

18.

Inclusion processes in work cultures and their impacts: a comparison of Portuguese and Mozambican cases

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It is not uncommon to hear, in the speech of managers and politicians, expressions connecting “work” to “culture” or “ethics”. In English, the phrase “work ethic” comes up often, with some people claiming to have learnt it from their parents, or demanding it from their employees. In Portuguese, and especially in Mozambique, the *cultura do trabalho* (lit. “labour culture”) is also often demanded from employees and “the People”.

An interesting point in this usually acritical emission and reception of words and meanings is that, in both cases, ethics and culture are not used in the plural. In fact, the speaker presupposes that there is only one “work ethic”, only one “labour culture”, with the characteristics they believe are the positive ones. These are claimed for themselves, and demanded from others in order to make them become “good workers”, or a “good People”.

So, the economically and/or politically powerful person encourages the dominated and poorer ones to adopt attitudes and concepts which they claim (or implicitly suggest) are at the root of their success. *This* is the path to being *included* in a group of wealthier and empowered people, although obviously not in the speaker’s own group. Therefore, in such speeches, it is the dominated and poorer people’s fault (and not the fault of the leaders and the rich, nor of the economic or political systems) that they are *excluded* from wealth and power, due to their lack of labour ethics and culture that, besides being the correct ones, are also unique.

Although we will return to this subject – when analysing the historical and socio-economic contexts that produced speeches accusing the Mozambican People of “laziness” – the focus of this article is not the normative, hegemonic¹ and putatively unique labour “ethics” and “culture”. It is rather on the actual and multiple *labour cultures and ethics* that we can observe in specific working contexts, their deep connection to labour conditions and to the local processes of *inclusion* within the working group, and their consequences for the safety and production.

We will therefore explore the continuities and contrasts between three labour contexts studied by the authors over recent decades²: the shop floor of

1 In the Gramscian sense of ideology produced by the dominant classes in order to legitimate their domination, and integrated by the subordinated into their own ideology (Gramsci 1971).

2 Despite employing different disciplinary frameworks (anthropology and sociology) each of the three long-term research studies used multiple methodologies, with a predominance of direct observation and interviews. Such similarities, together with the authors’ critical empathy for the workers’ points of view, have probably enhanced the comparative potential of the studies. The fieldwork periods for ►

the larger Portuguese and Mozambican industrial corporations, the Petrogal oil refinery at Sines and the Mozal primary aluminium smelter, and smaller companies with Mozambican, Portuguese or Chinese management, operating in the metropolitan area of the Mozambican capital, Maputo.

The comparisons will be based on two aspects. By comparing the large Portuguese and Mozambican industrial plants, we will focus on the different processes and aims of the new workers' *inclusion* in the companies and their daily work, and the effect of such differences on labour attitudes, the concepts and practices regarding labour hazards and industrial safety. By comparing the large aluminium smelter and the smaller companies in the Maputo area, we will focus on how different labour conditions, wages and management policies innovate within or reproduce the locally predominant labour cultures, and promote *inclusions* and *exclusions* from the workers' role models desired by managers and politicians.

In the process, we will both analyse the factors for the striking differences we can observe, and the ambiguity and multiplicity of *inclusion* meanings, according to the contexts and people involved.

THE AUTONOMOUS OIL REFINERS OF SINES

Back in 1978, a new oil refinery was built near Sines, on the southwestern Portuguese coast. The first workers hired were experts from Angolan and Mozambican refineries, returning to Portugal after the independence of those new countries. Some of their friends from colonial times were then hired from colonial times and, finally, some local youngsters with certificates from "industrial high schools".³

The *inclusion* of newcomers presented the experienced workers with a problem that persists today: there is no teaching or training for oil refining

▶ the research were undertaken in the second half of the 1990s (Petrogal, see Granjo 2004), in the early 2000s (Mozal, see Granjo 2003; 2008a) and in the early 2010s (Maputo, see Feijó 2015).

3 Until 1976, Portuguese high schools were divided into "industrial", "commercial" (both focused on professional training) and *liceus*, the latter allowing access to university. The data for this subject was collected by Paulo Granjo during the research project "Power and risk in the rational and symbolic production of labour in an industrial corporation", in 1994/1997, coordinated by José Fialho Feliciano and financed by JNICT (for broader approaches to this field, see Granjo 1998, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2007).

labour, outside or inside the company. New workers must learn while performing their jobs in a very hazardous technological environment, where they can jeopardise themselves and their co-workers due to ignorance or negligence.

The solution they found, and which has been followed by subsequent generations of workers, is unusual in industrial factories (Granjo 2004, 2007) and unexpectedly fits the model of *legitimate peripheral participation*, proposed by Jean Lave (1991).

In short, the professional training is organised by the workers themselves, who supervise the newcomers and show them how to do the various aspects of the job. They are gradually allowed to perform tasks of rising responsibility and danger – at first under supervision, later on their own. This goes along with the recurrent repetition of the sentence, “If you don’t know, you don’t touch”.

