, for instance, Cabral et al. (2012), Clements & Fernandes (2013) and Funada-Classen (2013).

3 Ruptures between discourse and practice in Brazilian cooperation

3.1 From “no links to commercial or economic motivations” to “private investors as the dynamic force for development”

Officially based on the concept of “solidary diplomacy”, Brazilian cooperation is often presented as “nonprofit and unlinked to commercial interests”, although a recent article has already called for an *aggiornamento* of this principle once it has been “bypassed in practice in recent programs”[12]. In fact, both interviews and project documents speak clearly that private and foreign investors are “the main dynamic force for development” within ProSAVANA. The March 2013 version of the Master Plan precisely formulates an agricultural development plan that “contributes to social and economic development by engaging private investment to promote a sustainable production system and poverty reduction in the Nacala Corridor” (ProSAVANA-PD-QIP, p. 1-1). The plan also foresees the implementation of Quick Impact Projects that should produce rapidly visible impacts as a way “to attract local and foreign companies to invest in agriculture and agribusiness projects in the Nacala Corridor” (idem, p. 4-1).

Indeed, due to the centrality of private investors in the operationalization of ProSAVANA, the plan often resembles a business plan more than a development plan. For example, in a project for integrated grain cluster to be implemented in the Majune district, “feasibility indicators, at a discount rate of 10%, show that the project has high profitability and the IRR was calculated at 20.3% and the payback is 9 years” (ProSAVANA-PD-QIP, 2013, p. 3-43). This project would demand 60,000 hectares, “incorporating family farmers in the business through promotion, contracts, including hand labor and the establishment of production villages in case when resettlement in needed (*sic*)” (ibid.). The plan adds: “the Nacala port will be the main route of the cluster’s production flow” (ibid., p. 3-45), a phrase that is found in other projects where no concerns are raised over internal food supply. While no other project in ProSAVANA demands such vast quantities of land, the private-investor perspective predominates in many of them. Another project, for grain and cotton in Lioma, demands “tax incentives mechanisms” to attract investors and “identification of areas available for expansion” (ibid., p. 3-50 and 3-51). Half of the Quick Impact Projects are to be taken forward by the private sector, including by agribusiness investors already operating in the Nacala corridor. The plan suggests “an affordable agricultural loan at a low interest rate” in order to “widely promote” the out-grower scheme for soybean production for companies already operating in Lichinga and Lioma (ProSAVANA-PD-QIP, 2013, p. 4-36). In the case of one soybean producer, whose plan is to expand his cultivation area to 2,500 ha by 2015, an “affordable agricultural loan” is also required “to cover 50% of the above cost of implementing the out-grower scheme” (ibid., p. 4-32).

The line between ProSAVANA as a development program and the private interventions in the Nacala corridor are often blurred. Two big investments in the Nacala corridor, while not officially associated with the program, are being carried out by Vale, the Brazilian mining company that operates the Moatize coal mine in Tete province (Figure 1). One investment aims to rehabilitate the export terminal port in Nacala and the railway that runs from Nacala to Tete, passing through Malawi. Vale has the concession to operate both the railway and the associated coal export terminal at the deep-water seaport of Nacala-à-Velha. Once this infrastructure is

[12] Patriota & Pierri (2013).

completed, the company expects to be able to transport and export at least 18 Mt/y of coal, against 6 Mt/y now through the Beira Port[13]. The rehabilitation includes revamping 682 km of existing railroads right in the heart of ProSAVANA and laying a new 230 km section[14]. Under another concession, Vale has also made an investment to build a mine to access the Evate phosphate deposits – the largest in Mozambique – in Monapo, Nampula province. It is expected to become another large-scale mining operation after 2014. To process the phosphate, Vale plans to build a complex in the coastal district of Nacala-à-Velha that will produce fertilizers[15].

Motivated by its interests in the region, Vale sponsored the first agro-climatic zoning in Mozambique that aimed to assess the agricultural potential of different zones. The zoning was part of a larger viability study prepared between 2010 and 2011 in Mozambique and three other African countries for the production of biofuels. These studies were requested by the Brazilian government, sponsored by Vale, and executed by a team from FGV Projetos, the same consulting company that has been preparing the Master Plan. By initiative of FGV Projetos, the scope of the zoning was broadened to include not only biofuels but also other crops, such as corn, soya and cotton[16]. The fact that a private mining company is financing a prospective cooperation program in its planning phase can be seen both as an indication of its interest in the region and of the limited capacity of Brazilian official cooperation to respond to demands.

