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Protesting unemployment and precarity? Mapping Community Perspectives on the Anti-bloodsucker Protests in Mulanje District, Malawi.

By

Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata
Student Number: 1708970

Supervisor: Prof Karl Von Holdt
Co-Supervisor: Prof Garth Stevens

This Dissertation is submitted to The Faculty of Humanities in Partial Fulfilment of the Master of Arts in Labour Policy and Globalisation at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

13th August, 2019

DECLARATION

I, Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata, declare that this research report is my own original work. This research work is being submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Labour Policy and Globalisation at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. To the best of my knowledge, this work has not been submitted elsewhere for any degree or examination.

Signature:

Date: 13th August, 2019

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

.....1
DECLARATION.....2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....4
LIST OF TABLES.....6
LIST OF FIGURES.....7
ABSTRACT.....8
CHAPTER ONE.....9
1.1. Background and Introduction.....9
1.2. The profile of Mulanje district.....14
1.3. Main Research Question.....16
1.4 Conclusion.....16
CHAPTER TWO.....17
2.0. Literature Review.....17
2.1 The sociological theorem of vampires and blood suckers.....17
2.2. Logics of violence: Community responses to the occult in Africa.....19
2.3. Society through the lens of zombie and vampire stories.....21
2.4. A synopsis of labour conditions on plantations.....24
2.5 Conceptualising violence.....27
2.5.1 Catharsis, domination, resistance and liberation.....28
2.5.2 The looping effects of violence: The changing nature of violence.....30
2.6 Conclusion.....31
CHAPTER THREE.....32
A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON METHODS AND ETHICS.....32
3.0. Introduction.....32
3.1. Research area.....32
3.2 Research design.....33
3.3 Sampling.....34
3.4. Data Collection Methods.....39
3.5 Data analysis.....44
3.6 Ethical considerations.....46

3.7. Conclusion 49
CHAPTER FOUR 50
BLOOD SUCKER PROTESTS: A SYMBOLIC RESISTANCE OF THE SUBALTERN 50
4.0 Introduction 50
4.1 An over view of the bloodsucker protests: Attacks, protests and vigilantes 52
4.2 The making of the vampire: Discourses and knowledge production 55
4.2.1 Elite discourses, meaning making and contestations 55
4.2.2 Typologies of "suckers" and meaning making 57
4.3 Precariousness beyond work: Different types of precarities 66
4.4 Conclusion 71
CHAPTER FIVE 72
THE CONTESTED MEANING OF PROTEST AND VIOLENCE 72
5.0 Introduction 72
5.1 Conceptualising violence : The meaning of protest and violence 72
5.2 Contesting the meaning of protests: 'Vigilantes are different from protests' 74
5.3 The contested space of violence: Moral logics of violence 84
5.4 Conclusion 95
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION 97
6.0 Introduction 97
6.1 Methods and ethics 97
6.2 Theoretical and practical conclusions on the bloodsucker discourse, precarity, protests 98
6.3 Conclusion. 101
REFERENCES 102
APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM- FGDs 114
APPENDIX B : PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION 115
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS 116
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM- INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS 117
APPENDIX E: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE 118

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number and nature of respondents 37

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of Malawi showing the location of Mulanje District 15

ABSTRACT

Responding to the 2016-2018 occurrences of bloodsucker rumours and the subsequent violence in concerned communities, press reports and other commentaries in Malawi presented the protests as a once off period of social distress. This research report has used primary qualitative data based on an extensive field work in Mulanje district to argue that the events in Mulanje surrounding anti-bloodsucker protests were actually eventful with a thick texture of issues shaping them. The events represented deep seated issues ingrained in relations between different groups of people. The research report argues that these community protests were not random, unorganised, and ludicrous sparks, rather, they were social processes ingrained in a tissue of suspicion, precarious livelihoods, perceived injustices, violence, displacement, and perceived unfulfilled promises by people in authority. Fractured relations between groups such as the state and citizens, local community leaders and community members, journalists and villagers, women and men, and white tea estate managers and black workers all filtered to define the texture of these protests within the narrative of bloodsuckers. To this end, the research report is mostly interested in both vampire/bloodsucking stories and the subsequent violent protests in the predominantly tea growing plantation Mulanje district.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Background and Introduction