However, the explicit or tacit authorisation for performing a new task does not only depend on the acknowledgment, by the experienced worker, that the newcomer already knows how to do it correctly. It also demands acknowledgment that the new worker is already assimilated and respects the notions and attitudes towards labour and danger that the community of experienced workers believes to be correct – or, at least, that they have assimilated and respect them sufficiently to perform that specific task without putting everybody else in danger.

So, the professional training and *inclusion* is achieved through a centripetal participation in current labour activities, whose speed depends on the acquisition of both technical knowledge and group identity. In this rite of passage-like process (Gennep 1978; Turner 1969), the newcomer endures a situation of *integrative liminality*, which will lead to their full *inclusion* in the workers’ group, usually after facing “their” first emergency shutdown with proficiency, selflessness and courage: one of the most dangerous and complex events in an oil refinery (see Figure 18.1).

In fact, this worker training and *inclusion* process produces six complementary and direct consequences.

In the short-term, it neutralises the new workers’ potential to become a factor and source of danger. But it also produces lasting and structural effects, through the transmission and imposition of the key representations and emotions shared by the group:

By making the surrounding hazards and their relative importance clear, it reinforces the conditions for accident avoidance.

Figure 18.1*Integrative liminality, through centripetal participation*

By emphasising the permanent possibility of an emergency and what to do if it occurs, it reinforces the ability to detect abnormal situations, and the individual and collective response to them.

By conveying the necessity to react immediately to accidents when they happen, in order to avoid uncontrollable and worse outcomes, it reduces their consequences.

By imposing mutual co-worker responsibility and solidarity, it inhibits dangerous actions and reinforces trust and help during emergency situations.

Last but not at all least, by reproducing a non-probabilistic notion of “danger” – which states that many hazards are unpredictable and may turn into accidents any moment and everywhere – it induces and maintains a precautionary attitude and avoidance of risk amongst the workers.

Therefore, this *inclusion* process moulds the workers’ representations and feelings, together with the labour practices. But it also moulds other labour groups inside the refinery, and interacts with a social factor of danger potentiation, which is central to the factory *modus operandi* and safety.

The moulding of other labour groups arises from the fact that, in order to gain promotion in a refining career, almost everybody⁴ has, beforehand, to have been a regular “exterior worker”, dealing directly and physically with the huge

4 As an experiment, however, some technical engineers were occasionally hired as “control operators”.

refining machinery and, consequently, have been moulded by the *inclusion* process described. The subsequent posts in the refining hierarchy are the “control operators”, who survey the functioning parameters of the machinery through a computer system, detect abnormal temperatures, pressures and fluxes, and decide when and how to change them, or if emergency action is needed. Next, we have the “shift supervisors”, who are both administrative chiefs and the ultimate safety and technical decision-makers during each eight-hour labour shift, since the refinery must be operated continuously.

The other labour group in the production area are the engineers, who work from 9 am to 5 pm and are responsible for one “unit” (aggregates of machinery that perform a specific function in the production process) or for a sector of the factory, where they are both the technical and hierarchical chiefs. They have never worked on the shop floor, but were socialised and moulded at university. For that reason, they have a detached and abstract relationship with the technical hazards. They don’t share the worker-rooted values and feelings of personal responsibility for everybody else’s safety. Moreover, although they would not be able to calculate the probabilities for a specific hazardous situation to become an accident, they perceive and evaluate the hazards according to a notion of probabilistic “risk”.⁵

The engineers at various hierarchical levels are pressed to maximise production, and their evaluation as “good engineers” and their subsequent career depend on it. The factors we have just mentioned therefore induce a hierarchical tendency to face dangerous casuistic situations according to impressionistic evaluations about the low probability of them causing a serious accident. Consequently, there is a tendency to put pressure on their subordinates to keep working under (or to adopt) abnormal or more dangerous proceedings, if this will keep production levels high, avoid a safety shutdown, or speed-up the process of resuming production.⁶

Of course, the submission to such pressures would induce new hazards, which would be primarily faced by the workers who actually operate the

5 To deepen the conceptual differentiation between probabilistic “risk” and non-probabilistic “danger”, as different social representations and models in a continuum of diverse “domestication of uncertainty” possibilities, see Granjo (2004; 2008a and 2008b).

6 Most “units” take more than a day to stabilise and start manufacturing products to commercial standards after a shutdown and, in the meantime, crude is wasted. So, besides the loss of production while they stop, both the shutdowns and the resuming processes are very expensive.

machinery. Being aware of that and continuing to share (to varying degrees) the concepts, values, feelings and practices conveyed to them during their process of *inclusion* in the workers' group, the shift supervisors or the control operators may and do resist such pressures, when they believe the increase in danger to be too high to take the risk.

In contrast, if they assess such an increase in danger as being acceptable (or, at least, acceptable enough when compared to the damage that a firm refusal to obey may cause their reputation and chances of promotion), they will usually submit to the hierarchical pressures, and reproduce such pressure over the workers of the sector they are in charge of.