ProSAVANA is often presented as a "package" that can reduce costs and risks of investors. This is notably done by the Nacala Fund, an investment fund elaborated as well by FGV Projetos that, in 10 years, aims to raise US$ 2 billion to finance agribusiness investors along the corridor. Brazilian stakeholders usually emphasize that the Nacala Fund does not have any formal connection with ProSAVANA. It is worth noting, however, that the fund does appear in the list of projects proposed by the March 2013 version of the Master Plan, although stating that "the project sheet will be completed after the confirming the situation of the Nacala Fund" (ProSAVANA-PD-QIP, p. 3-35). The Fund has so far selected 10 Brazilian farmers that, according to a business plan, should work in cooperation with four medium-sized Mozambican. They will operate around three production clusters: cotton (to be further developed into a textile cluster), corn and soya (both also for producing cooking oil and animal feed)[17]. The fund is planned to be registered as an Investment Company Risk Capital (SICAR) in Luxembourg, and is being marketed as offering "investments with low risk and high return", once risks should be minimized by ProSAVANA's "institutional package" (FGV Projetos, 2012, p. 58).

At least four large foreign agribusiness companies are already operating or beginning operations in the Gúruè (usually in the Lioma region) and Lichinga districts, producing mainly soya on a contract-farming scheme as proposed by ProSAVANA. The companies are Hoyo Hoyo (Portugal), Africa Century Agriculture (registered in Mauritius and based in London), Rei do Agro (US) and the controversial Agromoz, a partnership between Grupo Pinesso (Brazil), Grupo Américo

[13]http://www.miningweekly.com/article/vale-reveals-progress-in-moatize-expansion-and-nacala-corridor-development-2013-03-08 [last accessed in April 2013].

[14] Vale, Railroads website http://www.vale.com/brasil/EN/business/logistics/railways/Pages/default.aspx [last accessed in May 2013].

[15]http://www.macauhub.com.mo/en/2012/10/09/brazil%E2%80%99s-vale-starts-quantifying-phosphate-reserves-in-mozambique/ [last accessed in May 2013].

[16] Interviews with FGV Projetos staff on 18/03/2013 and on 03/06/2013.

[17] Interview with FGV Projetos staff on 03/06/2013.

Amorin (Portugal) and Intelec Holdings, owned by the Mozambican president, Armando Guebuza (Hanlon & Smart, 2012). This last partnership obviously raises questions about Mozambican political leaders' personal interests in attracting foreign investments in agriculture as they argue for improving national food security.

Brazilian investors will not be the only beneficiaries of the ProSAVANA interventions, but still one of the main groups. The Mozambican focal point in Nampula reported that "Brazilian investors are the ones that come in larger numbers within the scope of ProSAVANA". "There have been two big [Brazilian] missions, and in one of them they have hired a full Boeing, with 70 investors in November 2012. (…) Last Saturday there was a Brazilian team to search for land to work in here. But they left with a bit of a deception, because land here is not what they had imagined. To find 20,000 ha here is not easy (…), there is a lot of hidden land but the investor comes and looks around the road. With the zoning done by ProSAVANA it will be easier"[18]. Besides Grupo Pinesso, up to mid-2013 at least three Brazilian agribusiness companies were waiting for the approval of their DUAT, the state-granted land use right[19].

The central role of large-scale private sector in the ProSAVANA program has not been unproblematic within the program. In the first stages of the elaboration of the Master Plan, the Japanese counterparts claimed that large-scale agribusiness "would not be feasible", as one FGV Projetos staff member points out. Officials from the Mozambican Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG) have also reported facing difficulties in dealing with the expectations of Brazilian partners with regard to large-scale investments. "The biggest challenge with Brazil is that we have different perceptions. What is small in Brazil is not the same thing in Mozambique. So, for big farms… This is a big challenge for us: how to correspond to private investors' expectations in practical terms"[20]. Nonetheless, a strong characteristic of the March 2013 draft of the Master Plan is the role of foreign private investors in fostering family production through contract farming.