From 2016 - 2018, Malawi grappled with occurrences of bloodsucking rumours that erupted in Mulanje, one of the rural and tea growing districts in Malawi but also spread to three other districts within the Southern region of this Southern African Country. More than four occurrences have happened, in 2000, 2002, 2009 including the most recent ones of 2016 - 2018 (Chikoja, 2009). For the first three occurrences, rumours circulated and caused community panic for almost a month but the government contained them. Observers noted that rumours were a reflection of social distress due to the famine and economic crisis in the concerned years. The 2009 occurrences generated wide interest because of a man called Jack Bandawe, christened " The Beast of Ndirande" who pleaded guilty to murder and bloodsucking accounts, but also implicated businessmen and politicians believed to have been buying blood at 100 000 Malawi Kwacha (about $140) per victim (Sharra, 2019)

Unlike the previous occurrences of bloodsucker rumours, the 2016-2018 rumours erupted in a different context where Malawi had registered some significant economic gains, enjoyed spells of stability, recorded improved literacy rates but also registered a bumper maize harvest (Sharra, 2019;Mvundula, 2018). Again, unlike the previous occurrences where communities were panicking in silence, in 2016-2018, they organised marches to the district Assemblies and to their traditional chiefs. These marches emerged from discussions communities had in homes, churches, schools, at boreholes, women's clubs and football matches. Few weeks after rumour circulated of the first case of bloodsucking, Mulanje registered 13 village based marches, and 48 episodes of violence related to bloodsucking stories in two different Traditional Authorities (Mulanje police monthly report, March 2016).

These marches were primarily convened to vent concerns of community insecurity to bloodsuckers but later turned out to become a protest to erratic rural policing by the police, delays in processing court cases of suspected bloodsuckers, poor service delivery by local government, the "illegal" extractive industries by foreign companies, precarious working conditions on tea estates, and the sucking nature of media coverage of the bloodsuckers' stories. From these marches also emerged exceptional levels of violence reflected in the killing of suspected bloodsuckers. For example, violent attacks were unleashed on "bloodsuckers" such as white tea plantation managers, tourists, journalists, state security agents, local business men, politicians, oil exploration engineers, and engineers working on the water extraction project from Mulanje

Mountain. All these categories of people were attacked in a narrative of bloodsuckers. Marching communities also stoned buildings, chanted obscene songs, erected barricades, invaded shops, and torched houses of suspected bloodsuckers and those of traditional chiefs. Three chiefs, Traditional Authority Nazombe and Group Village Headmen Khatingo and Chizinga were killed by angry mobs on allegations that they were hiding bloodsuckers. To contain the marches, the state through police also used violence such as arbitrary arrests, intimidation, abductions, and illegal raids of homes at night.

The marches and the subsequent violence revolved around what Ashforth (2014) calls bloodsucking vampires, understood as both concrete flesh and blood agents sharing the same physical and social space with community members but also as mysterious figures that pounce on victims at night. These bloodsucking vampires were believed to have sucked blood from several community members, especially women and children (Lwanda, 2017; Chikoja, 2018; and Ashforth, 2014). In Malawi, the occult is mostly understood in reference to beliefs in activities of the supernatural world, other worldly beings, suspicious societies such as witchcraft, satanism, human organ markets and activities of the dead (Lwanda, 2017). What has emerged in Mulanje district over the past few years is the idea of bloodsucking vampires as part of the occult. *Anamapopa* is directly translated as bloodsuckers, meaning people who suck other people's blood. Commentators in the academia and media have loosely used the term vampires in an attempt to define the bloodsuckers.