When this happens and the workers who deal directly with the machinery evaluate the danger as being too high to face, they will tend to resist. Preferably (in order to protect their reputation and future career), using tricks that impose the output they want without explicitly confronting the hierarchy. For instance, the walkie-talkies may “stop” functioning correctly, or their experienced knowledge about the details of the machinery may be capitalised on in order to deceive the alarm sensors and impede the operations continuing under conditions and parameters which they reject. If there is no other way, they may exceptionally refuse to obey, after arguing why.

Therefore, the worker *inclusion* process – and particularly the representation of non-probabilistic danger and the values it reproduces – provides, besides the safety consequences mentioned above, the reduction of extra danger through hierarchical pressures. By doing so, it increases safety and has probably prevented several major accidents in this oil refinery.

THE MOZAL SMELTER “MINERS”

At the turn of the century, a state-of-the-art aluminium smelter started production near the Mozambican capital, Maputo. Its managers wanted to integrate the future workers, moulding them from a “blank sheet of paper”. Therefore, they did not contract candidates with previous industrial experience,⁷ and implemented a long school-like training programme. In the classes, they used to teach every future job action according to a dossier of “Best Operation Proceedings”, each one of them listing in detail all actions to

7 Or “with bad vices”, in a manager’s own words.

be performed in a single working task, how to do them and their sequence. Much attention was also given to safety proceedings and to the repetition of the slogan “Safety comes first, production comes second”.

The workers-to-be were glad to attend such classes because, while doing so, they started getting salaries some 10 times higher than in other factories. Besides, completed high school education was required to become a worker at Mozal and most new workers had finished their school days recently, so it didn't seem strange to them to learn how to work in a classroom. On the contrary, their idea of their future job added to their self-esteem, since it was “so demanding that you have to learn it like you learn maths”.⁸

A few years later, when one of the authors started his fieldwork on the shop floor, the level of workers' expertise, productivity and proceedings compliance was indeed quite exceptional, by local or international standards. However, some strange and recurrent details called for his attention.⁹

On the floor of the potrooms (1 km long galleries, each one of them with a line of 144 pots where the aluminium is extracted from the rough mineral by a 335 000 Amp electrolysis, at 960° C), a line was painted dividing the areas where it was compulsory, or not, to wear a very uncomfortable gas and dust mask. However, most of the workers wear them all the time, in both areas, from the moment they enter the potroom. Many of them even wear masks when operating a crane inside a hermetic cabin, which they know to be protected by air conditioning with gas and dust filters.

Even in the open air, outside the potrooms, a worker was once seen wearing a mask while driving a vehicle where a suspended container with 23 tons of melted aluminium was shaking in front of him. He had forgotten, however, to close the container safety cover and could have been killed by even a splash of the liquefied metal.

It was even more puzzling that, although workers were usually overzealous about mask wearing and other safety proceedings, nobody seemed to fully comply with an established rule which was crucial for environmental safety inside the potrooms. Since the air (and the toxic gases and dust resulting from

8 Reduction Operator (the key expertise in the potrooms), 2003.

9 The data for this subject was collected during Paulo Granjo's post-doctoral research “Social appropriation of danger and industrial technology: comparative perspective Mozambique/Portugal”, supported by a grant from FCT, between 2002 and 2004, with ulterior monitoring until 2015. For a detailed description of this subject, see Granjo (2003).

the melting process) is permanently vacuumed from the pots and filtered in another area of the factory, the doors and hoods that access the interior of the pots must only be opened to perform some necessary operation, and kept carefully closed both afterwards and between distinct phases of this process. Nevertheless, the doors of several potrooms were kept open when routine operations had to be performed consecutively in all of them, and up to 1/4 of the lateral hoods of the pots were put back roughly in their place, allowing the air to freely escape from the pots to the working area.

Therefore, one could observe an – internationally very rare (Duclos 1991; Granjo 2004) – focus of workers' attention on their personal protection from invisible dangers whose effects can only be noticed in the medium and long term. This, however, went hand-in-hand with less attention both to visible dangers that can harm or kill immediately, and to collective protection of the labour environment. In order to understand such practices, we need to take into account the local social representation about this smelter and about industrial labour.

No worker, of course, is a “blank sheet of paper”; nor is their labour representation locked inside the factory walls. They are daily members of diverse communities, in a society that shares and reinterprets many cultural benchmarks.¹⁰ In this case, a society which devoted a great deal of speculation to make sense of this 1.340 million USD investment in a poor country.

The announcement of such huge foreign investment, just 3 years after the Civil War, raised the folk belief that the factory would be built in Mozambique because it was very pollutant, so nobody else wanted it in their country. This image was a key element in the conceptual model adopted for perceiving the plant and the work performed there.

In fact, the previously established industries were not a suitable model for this new situation. They were popularly seen as national, obsolete, falling to pieces, managed in an easy-going or even corrupt way:¹¹ characteristics that were the opposite of what was being said about the big factory to come.