The high population density in the 14 districts immediately around the railway line was reported to be the main reason for expanding ProSAVANA interventions to 19 districts. The program now includes five new districts with lower population density where it could be easier to implement large-scale farming, for example in Majune[21]. In a context marked by limited operational and policy capacity on the part of ABC (more below) and by the implicit need to defend "national interests" through cooperation[22], it should not be surprising that organized private interests have been able to take the lead in certain Brazilian SSDC projects.

3.2 From a "demand-driven" to a "donor-proposal" approach

Brazilian South-South development cooperation is, according to the official discourse, "demand-driven" (ABC, 2013) and based on principles that promote "local ownership" (Patriota, 2009) and "local leadership". Projects and programs should take place "in response to the demand from developing countries" (ABC, n.d.) and should be aligned with national development plans.

[18] Interview on 21/03/2013.
[19] Interview with MINAG official on 09/04/2013.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Interview with FGV Projetos and JICA staff members on 18/03/2013.
[22] Interview with former ABC director on 06/03/2013.

Instead of being original SSDC principles, these concepts have been derived from the so-called Aid Effectiveness Agenda that has been orienting traditional donors' practices since the 2005 Paris Declaration. The idea behind ownership is that developing countries should be formulating their own national development strategies. In practical terms, however, recipient countries have had less policy space to define social, economic and political strategies due to the proliferation of Strategy Papers often written with the intention of pleasing foreign donors. These documents have come to form the main framework of recent donor-recipient relations in Africa (Oya, 2006; Castel-Branco, 2011; Oya and Pons-Vignon, 2010).

ProSAVANA is indeed aligned with a couple of Mozambican national strategies, notably with PEDSA (Strategic Plan for Development of the Agrarian Sector). However, to what extent these national plans were developed to respond to new trends in development cooperation is subject to further investigation. What we know is that ProSAVANA was not born of a request or a demand from the Mozambican government[23]. It was initially an initiative of the Japanese counterparts, operationalized by JICA and motivated by the Japanese desire, as said before, to balance "the supply and demand for food in global standards by increasing food production" (ProSAVANA, 2009). ProSAVANA is based upon the decade-old "Japan-Brazil Partnership Program" (JBPP) agreed on 28 March 2000 in Tokyo, which takes the same type of triangular form that Japan has used in its partnerships with a number of other Southern countries[24]. The partnership was re-activated at the initiative of the Japanese side during a visit of the Senior Vice-President of JICA, Kenzo Oshima, to Brasília in April 2009. During these meetings, JICA proposed spreading the results of the Prodecer (Brazil-Japan Cooperation for the Development of Brazilian Cerrado) to the African Savannah. This led to the signing of an agreement between Oshima and the former Director of ABC, Marco Farani, on 3 April 2009, confirming a common interest in using the JBPP framework for cooperation in the development of the African tropical savannah.

It was only then that the first beneficiary country of the agreement began to take part in the formulation of the plan. As the ProSAVANA Master Plan's Terms of Reference put it, "as a result of a combined decision between the governments of Japan and Brazil, (…) ProSAVANA aims at repeating in the African continent the development experience of Brazilian cerrado, and Mozambique was defined as the first country to receive the program's actions" (ProSAVANA ToR, 2011, p. 14). The first formal entrance of officials from the Ministry of Agriculture of Mozambique into the planning of the program was during a roadshow visit to the Brazilian cerrado organized in May 2009 in order to present Brazilian large-scale agriculture and the techniques that could be transferred. A subsequent Japan-Brazil joint mission to Mozambique in June 2009 formed an initial perception that there would be "an extensive area of non-used arable land" available for investments (ProSAVANA, 2009). Finally, in July 2009, the program was given high-level political approval during a meeting between the Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso and the Brazilian President Lula da Silva at the G8 summit meeting in L'Aquila – without the presence of a Mozambican authority.

[23] Based on interviews with former and current ABC and JICA staff members, Mozambique Ministry of Agriculture and on the minutes of the meeting of 17 September 2009 (ProSAVANA, 2009).
[24] This framework was first used with Brazil in a partnership for capacity building in Josina Machel hospital in Angola in 2007 (JICA, n.d.).