The press reports together with early academic commentaries on the marches created a discourse that portrayed the marches as an activity of the unemployed youth and rural madness especially in Mulanje district (See Ashforth, 2014; Storer, et al 2017; Daily Times, 2017). It however, emerged with time that the range of victims (suspected bloodsuckers) symbolised issues beyond the narrative that was being offered in the press and academic commentaries. Lwanda (2017) for instance suggests that to understand these marches and subsequent violence, one has to go beyond elitist simplistic conclusions, and this would only be possible by engaging the communities which experienced the protests first hand.

One can also infer from White (2002) that the rumors of bloodsucking and the occult in Africa actually tell us about both the past and current African socioeconomic orders within the age of global neoliberalism. In such a perspective, we cannot continue to separate the horrors that are depicted in the rumours of existing vampire communities and subsequent attacks on such communities as mere fantasy.

White (2002) in Ashforth (2007:5) articulates how African people used similar vampire stories (but not violence and protests) to make sense of oppressive colonial powers and the demanding nature of new forms of work and the supervision of white foremen. Such articulations though not exhaustive could help one build a basic foundation in order to explain underlying historical and structural conditions surrounding vampire superstitions in Africa. This study goes beyond understanding just stories of vampires, it tries to examine the violent protests that accompanied the stories in Malawi and how communities defined such violence. Were these protests a mere occurrence? What did the bloodsucker discourse denote within communities in Mulanje district? How do we define the range and meanings of suspected bloodsuckers and their position within the social order of Mulanje district? These are questions worth pursuing beyond what Louise White and David McNally have done.

It is worth acknowledging that the accounts suggested by McNally (2011) and White (2002) are important as an entry point into understanding the occult and what they represent within a range of social relations. Although this paper examines specific historical accounts of superstition surrounding such genres in Mulanje district, the approach itself is different from what the two have done. McNally uses historical materialism to theoretically argue for relations that might exist between the stories of contemporary occult experiences in Africa and capitalism. On the other hand, White uses rumour and gossip to try and explain what such stories might reveal about the real world. It is stated that 'such stories perhaps articulate and contextualise experience with greater accuracy than eyewitness accounts' (White, 2002: 5). This research differs from the two in that it is an empirical study of an outbreak of the killing of suspected bloodsuckers, the actors and victims involved, and the meanings constructed by community narratives about these events. The research also explores the concrete experiences of capital by communities and the responses such experiences generate in our present times.

Most literature from Malawi on these occurrences has referred to the public performances of marchers and the violence emerging from it as "protests". For example, Lwanda states that 'these are not just mere marches by bystanders but rather protests by mystified communities' (*ibid* 2017:12). In the same approach, Chikoja, (2009:3) argues that 'the state can decide to ignore the bloodsuckers' rumour, but it cannot ignore the fact that rural citizens have risen to protest against fundamental issues we might not comprehend ourselves at the moment'. What these two definitions do not accomplish is to conceptualise "protests" but also dissect the protests beyond surface explanations and understand them within a framework of socioeconomic and socio-political relations in which the bloodsucker stories, protests and violence operated. There fore, this research also draws on some protest literature especially Gallas (2012) and, Edwards & McCarthy (2004) where the concept of protest is understood not based on rigid characteristics but rather performances as acts that display open social purpose in directing the participating actors into a particular social action. Gallas shows that this particular social action could be both understood as resistance to some orders but also protest of the marginalised to counter particular power structures. In this regard, they are a counter hegemonic force agitating to disrupt or dismantle some form of social order. Edwards and McCarthy (2004: 26) argue that using the specificity of particular targets by a protest group could sometimes be a problem in defining a protest because in some cases 'discontentment is an accumulation of both ambiguous but lived experiences and several factors perceived to be caused by both abstract and concrete figures in society'.