On the other hand, the folk labour conceptualisations have, since colonialism, highlighted the experience of mining migration to South Africa,

¹⁰ Most Maputo inhabitants are familiar with (and reinterpret and mobilise differently, according to the contexts and circumstances – Granjo 2008a) diverse cultural references, such as those from “traditional” rural origins, the scientific conveyed by schools, those shared by several religions, and those arising from different daily inputs, including the Brazilian soap operas.

¹¹ For a literary example of such folk images back in those days, see Chiziane (2000).

a massive and long-lasting phenomenon which induced major social changes (First 1977; Vletter 1998; Harries 1994; Covane 2001; Granjo 2005). Those shared representations ascribe four main characteristics to the mining labour: (i) it is hard and a “man builder”; (ii) it is a well-paid but temporary situation; (iii) there is a huge danger of accidents during working time and the lungs get destroyed after it; and (iv) it happens in a special space, subjecting the worker to different rules and to abuses from “white” South-Africans.

From the outside, almost all those representations could be tagged to Mozal, as well. The conviction that the smelter was pollutant implied the idea that working there was very dangerous, with the same kind of dangers ascribed to the external impact of the plant: pollution by contaminative dust and gases – so, the same kind of deferred danger that is usually related to mining labour.

It was also known that salaries would be exceptionally high by local standards, so the combination of two such ideas led to the jobs at Mozal, such as mining, being seen as a tough but short term means of guaranteeing a financially secure and healthier livelihood elsewhere.

Besides, although the company capital is transnational and the main stockholder is officially British,¹² Mozal is systematically mentioned by the media and the general public as a “South African plant”, as a result of the conspicuous initial presence of South African staff and managers.

Those metaphorical potentialities were manipulated and reinforced during the strikes of February and October 2001. The press references to the “South African plant” went, then, together with its presentation as a separate space, set apart from national labour rules, including the use of English as its official labour language, and with the rumours about racist verbal abuse from the “Boers” on the shop floor (*Expresso da Tarde* 2002, 4). By February, the references to work conditions mainly stressed their toughness, due to the high temperatures of the smelting pots, but in October the main issue was already the lung hazards (*Correio da Manhã* 2001, 3; *Imparcial* 2001, 3).

In the process, what started as a metaphor became the matrix guiding the perception and analysis of everything people heard about the company. The use of the mines as a comparative base to interpret this industry called public attention towards other analogies, which in turn invited *mutatis mutantis*

12 BHP Billiton, a fusion of two mining companies, one Australian and the other part of the previous Gencor Corporation, from South Africa. The other stockholders are the Japanese conglomerate Mitsubishi, the South African IDC and, with a small percentage, the Mozambican State.

comparisons. Finally, in a typical import of “societal references” (Duclos 1991), the workers talked about the plant in the way the miners normally talked about the mines.

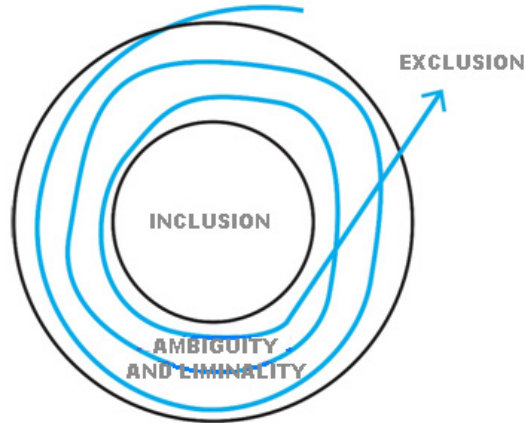
Those were the grounds for overzealous mask wearing. Like a group of workers explained during a shop floor conversation in 2003, “if managers acknowledge that the dust and gases are dangerous, they must be really very dangerous. I need to protect myself, because I don’t know what else they may be hiding from us”. When one points out that the hazards they fear the most are silicosis-like, their answer is eloquent: “But this is like a mine. In the open air, but it is the same. This is an open-sky mine.”

However, merging high salaries, an image of imminent danger, youth and high education sets up your job as a temporary situation providing the means for a better life, through which one must try to pass unscathed – like in mining migration. This was indeed the case of most potroom workers in the mid-2000s, and a young operator who eloquently expressed his plans in 2004¹³ had the same intentions eleven years later, although he has grown older and is still working at the plant.

This enduring attitude induces two observable effects. On the one hand, each worker focuses on safeguarding his individual physical integrity from the most feared dangers. Since, however, human attention to surrounding threats is limited (Duclos 1991; Granjo 2004) and they believe in just “passing through”, this fits with less attention towards other job hazards and, especially, towards the dangers that might affect the labour environment and all their co-workers. On the other hand, this attitude weakens the potential for a collective workers’ safety culture and for the reinforcement of labour safety, since spreading feelings of individual responsibility for everybody’s safety is crucial for collectively shared *prudence skills* (Dejours 1987).