3.3 From a "participatory" to an "explanatory" framework

Probably the two most criticized characteristics of ProSAVANA have been its opaque management from the public's perspective and the incoherence between different stakeholders over time[25]. In a civil society meeting held in Maputo[26], this incoherence was illustrated in a debate over the displacement of local communities. A Brazilian representative of the study team categorically stressed that no displacement would take place in the first phase (until 2019) and was followed by a Mozambican intervenient who affirmed that "I cannot say if there will be displacements or not. We want to minimize conflicts (…) but it doesn't mean that they cannot happen".

Both in personal interviews and public events, government officials and the program staff have admitted that problems of communication are an important failure, and have stated that they are trying to fix it through meetings at village level and dissemination of information to civil society. Since February 2013, teams consisting of Mozambican officials and Japanese and/or Brazilian consultants have been visiting districts to present ProSAVANA to local communities. After presenting the program, the teams open the floor to questions and suggestions from farmers, aiming to learn about the constraints they are facing. However, the methodology seems to focus merely on presenting the project as it has already been planned, rather than allowing locals real participation. According to officials at the Mozambican focal point in Nampula[27], there has been "divulgation" to local communities to avoid "disturbance". The methodology is to "spread information" and "explain" the program. A member of the Japanese study team shared this view: "We have started the divulgation of ProSAVANA in local communities as a way to oppose the criticism"[28]. Only one consultant interviewed reported some knowledge of a participatory approach: "I ask them about their dreams. How do they see themselves in the future?"[29]

Genuine 'participation' does not imply asking someone's opinion before doing what has been already planned (and what would be done anyway, in many cases). Participation should mean planning together and sharing each other's opinions transparently in the process of planning. Interventions that fail to put such a process into practice risk a low level of local ownership by the community and a high probability of gross mistakes. However, a participatory approach was not an official orientation of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency at the formulating phase of the Master Plan, and it was left to consultants to decide their approach. "If we had asked for it to be participatory, there would be no chance to conclude the study within the period defined in the contract for the delivery of the final product", reported an ABC staff member[30].

The March 2013 draft of the ProSAVANA Master Plan was elaborated by the Japanese and Brazilian consulting teams with very limited input not only from local communities and organized civil society but also from the Mozambican government. This is to say that the

[25] See Funada-Classen (2013) for a systematization of the volatility in ProSAVANA discourse from a Japanese perspective.
[26] Attended by one of the authors on 18/03/2013.
[27] Interview on 21/03/2013.
[28] Interview on 01/04/2013.
[29] Interview on 27/03/2013.
[30] Phone interview on 17/05/2013.

planning of the program was not only imposed in an 'outside-inside' manner, that is, proposed by donors, but also in a 'top-down', that is, a non-participatory manner. "We haven't got much involved. We are waiting to see what they are going to propose", responded one high official from MINAG[31]. The lack of involvement of the Mozambican government, a problem reported also by Brazilian and Japanese stakeholders, is a matter of method. Other projects that Brazil has developed in Mozambique, like the formulation of the strategic plan for the Institute of Agrarian Research (IIAM) in partnership with Embrapa, have adopted a participatory approach from the beginning. "Otherwise they don't feel it is their plan and they won't use it", summarized the Embrapa representative in Maputo[32].

4 ProSAVANA as a manifestation of the post-land grabbing mainstream trend

ProSAVANA seems to be a precise manifestation of the mainstream development cooperation trend that has emerged as a response to growing apprehension over the phenomenon of land grabbing in poor countries. Since 2007, a large number of reports on land grabbing have been commissioned by different organizations[33]. These studies raise concerns over issues ranging from food security, land conflicts and the incapacity of past land deals to reduce poverty, to their concentrated benefits in terms of corporate profits[34]. As a response to these threats, some "opportunities" were identified in the 2011 World Bank report (Deininger et al., 2011), whereby large investors' resources and interest in land would be used to help low-income countries to increase smallholder productivity and improve local livelihoods. This development agenda uses the "win-win" discourse to argue that large-scale foreign direct investments are the answer to low agricultural productivity in Africa if coupled with two things: a beneficial policy environment and a code of conduct for transnational corporations. As Borras and Franco summarize, "the dominant storyline of land grabbing as a threat is slowly ceding ground to a new storyline – that of the new land deals as a potential opportunity for rural development, if they can be harnessed properly to minimize or avoid possible negative social and environmental effects" (Borras & Franco, 2010, p. 509).