From their argument, it is clear that protests should not always have a clear target in-order to qualify as protests, but have a picture of what or who has contributed to their misery. This research report adapts to some extent this working understanding where communities in Mulanje gathered and agreed to protest against structures perceived and aligned with extraction or "sucking" such as journalists, state security agents, local elites (business men, white plantation managers and traditional leaders), politicians, oil exploration engineers, and engineers working on the water extraction project from Mulanje Mountain. These community targets were not fixed, in some instances communities framed new targets based on the context of rumour. This fluidity should not discredit their actions as protests, these communities understood their struggle and public performance as a protest. However, this research is not an exhaustive study on protest dynamics, but rather attempts to explore how violence could illuminate meaning making in some

contexts. Furthermore, it also explores how community power frameworks, community fractures and material conditions all interacted and got glued in a narrative of bloodsuckers'.

This study has examined how violence had contested meanings during the protests, how communities and groups exercised this violence in different contexts and how the meaning of violence changed in those different contexts as communities and other actors exercised it. The study argues against accounts that have treated the anti-bloodsucker violence as a subsidiary of other elements, by illustrating that violence was central in these protests and its operation reveals deep seated issues within Mulanje district.

There was need for a concrete analysis of subjective accounts emerging from the communities in Mulanje and the youth who have knowledge of these protests and violence, rather than generalising the relationship between violence and unemployment. This study, therefore, attempts to unpack such accounts through a methodology that amplifies the voices of people that live in the Mulanje communities and not voices of experts on violence as the other studies have done. The study engaged with community members that included unemployed youth, women, and youth working in tea plantations, traditional leaders, political leaders, trade union leaders and white managers on tea plantations. The interviews with these community members reveal a complex matrix of social relations and economic conditions that have informed the violent protests.

Youth unemployment has been used as a cliché for explaining several socially unacceptable behaviours that are exercised by the youth more especially in the case of bloodsucker protests and attacks (see Ashforth , 2007; Mtetema, 2017; Mtuta and Tembo, 2017; Malawi Government, 2016). As Ashforth (2007) notes, most of the state interventions in the vampire protests could have emerged from a misleading position, where the media blamed both the youth and state by linking everything to unemployment. This study argues that the violence in Mulanje district should be understood within the image of the matrix they occurred. The research mainly explores what social, economic or political dynamics shaped these protests? Who were the groups in terms of gender, age, social positions of power and authority shaping the space of protests? How did communities appropriate the stories of bloodsuckers into the protests? However, it should be noted that this is not an exhaustive study as it stands.

1.2. The profile of Mulanje district

Mulanje district is located in the Southern Region of Malawi, an hour's drive from Blantyre city, Malawi's Commercial Capital and 415 kilometres South of Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi. It is bordered by the Republic of Mozambique to the East and South. With a population of 525,429 people in 2008, the district covers 2056 square kilometres, which is 2.2 percent of the total area for Malawi. Mulanje district is named after the highest mountain in central Africa, which stretches to Mozambique.

The district has nutrient rich soil allowing it to be the biggest tea producing area in the country. The large commercial tea estates account for 93 percent of production, with the remainder grown by some 6,500 to 8000 smallholders who share 15 percent of the land under tea production (Government of Malawi, 2013). The district hosts 44 commercial tea estates whose ownership is mostly foreign and the largest is Eastern Produce Malawi (EPM), which owns 21 of the 44 estates (Malawi CARER, 2009). Mulanje district makes Malawi the second largest tea producer in Africa after Kenya and produces approximately 10 percent of African tea market share. The 2016-2017 annual tea exports were 56,000 metric tons contributing 5 percent of the global tea exports (Mulanje District Socio Economic Profile, 2010).

Although Mulanje has been producing tea on a commercial scale for over 100 years, socio-economic conditions of workers and the surrounding communities are very poor. The surrounding communities rely on smallholder tea farming or mostly providing cheap labour to the tea estates that are the economic hub of the district (ILO, 2007). The district commissioner's office indicated in 2010 that the district has the following problems which have been put as development priorities: high youth unemployment; child labour; food insecurity ; poor access to safe water; poor quality education; high maternal and child mortality rates; inadequate accessibility to essential services; high illiteracy rate; limited access to secondary education, environmental degradation; high crime rates in tea estates and community conflicts with tea companies; acute land shortage; chieftainship conflicts; poor sanitation in public places; extinction of Mulanje cedar and high prevalence of HIV/AIDS (ILO and Ministry of Labour, 2011).