Therefore, the company management tried to *include* new workers by moulding them from scratch, through their corporate values, into a “big happy family” of well-paid people who produce a lot and protect each other. However, societal notions reinterpreting the historic memory of mining labour induced a different sense of “inclusion” in the workers. (see Figure 18.2).

13 “The work is too dangerous and will harm my health more and more. I really don’t want to stay here for the rest of my life, but I couldn’t go on with my studies. Now I have money and, later on, I’ll go to university and I’ll get a good job, even if with a lower wage.”

Figure 18.2*Expelling liminality, desired by workers*

What they desire is a liminal and temporary *inclusion*, an *expelling liminality*, and they act accordingly when protecting themselves. This has significant consequences for the cohesion of the group, for industrial safety and even for their own individual vulnerability towards labour hazards with more immediate and lethal effects.¹⁴

WORKERS IN MOZAMBIKAN, CHINESE AND PORTUGUESE COMPANIES IN MAPUTO

The implementation of the Mozal project was followed by a large investment in other sectors of the economy, namely in building firms, hotels, restaurants and banking, as well as other services. Due to its openness to foreign investment, many organisations from various parts of the world invest in the capital of Mozambique, turning Maputo into a multicultural city. However, the analysis of Chinese, Mozambican and Portuguese companies in the Maputo area does not really show the existence of integrative and homogeneous organisational cultures, based on the nationality of capital.

14 For other consequences of *societal references* in this factory, see Granjo (2008a; 2012).

What it reveals instead is mostly differentiated cultures, depending on the sector of activity or according to the hierarchical power of individuals in the organisations (Feijó, 2017).

Although this phenomenon is most evident in the restaurant and security sectors, or in the small and medium scale industries (characterised by the employment of a low-skilled workforce in Taylored tasks), a dirigist and coercive management culture predominates in all organisations, regardless of nationality, based on a strong hierarchical distance between managers and subordinates. In contrast, regardless of the nationality of managerial or specialised cadres, the more their individual power increases in the organisations, the more their discourses tend to be oriented towards production and productivity, and highlights issues such as the “relaxed attitude” or “laziness” of Mozambican workers. Simultaneously, among both the leading national and foreign cadres, there are clear strategies for creating proximity to influential individuals with economic or political capital, in a clear clientelist strategy. The enrichment of the leaders has often been publicly associated with illegal behaviour, related to the corruption of the local authorities or to the disrespect of Mozambican laws. In fact, concerns about production or quality control has not invalidated, in many situations, investment in a network of social contacts, easily capitalised on for economic purposes.

Concerning salary policies, in a neoliberal scenario which is also marked by highly asymmetrical qualifications, the wages in Mozambican companies have two main characteristics:

On the one hand, salaries of the less skilled workers are very low, representing less than half of the so-called “basic basket”¹⁵ and, therefore, of survival needs. Daily survival is therefore only possible with the cutting of numerous essential expenses related to food, health and transport; so many workers arrive at work without having eaten, after having travelled long distances on foot. In fact, in a business environment usually evaluated as “bad” by international reports, one of the investment attractors is the existence of a cheap labour force. But by paying below the basic needs, employers transfer the responsibility for finding formal and informal ways (often illegal) to complete the remaining part to the workers and their families.

15 The basic basket is a set of products and services, indispensable for the survival of a “standard” family of five persons, which mainly consists of food products (mostly rice and flour), energy and transport expenses. The basic basket does not include health, clothing and education expenses.

On the other hand, wages are characterised by high asymmetries. Often, while salaries of normal workers are paid in meticaís, those of highly qualified staff are calculated in dollars. In 2011, while an operative worker received normally a salary of 3 000 meticaís, a specialised foreign worker could easily earn (with bonuses) 3 000 dollars, a value some 30 times higher, using the exchange rate at the time (Feijó 2015).¹⁶ Although not so significant, asymmetries are also striking amongst undifferentiated and specialised national cadres.

The emerging consumer society in Maputo is contrasted with extreme poverty, turning the town into a “socially seismic” territory (Serra 2008) and a source of conflict and social upheaval. However, the high unemployment rates, the fear of dismissal, the widespread corruption of labour inspectors, and the political manipulation of union leaders make the strategy of confronting employers very risky. The option of avoiding direct conflict, disguising dissatisfaction through social cynicism, feeds the dominant social representation of the “peaceful” and “relaxed” Mozambican, often constructed in opposition to the “violent” South African. In fact, “humility” represents the safest attitude in a scenario where “*arriscar é arriscado*” [it is risky to risk], and a conscious strategy to obtain benefits. This is something justifiable for very pragmatic reasons: the need to keep the job, the avoidance of being reported by opportunist co-workers and, above all, the attempt to take advantage of a collaboration with managers, both materially (in cash, clothing and food) and immaterially (managers’ friendship and trust, greater tolerance for error or new professional opportunities). Humility stands out in the tensest working moments: during recruitment and selection, when receiving working instructions, during inspections or when facing the threat of dismissal. Known among Mozambicans as “puxa-saco”¹⁷, this is an important strategy for gaining the manager’s trust and, through it, a greater relaxation of professional vigilance. Humility or sympathy represent strategies to adapt to adverse realities, through which it is possible to obtain a set of benefits.