The policy framework that, according to the 2011 World Bank report, would lead to large-scale investment in agriculture and land acquisition as well as the enhancement of "opportunity", is the same policy framework that orientates the ProSAVANA Master Plan. The defining principles are: 1. well-defined and demarcated land rights, 2. clear identification of land and its availability through agro-ecological zoning, and 3. facilitation of contract farming or other out-grower schemes (Deininger et al., 2011; Borras & Franco, 2010). Often, these are not interventions formulated with pro-poor interests in mind, in the sense of "proceeding from a social-justice-driven analysis of the causes of rural poverty and the need to protect and advance rural poor people's land access and property interests" (Borras & Franco, 2010, p. 511). The main issue to

[31] Interview on 09/04/2013.
[32] Interview on 14/03/2013.
[33] For example, the United Nations Food Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Land Coalition (ILC), The Oakland Institute, and Land Deals Politics Initiatives. For a review, see Fernandes et al. (2012).
[34] For applied research on land grabbing in Mozambique, see The Oakland Institute (2011) and Aabo & Kring (2012).

be tackled is rather an "investment problem", which will supposedly be overcome through facilitation of foreign investments.

However, why should foreign private investors "promote development" once large plots of land are sold or rented out to them on a commercial or concessional basis? According to Borras and Franco (2010), the answer – the "magic bullet" – in the new narrative is a voluntary international code of conduct for investors, that is, a self-regulation guideline that should orient investors towards "good practices". In the ProSAVANA Master Plan, this is materialized as the Principle of Responsible Agricultural Investment (PRAI), essentially a reproduction of seven principles prepared by the FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD and World Bank Group (FAO et al., 2010), which "private investors interested in agricultural development in the Nacala Corridor will be *requested* to comply with" (ProSAVANA-PD-QIP, 2013, p. 5-3, emphasis added). The list includes a number of vague requirements without enforcement mechanisms, allowing for a high degree of interpretation and discretion; for example, it is requested that "continuing access to food is assured" or that "strategies to reduce potential instability of supply are adopted". In other cases, investors are requested to adhere to what should be their most basic practices in any case, such as "comply[ing] with laws, regulations, and policies applicable in the host country". The Master Plan also discusses the creation of an agency to address RAI issues, recommending that "this agency or unit will not possess legal power to impose sanctions or penalties" (ProSAVANA-PD-QIP, 2013, p. 5-8).

The critical aspect to be highlighted here is not the presence of foreign private capital in development strategies *per se*, but the centrality it has gained in policy formulation and operationalization and in terms of self-regulation, as opposed to state regulation. As Chichava et al. have observed, the emphasis on the private sector has been present in development cooperation ever since the structural adjustment agenda emerged. What is new, they argue, "is the central role attributed to the private sector in operationalizing public policy" (Chichava et al., 2013, p. 6), coupled with the optional self-regulation guidelines, we would add. As a consequence, this development agenda minimizes the responsibility of the state in promoting development and blocks the possibility of imposing contract conditionalities on foreign investors, although these have been proven to be crucial elements in development (Chang & Gabrel, 2004; Oya, 2006). Thus, ProSAVANA does not impose size limits for foreign farms, ceilings on exports or shares of the production that must stay in the local market. Indeed, these are not even mentioned, and yet one of the expected results is increased food security. In the same way, although the plan foresees the creation of industrial linkages through agroprocessing facilities, no binding contracts to add value locally are discussed.

How have organized private interests come to gain so much space in policy planning and operationalization of ProSAVANA? There are several possible interpretations, but this discussion goes beyond our objective in this article. What we would like to emphasize is that, on the Brazilian side, the program involves a number of different institutions, some of them known for their different approaches to the "agrarian question". And, above all, general coordination, which should be taken forward by ABC, is missing due to limited staff and resources and lack of policy orientation (Cabral and Shankland, 2013). In the agribusiness sector, one influential figure in conceptualizing the program has been Roberto Rodrigues, a former Minister of Agriculture and former president of the Brazilian Agribusiness Association, who is currently coordinator of the FGV Center for Agribusiness. One of his arguments is that Brazil has developed large-scale tropical agriculture technology that no other country has, and it should make efforts to become a world provider of such technology – the more people use it, the more valuable it becomes[35].