Figure 1: Map of Malawi showing the location of Mulanje District



Source: ILO and Ministry of Labour 2011.

1.3. Main Research Question

What are the social, economic and political dynamics of the violent 'vampire' protests in Mulanje district?

Specific research questions

a) What are the characteristics of 'vampires' who have been labelled and targeted in communities, and why specific people are labelled and targeted?
b) What are the characteristics of protestors who target 'vampires'?
c) Who points out who the 'vampires' are in the communities and what empowers them to make such identifications within community relations of authority?
d) What are the symbolic meanings and functions of 'vampires' in relation to material conditions of unemployment and precarity?
e) What are the conditions and circumstances under which violence emerges from these social protests?

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has given a brief overview of the bloodsucker protests in Mulanje district, Malawi. The study rests on the belief that the current narratives around bloodsuckers have offered a limited view of the dynamics that have shaped the matrix of bloodsucker protests and violence. The chapter lays the foundation for a methodology that allows the study to engage with community members who experienced the protests in order to account for the nuances and contestations that have been loosely explained or ignored.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. Literature Review

This literature review presents themes which discuss the occurrence of violent protests in the context of occult experiences and precarity, especially in Africa. The literature captures theoretical configurations of violence and also delves into the different cases of community responses to the occult experiences. Thereafter, the concepts and cases discussed in this section will form the basis of discussion of the data that was collected through several in-depth interviews conducted in Mulanje district. This section explores literature on occult experiences in Africa especially the genres of African vampires and zombies and violent protests as a means of protesting precarity. The review also identifies gaps in the literature, introduces concepts that are important in this study but also counter argues certain narratives.

2.1 The sociological theorem of vampires and blood suckers

The concept of vampires takes centre stage in this study. In the later chapters, the study adopts the term 'bloodsuckers' as used by communities in Mulanje, Malawi. Several comments from individuals and colleagues pushed the study to include a section on how relevant the concept of vampires is in sociology and in this study. Can stories and fears of the occult such as vampires or bloodsuckers be understood from a sociological analysis? While Marx utilised the term vampire in some of his work, it is believed the term was used mostly as a figurative synonym, it was more theoretical with fewer bearings of concrete lives (Franklin, 2012; Nucleolus, 2003)

However, McNally (2011:15) argues that vampire stories go beyond theory and figurative synonyms, for example, 'the new African vampire narratives are not just theoretical and an extension of witchcraft (usually an area tackled by anthropology) because sorcery dealt predominantly with fissures and fractures among kin while the new occult monstrous stories deal with the life threatening dangers of impersonal mania for the accumulation of wealth'. He proposes a new analytical approach to the understanding of the occult in modern Africa where monster stories should help inform us about 'key symbolic registers in which the experience of capitalist commodification is felt, experienced and resisted' (McNally, 2011:3). He states that the occult is a subject matter of any field in social sciences as it is the central part of rural life not just in Africa but also other people of the South (these are people populating half of the social and physical

globe). He also raises important speculative and theoretical questions pertaining to the interaction of capital, precarity and the occult within African communities.

This research shows in later chapters that stories of vampires as real life figures within the narratives and experiences of communities or of vampires as a symbolic representation of reality should actually be an important part of sociological analysis. This research discusses how communities understand the existence of vampires in Mulanje district, this does not make it literal writing, but a sociological analysis of community narratives and its symbolic representations. This study uses concrete experiences of the youth in Malawi and their interaction with both the occult and capital as they live on the side-lines of huge tea plantations. As McNally (2011:4) shows and agree, vampire stories in Malawi 'both past and present might actually manifest recurrent anxieties about corporeal dismemberment in societies where the commodification of human labour, its purchase, and sale on the markets is becoming widespread'.