16 Due to a fast devaluation of the national currency over the last couple of years, this difference has suddenly increased to a value 60 times higher. However, many private companies have abandoned, in the process, the parity to USD in the wage calculation of top ranked employees, so even the so-called “medium-high classes” have seen their previous income being significantly reduced.

17 The “puxa-saqueiro” or the “escovinha” is a worker who is more concerned with pleasing their director (taking personal benefits from it) than with the group’s well-being or their professional performance.

However, in this scenario marked by fear and generalised subservience, there are disguised forms of protest. These subtle strategies can take the form of small robberies, sabotage, gossip or anonymous threats.

Frequently performed in groups and often in an ingeniously creative way, small robberies are an increasingly common phenomenon in Mozambique. Although they can be the object of abstract criticism as an immoral and incorrect process, robberies are also seen as a legitimate way of surviving and compensating for extremely low wages (Feijó 2011a). This attitude can be illustrated by the vulgarisation of the term “matreco”, used to classify a person unaware of the daily opportunities and too attached to moral principles, such as honesty and loyalty.¹⁸ However, it should be noted that there is actually no linear relationship between economic disadvantage and illegal practices. In fact, although low salaries stand as the ethical legitimisation for robberies, such practices are transversal to several sectors and wage levels inside the same company, illustrating a neo-patrimonial reality: if according to the local aphorism, “o cabrito come onde está amarrado” [the goat eats where he is tied], he also ties himself where he can eat.

A second phenomenon, the sabotage of working mechanisms and procedures (surveillance systems, attendance records, stock management, etc.), aims to reduce managers’ supervision, to circumvent regulations and to allow workers to rest, regaining control over rhythms and working conditions. As Cohen (1987, 127) demonstrates, these attitudes produce a discontinuity between modes of artisanal production or of rural origin, and those manufactured industrially or under bureaucratic routines. For Cohen, sabotage is seen as a mean of reducing inequalities, a way of compensating differential reward systems, inherent to the capitalist labour process. As can be commonly heard in Maputo, “eles fingem que nos pagam, nós fingimos que trabalhamos” [they pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work].

Thirdly, gossip, through *fofoca*, nicknames or irony constitute subtle mechanisms of manifesting dissatisfaction, particularly when there is competition for scarce power resources, such as a promotion, a wage increase, or a symbolic distinction. Finally, anonymous threats, via SMS, written notes or witchcraft, can weaken a hierarchical superior, making him more flexible

18 Finding a mobile phone in a *chapa* (semi-collective passenger transport) and returning it to the owner, having autonomy to leave the job earlier and not do it, or not being able to divert an amount of money may be commonly called typical “matreco” behaviour.

in controlling his subordinates, thus regaining control of rhythms and work processes.

These contouring strategies have increased managerial mistrust of local workers, expressed through the reinforcement of control and supervision mechanisms. All Maputo economic units are protected by bars, padlocks, sound alarms and, often, armed private security with military training. Several complex worker control and surveillance systems have been instituted, such as the inspection of employees leaving the establishment, the existence of supervisors, sometimes overseen by security guards. Ironically, many *manobras* imply the connivance of these officials, which tends to subvert all the security logic.

CAPITALIST PENETRATION, *CABRITISMO* AND THE MYTH OF THE LAZY MOZAMBICAN

The described workers' reactions show the existence of two different rationales (from capital and labour), reinforcing the stereotype of the lazy and work-averse Mozambican, who must be closely controlled under Taylorist ways. It is an often-used stereotype harking back to the dominant social representations in the colonial period.

In fact, at the time of colonial capitalist penetration (late nineteenth and twentieth centuries), population density was much lower than in the Europe of the Industrial Revolution, as was the availability of a surplus labour force of rural origin. The autochthonous population was embedded in non-capitalist economic rationales, only sowing and doing what was necessary for subsistence and exchange, through plausibly available external products and with minimally acceptable terms of trade. There was, therefore, no apparent reason to become employed: receiving very low wages, in emerging projects with arduous and risky conditions, such as the construction of infrastructures, the extractive industry or in plantations. Since the colonial State had no available capital for the introduction of mechanised processes, it could only count on abundant cheap labour, which was the fundamental concern of Administrators in their official reports (Vail and White 1980; Serra 1995). In times when these colonial capitalist expectations were frustrated, often incapable of understanding local thinking, the "lazy African" discourse was reinforced. The dominant idea was that Africans must be forced to work

through specific legislation, through *chibalo* (forced labour) and with foremen in control.