Such technology, however, is suitable only for certain types of agrarian systems, notably agribusiness with relevant scale. It is also highly dependent on the use of inputs (seeds, fertilizers and pesticides) certified by major agricultural companies. It is therefore no coincidence that the ProSAVANA Master Plan does not include any project that employs agroecology systems, such as organic fertilizers or improved native seeds – areas in which Brazil also has a good knowledge base and that provide local and autonomous solutions, reducing pressures on the national budget and balance of payments while improving food sovereignty[36]. It is also striking that a program of such magnitude ignores the internal demand side of the agricultural system, again an area in which Brazil has acquired much relevant knowledge via national food acquisition programs. As of early 2013, the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), which is responsible for family farming in Brazil, had refused to take part in the ProSAVANA program, stating the reason "not believing in the model" that was being proposed[37]. It finally decided to take part in the elaboration of ProSAVANA-PEM in April 2013 as a way of strengthening family farming in the program.

5 Conclusions and discussion

In this article we have argued that ProSAVANA is a precise manifestation of the recent mainstream development storyline that perceives foreign land deals in Africa as a potential opportunity for rural development, a straightforward reaction to the concerns raised by the literature on land grabbing. Following this trend, ProSAVANA defends a stance where private investments as a "dynamic force" are the answer to low agricultural productivity in Mozambique – when coupled with a beneficial policy environment and a self-imposed code of conduct for transnational corporations. These conditions include a responsible investment approach and a fast expansion of the contract-farming scheme for accommodating large-scale farmers (without automatically dispossessing local small peasants).

The responsible investment approach has helped to bypass issues surrounding socio-economic impacts of large-scale investments and contract farming, taking for granted that "development will naturally follow" economic growth. This has meant, however, that the numerous risks associated with contract farming have been ignored, such as the risk of a decrease in food production due to emphasis on monocultures for export, the risk of higher vulnerability and dependence (price and access) of small producers on imported inputs, and the risk of strengthening the already predominantly extractive nature of the Mozambican economy[38]. Organized local cotton producers who have been working on a contract-farming basis for decades in the Nacala Corridor have reported difficulties in price bargaining and serious difficulties in ascending the value chain due to large contractors' dominant market power[39].

[35] Interview with FGV Projetos and JICA staff members on 18/03/2013.
[36] Altieri & Toledo (2011).
[37] Interview with MDA and ABC staff members on 31/01/2013 and 18/02/2013.
[38] Mosca (2012) provides an introduction to this discussion.
[39] Interview on 29/03/2013.

In the case of ProSAVANA, the mainstream agenda has given legitimacy to cooperation practices that are strongly influenced by organized private interests around commodity exporting sectors. The critical aspect we have emphasized is not the presence *per se* of private actors in a development strategy, but the central role they have come to play in terms of policy formulation, operationalization and self-regulation. In such a context, private investment behavior is not to be controlled or oriented by the state or public actors, but rather it is to be guided with suggestions that lack enforcement. Given the high degree of fragmentation in the institutional framework governing Brazil's development cooperation, coupled with limited coordination capacity on the part of ABC, a lot of space has been opened for organized private interests to take the lead in this specific Brazilian SSDC project.

Our fieldwork provides evidence that ProSAVANA goes against at least three central pillars of Brazilian SSDC principles. First, contrary to the official discourse on lack of economic motivations, the centrality of private investors as the dynamic force for development has led to a Master Plan that, in its March 2013 version, more resembles a business plan than a development plan. Second, and also contrary to the official principle of a demand-driven approach, ProSAVANA was not born of a request from the Mozambican government – although all local officials interviewed support the program and expressed hope that it will boost local agricultural production. Third, any participatory aspects in the ProSAVANA Master Plan have been forced into it by the fierceness of the criticism from civil society and peasants' organizations; at first, at least with local populations, the program contained no participatory element at all. The plan follows not only a top-down but also an outside-inside direction, since Mozambican government authorities are hardly taking part as equal partners.