Nucleolus (2003) argues that most studies have failed to rightly capture the meaning and relevance of Marx's reference to vampires in his work. He argues that Marx did not use this metaphor in a literary style; rather there are critical issues within the nature of capital that directly link to the metaphor of vampires or sucking and its relations with labour. Franklin (2012) argues that the difference between a literary style and Marx's reference to vampires is that his work constitutes a deliberate phrased wording meant to show not just a philosophical language of the social world but also an attempt to signal the reality of the social within its context. Nucleolus (2003) states that our reading of Marx's Capital should not confuse it with high literary art, rather we ought to utilise metaphors to define the underlying issues of the real story Marx tells. Critical to what Marx does in Capital is portray the 'philosophical and political' importance of these terms to the audience he talks to (*ibid*).

In this metaphor, Marx tries to show that the theory of the social should not be abstract but also utilise the popular narratives that capture and directly speak to symbols of public discourse. A closer reading of times in which Marx wrote capital shows that public discourse was dominated by the stories of vampires especially from the field of literature. However, Wodak (2003) shows that every discourse is shaped by authorities that verify such interpretations of discourse. To him, the existence of vampires is both a reality and fiction based on what type, which type of authority and when does such authority deem necessary to acknowledge the existence and reality of these

beings. Franklin (2012:88) states that vampires both exist but also represent the several sucking relations that exist in the nature of a capitalist society. He argues that it is sociological to not just discuss vampires as a natural existence but also a representation of real relations in our everyday existence. Unlike philosophers such as Rousseau and Voltaire, Nucleolus (2003) argues that Marx uses the concept of vampires as a political and sociological tool that is far from superstition, rather, a tool that signifies not just the life sucking nature of some states and institutions of French authority such as the French 'judicial vampires' but also pointing us to the reality of these institutions as having 'life sucking' tendencies in their own right.

2.2. Logics of violence: Community responses to the occult in Africa

Roxburgh (2014) argues that the definition of violence by African communities living under the threat of occult insecurity (i.e. witchcraft, vampires, sorcery and black market organ markets) is mostly different from those definitions constructed by secure, scientific, logical academics and institutions of authority. His work based on communities in Ghana and Cameroon shows how the larger part of the world community living under the threat of the occult has to manoeuvre on a daily basis the realities of living in spiritual insecurities that are neither limited by space nor time.

Violence against the occult such as witchcraft has been a popular framework for analysing African communities in the past few years (Olson, 2008). Delius (1996) shows that one of the key characteristics of witch killings is its linkage to histories of kinship, age and gender conflict fractures within communities. On the other hand, Ashforth (2014) seem to suggest that vampire suspicions and killings in most African communities have an undefined relationship between the suspects and their alleged attackers within communities. Ashforth (2014) also suggests that this ambiguity is present mostly because there has been a lack of investigation into such phenomena by African scholars. Therefore, one of the proposed aims of this this study is to map the characteristics of those targeted as vampires and their relationship with communities. Based on the data collected, this study points to established relations that link the attacked and their attackers. One argument this study raises is that most of the violence on the vampire community represents a history full of fissured relations intricately tied to the social and economic structure of the communities involved.

Olson (2008) shows how communities have defined the supposed violence enacted by the occult on communities as real violence, while defining collective community violence enacted on people

perceived to belong to the occult as a moral obligation. Stories of accused witches being set ablaze on a sport ground in South Africa, suspected albino killers being hacked to death in Malawi, suspected bloodsuckers being torched alive by angry mobs in Malawi, angry mobs baying for the lives of white tourists suspected of "fluid sucking" in Tanzania and several others in Africa have been written from the perspective of the generic definition of violence by the media, where communities are blamed and demonised for the mob justice as taking the law into their own hands (see Adinkrah,2015 ; Allen and Reid, 2015; Botha 2015). The community actions above suggest the importance of understanding how violence becomes an outlet in economies of morality within communities. Karandinos *et al* (2014:14) argues that violence can operate within a moral logic framed by different interlinked relations within communities. It is these moral logics that 'mediate how violence is enacted, what type of violence is enacted, where violence is enacted and on whom such violence is enacted' (*ibid*).