In the current neoliberal scenario, where a large number of rulers are in a strategic alliance with great capital¹⁹ (or representing it) and where the State refrains from carrying out many of its functions, work is presented again as the solution for development, regardless of the existing production relationships. In the official discourse, the origin of poverty is in people's heads, in their laziness and lack of love for work, lack of self-esteem or creativity (Chichava 2009; Feijó 2017) and not in the capitalist relations. The worker is encouraged to commit to fulfilling their role (to work), regardless of the possibility of survival and reproduction.

However, if we consider the dynamism evidenced by African entrepreneurs, especially in the informal sector, as well as the dominant representation of the Mozambican worker in South Africa²⁰ (where wages are comparatively higher), the "lazy Mozambican" assumptions must be questioned. Indeed, the alleged *laziness* deserves to be understood as a strategy of passive resistance, in a context understood as non-meritocratic, socially unjust and even prejudiced. The belief predominates among many Maputo workers that social mobility is based not on individual merit but, above all, on a series of aspects related to individuals' political and family relationships (clientelism and nepotism), with their somatic characteristics, illegal practices (Feijó 2011a) or magical-traditional mechanisms (Granjo 2008b). Marked by such uncertainty, where effort is not always financially rewarded, the workers' strategy tends to be orientated towards quick and opportunistic enrichment, which does not mean investment in professional brio.

It should be noted that, despite the existence of strong social asymmetries and intensive exploitation, there is no clear confrontation between capital and labour. The opportunities for rapid enrichment (accessible only to the

19 As Castel-Branco (2016, 151) explains, from socialist discourses based on the "liberation of man and land" new visions emerge "based on the possibility that previously colonised peoples could become capitalists", freeing themselves from the obstacles that colonialism represented for the development of national capitalism.

20 By the time of independence more than 100 000 Mozambican miners were recruited annually for South African mines (First 1977). As opposed to their South African counterparts, the Mozambican workers were represented as humble and disciplined. However, after *apartheid*, with the intensification of undocumented migration of Mozambicans and Zimbabweans to South Africa and an increase in crime, Mozambicans also started being associated with robbery and informality.

most attentive and insightful), coupled with the presence of familiarity ties in many working relationships, act as important “conflict dampers” that prevent open confrontation. On the other hand, many workers who find themselves in a disadvantaged working situation also create their own parallel businesses, where they reproduce the exploitative relations with other workers – their employees. Similarly, widespread criticism of corruption or illicit enrichment does not invalidate the fact that many protesters benefit from opportunistic practices. Indeed, struggle and resistance are not exactly against the system, but against one’s relative position in the system.

COMPARING “INCLUSIONS”

Looking back on the three cases of *inclusion* processes, a first pertinent comparison concerns the Sines oil refinery and the Mozal aluminium smelter.

In the Portuguese refinery, the management’s inaction towards the training and integration of new employees – apparently expecting some automatic *inclusion*, or hoping that things would keep on working, since they always had before – meant the experienced workers had to organise the *inclusion* and control of the newcomers, in order to safeguard everybody’s safety.

Such a process sets up centripetal participation from the novices, which eventually includes them in the labour group through progressive *integrative liminality* (Figure 18.1). This mechanism is guided by *prudence skills*, the ethics of mutual responsibility and the non-probabilistic notion of “danger” shared by the group. However, it is also a powerful tool to reinforce and reproduce those values, concepts and practices, even providing the bases for the workers’ resistance against dangerous management tendencies. So, the newcomers’ *inclusion* is not within an abstract corporation, but in the specific group of refining workers, who build their identity in opposition to the other groups coexisting in the factory (Granjo 2002).

The process produces positive consequences for the factory’s and workers’ safety. However, this is an occasional and socially-constructed *virtuous effect*²¹ of management negligence and, therefore, unavailable to reproduce elsewhere.

At the Mozambican aluminium smelter, the management attitude towards the newcomers’ *inclusion* is almost the opposite. Nevertheless, the strategy of

21 In the sense of positive “perverse effect” (Boudon 1979).

recruiting and training the workers from a “blank sheet of paper” – formatting them according to the desired technical knowledge and precautionary attitude, while presuming their *immediate inclusion* in an ideal labour group, stimulated by high wages – clashed with the reproduction, by such workers, of dominant *societal references* that equate the factory, the labour inside it and their hazards, to those existing in a South-African mine.

As a consequence, the workers see themselves as having a liminal and temporary kind of *inclusion*: an *expelling liminality* corresponding to a desirably transitory job (Figure 18.2), which leads them to focus their attention on their individual safeguard against “mining” dangers, therefore neglecting both the other labour hazards and collective protection. This restricts group cohesion and, in the long term, both the development of collective *prudence skills* and general safety.

This *perverse effect* (Boudon 1979), however, does not counteract another outcome arising from management strategies. The policy of high wages by local standards, the corporate valuing of the workers’ functions and skills (also reinforcing their self-esteem), and the highlighting of meritocratic criteria for promotions were powerful stimuli for a conspicuous high level of commitment, proficiency and compliance amongst the workers.²²

As seen above, both the Mozal labour policies and the resulting workers’ attitudes contrast strikingly with what we can usually observe in the Maputo region, or are even without being opposite to the usual ones in smaller local companies. This calls for a second comparison.