Mozambique, like various other Sub-Saharan countries, faces some undeniable challenges in terms of food security and sheer material poverty. In such a context, agribusiness derives its legitimacy from the failure of peasants to produce sufficiently. Enduring and rapid economic growth in recent decades has not helped to alleviate these basic problems; in fact, it has actually deepened the extractive nature of the Mozambican economy. Development programs that ought to have best impacts with regard to poverty reduction are such that break up with this extractive logic.

Agroecology-based production systems helping to reduce dependency, structural projects solving the internal demand side of agricultural constraints, and a structure of land distribution that avoids excessive concentration when allocating resources should be seen as fundamental components of an inclusive development plan. So far these have been absent from ProSAVANA. Moreover, although the program has merit in its emphasis on agroprocessing, it has failed to introduce an inclusive strategy for carrying out structural change that would enhance the conditions of the masses and add value locally. While remaining sensitive to all these components, there is a serious need for a genuinely participative, bottom-up and publicly backed regional development. If Brazil were to stand by the principles it expresses in official discourse, inclusive development in ProSAVANA would not have to represent a utopia.

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ANNEX

List of people interviewed

Institution	Name/position
ABC (Brazilian Cooperation Agency)	Marco Farani, former Director
	Thais Braga, Coordinator of Technical Cooperation Programs in Agriculture in Mozambique
	Paulo Lima, Coordinator for Lusophone Africa
	Wofsi Yuri Souza, General Coordinator
AENA (National Association of Rural Extension), Nampula	António Lourenço Mutoua, Executive Director
African Century Mozambique	Sérgio Gouveia, Agriculture Director
Embrapa (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation)	José Bellini Leite, General Coordinator Embrapa Mozambique
	Edson Guidcci, Embrapa Hortaliças
Fonpa (National Forum of Cotton Producers), Nampula	Américo Cândido, Coordinator
	Maurício Muarope, Coordinator
Forum Terra Nampula	Luisa Hoffman, Executive Director
GAPI (Financial Institution for Development), Nampula	Jorge Gonçalves, Technical Staff
IIAM (Institute of Agrarian Research of Mozambique)	Antonieta Nhamusso, Plataforma Coordinator
	Jacinto Mafalacusser, Soil Researcher
IKURU (Commercial Enterprise of Associated Producers)	Gerson Daniel, General Manager
	Moseis Raposo, former General Manager
JÁ / Friends of Earth Mozambique	Vanessa Cabanelas, Technical Staff
	Renê Machoco, Technical Staff
Ministry of Agrarian Development, Brazil, International Affairs	Francesco Pierri, Head
Ministry of Agriculture, Mozambique, Directorate of Agrarian Services	Mahomed Valá, National Director
Ministry of Agriculture, Mozambique, Directorate of Economics	Raimundo Matule, National Director
Ministry of Agriculture, Mozambique, Office of the Minister	Ventura Macamo, Minister Adviser
	Fernando Songane, former Minister Adviser
Ministry of Planning and Development, Mozambique	Salim Valá, Permanent Secretary
Nacala Fund / FGV Projetos	Frederico Dimas de Paiva, Consultant
Plataform of Civil Society in Nampula	António Muagerene, Executive Secretary
	Calisto Ribeiro, Coordinator for Agriculture
	Luís Huamasse, former Executive Secretary

Polytechnic University of Mozambique	João Mosca, Professor
ProSAVANA	Calisto Bias, National Coordinator
	Inácio Nhancale, National Focal Point for Rural Extension
ProSAVANA PD Project / Provincial Directorate of Agriculture Nampula	Júlio Nunes de Carvalho Júnior, Focal Point
ProSAVANA PD Project / FGV Projetos	Francisco Rollo, Consultant
ProSAVANA PD Project / JICA	José Tashimori Nakane, Consultant
	Mário Yoshimi Inoue, Consultant
UCM (Catholic University of Mozambique), Cuamba	Miguel Benjamin Antonio, Professor
UNAC (National Peasant Union), Mozambique	Augusto Mafigo, President
	Vicente Adriano, Technical Staff
UGCAN (General Union of Agricultural Cooperatives), Nampula	Gregório Ali Abudo, President
	Elísio Taniquera, Executive Secretary
	Daniel Ábaco Mario, Coordinator