However, as Roxburgh (2014: 3) shows, the media sensationalises these acts in narrating such stories in terms and language which persuades us to view these acts as shocking or appalling, while for the people experiencing the sucking powers of the occult on a daily basis, "mob justice and jungle justice" are mostly viewed as a line of community shield. Though society has taken media reports on issues of violence and its interaction with the occult at face value; Derby (2008) shows that the media can create and shape discourse that either contradicts or over rules genuine community articulations as seen in the Chupacabras case in Mexico and Puerto Rico. The logic of violence and how it articulates itself in some spaces with helpless communities also reveals the insecurities that African communities experience. Ashforth (2007) corroborates such arguments, by expressing how vulnerable communities in Malawi have strained relations with the state and security forces and resorted to mob justice as an expression of community independence. These communities have appropriated a community level discourse that governs their actions within the space of politics and vampires (Gwashu, 2012). This is a vivid example of how communities, usually understood as powerless can also create and shape discourse as articulated by Van Dijk (1993). He argues that this discourse, in as much as it is a weapon in the hands of elites, it transcends beyond their control and becomes a tool at either ends of society (both the rich and poor can utilise it).

Behrend (2007) shows that to some extent the narrative of violence on people perceived to belong to the occult in Uganda is different from the conventional definitions scholars have been using from the 'ivory tower'. Communities living in fear of the occult find the violence on the accused to mean not just vengeance, but closure, community healing, community cleansing, and community levelling. Such moral orders would be an ideal window for the understanding of community accounts of collective violence and the processes such violence goes through.

However, it is also worth noting that in some African countries, communities totally reject acknowledgement that the violent encounters that emerge from the belief in the supernatural can be defined as violence at all (see Ally, 2015; Douki et al, 2003). These understandings of violence in some instances extend to explanations such as 'killing vampires and witches is not violent because they are not human beings' (Ally, 2015:8). In other words, the meaning of violence in its literal sense does not make logical sense to them because it is only relevant between human beings, and the occult are not. Such narratives of collective community violence call for a reconceptualisation of violence: what does violence enacted on *anamapopa* mean to youth and communities in Malawi? What dilemmas do we fall into when violence is conventionally defined as objectivity? Roxburgh (2014:4) argues that acts 'which may seem to be violent to those outside the logic of the occult may be sometimes preventive or protective in nature'.

In examining dynamics of collective violence, Roche (2001:6) argues, through her application of social geometry, that 'every lynching is a case of partisanship for the victim and its absence for the alleged offender'. In the social geometry analysis of violence, there is a valid argument on why and how communities and groups of people participate in collective violence as elements of partisanship and solidarity clip in. However, as much as this is the case, what remains under explored in this conceptualisation of violence is why there is collectivisation of violence .

2.3. Society through the lens of zombie and vampire stories

There is a volume of *foci* on the occult related economies and how different communities relate with such. Within the occult, literature has focused on witchcraft, zombies and vampires. As will be discussed in this section, all these have generated varying meanings of relations within different African communities. These genres also have the capacity to reveal the nature of social relations in communities and how such are articulated in the corresponding violence (Ashforth, 2007).

Delius (1996) offers an interesting analysis of the different social dynamics in which witch-hunts took place in the Apartheid Transvaal. The youth viewed the violent (witch cleansing) protests as a fundamental part of the new society they would create once apartheid was defeated and they directly attached their operations to their fight against oppression, inequality and misfortune which had haunted their communities under apartheid (*ibid*). Delius articulates how conceptions and discussions of class, community and witchcraft intricately intertwine such that youth unemployment, community welfare and wealth accumulation all circulated within the same currency of community tales. The Transvaal dynamics reveal that the attacks by the youth on witches targeted neighbours and relatives, and mostly accusations circulated within kinships. Delius (1996) also shows that the accusers and accused were mostly tied together by bonds of locality and only separated by age and gender.