We have highlighted that, despite the recurrent official discourse accusing potential workers from the Maputo area of lacking a “work culture” and arguing for their *inclusion*, through a change in their mentality, as an ideal type of worker (committed, disciplined, effective and productive); the actual labour relations stimulate such workers to engage in a very different work ethics and culture. The labour conditions, the low wages, the socio-economic asymmetries, or even the authoritarian and indignant practices that try to neutralise the employees’ abusive actions stimulate a work culture and ethics characterised, instead, by high pragmatism and scepticism. Workers

22 The relevance of such factors is evident both in the workers’ speech and by external observation. Moreover, for that very end, the first managers of the factory deliberately emphasised, in words and practices, the contrast between the corporate rules and the habits of the surrounding labour environment – including the corporate intolerance towards nepotism and clientelism, besides clear evaluation criteria for promotions and bonuses.

calculate the effort to devote to the organisation according to the rewards that may arise from it, as well as the costs that it implies for other spheres of life, especially for parallel jobs, school activities or family relations. In terms of organisational performance, the coexistence of such different rationales leads to low commitment, passive resistance and anonymous subversions.

So, if the employers and the public powers²³ claim a subjective *tour-de-force* that *includes* employees in an ideal group of “good workers” (similar, after all, to those we can find at Mozal), the work culture shared by their addressees places them, instead, in a position of *structural liminality* regarding their inclusion in the model of the committed and disciplined worker (see Figure 18.3).

In many individual labour stories, such *liminality* also includes periods of *exclusion* by unemployment, due to the instability of jobs and employing companies, or to employees’ resistance, robbery or sabotage practices that went too far and, being disclosed, led to their dismissal.

In contrast, as *cabritismo* shows, although the basis and legitimation for this work culture/ethics are the dominant labour relations and material conditions, it is also reproduced amongst high ranked and well-paid positions, becoming the standard for expected labour attitudes.

And, in fact, at Mozal during the early 2000s, there were also workers who tried to manipulate work schedules and rhythms, or to find more relaxed proceedings for the regular technical tasks. Nonetheless, digital control of the staff circulation and the abnormal production parameters resulting from such alternative proceedings were easily detected, making it pointless to jeopardise a well-paid job in the pursuit of small gains in effort or free time.²⁴

So, again, the wages and labour conditions stand out as the key factors in this comparison. As mentioned, besides the Mozal workers, the local “informal” entrepreneurs and the reputation of Mozambican emigrants in South-Africa undermine both the image of the “lazy Mozambican”, and the inevitability of the work culture/ethics we have been debating. Nevertheless,

23 These are often the same people or share partnerships and similar interests in the economic arena (Cortês 2018).

24 Another phenomenon induced by this corporation’s policy concerns the suppliers and their business culture. Mozal is a large contractor of, for instance, transportation services for personal and cargo. Their suppliers know they pay better and faster than other clients, but also that they undertake frequent and demanding controls of the vehicles’ safety and technical maintenance, besides controlling the drivers’ alcohol consumption. In order to keep their advantageous contracts, they make sure the material and staff they provide to Mozal is in good order – like, in fact, it should be everywhere.

Figure 18.3*Structural liminality, by change refusal*

as happened during the capitalist colonial penetration, once a work culture is settled and sedimented, the first relevant question faced by the people who share it, when instigated to change it, is “Is it worth it?” If it is not, in terms of immediate advantages or in plausible future gains, why do it?

Although complex and ambiguous, the work culture that is dominant in the Maputo region is eloquently expressed through a sentence which also states its ethical grounds: “They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work”. Our data and analysis strongly suggest that, in order to make the employees stop “pretending to work”, it is indispensable to, first, stop “pretending to pay them”.

This is, however, only one part of the equation. Since the dominant *work culture* is also a calculated strategy to take advantage of dysfunctional and abusive labour relations, salary fairness would have to go along (as our data also suggests) with two other factors: the implementation of conspicuously effective principles of meritocratic management, and the evidence of a “good labour example” from the leadership. In many important areas of the Mozambican labour market, however, such requirements are the most distant from reality and the most difficult to implement.²⁵

25 For instance, in the State apparatus the best paid supervising officials are usually the most absent employees, due to delegating their responsibilities and undertaking parallel activities. ►

Besides noticing and characterising the diversity of forms and meanings of labour *inclusion*, as well as the significance of such processes for the labour cultures and safety, those are probably the most significant conclusions of this comparative study.

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► In public companies, the leading posts are filled through political trust, so the first priority of such corporate leaders is not the functional content of their jobs, but to invest in the clientele networks that allow those who have them to keep them. This is also the case (and a major part of the tasks) of the leaders from corporations that largely depend on State contracts (Feijó 2015; Cortês 2018).

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