Such articulations of community violence as described by Delius (1996) then reveal some underlying currents that relate communities and occult economies. Issues of unequal power relations based on age, gender and class in rural communities could have a hand in explaining sources of collective violence on certain victims. However, what Delius (1996) does not acknowledge is the complexity of violence, for example one would wonder how violence in some spaces seems to have no stakeholders.

Unlike the case of Transvaal as articulated by Delius (1996), the surface indicators of the vampire attacks in Malawi show there seem to be (so far) undefined relations between the accusers and the accused. Accusations and attacks have been on white tourists, strangers, relatives, state officials, journalists, traditional chiefs, children, international Non-Governmental organisations (NGO) staff, and in some cases on tea estate executives working within the affected areas (see Daily Times, 2017;Nyasa Times, 2017). These dynamics are corroborated by McNally (2011:15), who argues that 'we cannot treat the new African vampire narratives as an extension of witchcraft because sorcery dealt predominantly with fissures and fractures among kin while the new occult deals with the life threatening dangers of impersonal mania for the accumulation of wealth'. McNally (2011:3) proposes a new analytical approach to the understanding of the occult in modern Africa where monster stories should help inform us about 'key symbolic registers in which the experience of capitalist commodification is felt, experienced and resisted'.

Though rumour and gossip are sometimes disputed as a source of data in social sciences depending on how they are used, White (2002:5) argues they can actually be an important avenue when articulating the world they reveal behind occult economies. What would rumours of blood sucking and zombies really mean in 21st century African modernity?

Although Ferguson (2006:34) in *Global Shadows* would argue that the "good" fruits of capitalism and neoliberalism have not been evenly spread in Africa, instead they have "hopped" from New York to African "enclaves", with zombie stories being regarded as "holdovers" of the past. One could still argue that capital's "sour" fruits can still be felt in African communities. For this study, as much as Ferguson's capital-hopping hypothesis makes sense in some instances, history still shows that Africans were introduced to capital ages ago and serious colonial capital accumulation actually took place in Africa's rural communities. For example Barchiesi (2016) shows that the exploitation and precariousness of African workers can be tracked from the colonial modalities of worker subjugation based on the colour of their skin.

It can be inferred from both White (2002) and MacNally (2011) that the rumours of bloodsucking and occult economies in Africa actually tell us about both the past and current African socioeconomic orders within the age of global neoliberalism. In such a perspective, we cannot continue to separate the horrors that are depicted in the rumours of existing vampire communities and subsequent attacks on such communities as mere fantasy.

White (2002) in Ashforth (2007:5) articulates how African people in trying to make sense of colonial powers and its demanding nature, believed that white settlers only survived in the tropics by 'consuming black people's blood and other fluids to replenish their strength'. It is illustrated that migrant labour became the axis of reconstructing 'the rural' in the new towns as African men and women moved to cities to work in towns, mines, farms, and plantations where they began to feel the demanding nature of work as sucking the life out of them. In this narrative, it is interesting to note how this migrant work force became the medium through which the stories of white blood suckers travelled from the urban to the rural. White also shows how the confusing doctrines of white Catholic priests who imbibed wine for "the blood of Jesus" and white doctors who used syringes for extraction of body fluids for lab tests all created space for the breeding of blood sucking rumours during the era of the colonial state (White, 2002) in Ashforth (2007). Such

articulations though not exhaustive, are basic foundations that explain underlying historical and structural conditions surrounding vampire superstitions in Africa.

The accounts by McNally (2011) and White (2002) on occult economies are important regarding *anamapopa* and zombie stories in our efforts to conceptualise the meanings generated by communities in specific contexts. Although this paper investigates specific historical accounts of superstition surrounding such genres in Mulanje district, the approach itself is different from McNally (2011) and White (2002). McNally uses historical materialism to theoretically argue for relations that might exist between the stories of contemporary occult experiences in Africa and capitalism. On the other hand, White uses rumour and gossip to try and explain what such stories might reveal about the real world. It is stated that 'such stories perhaps articulate and contextualise experience with greater accuracy than eyewitness accounts' (White, 2002: 5). This research differs from the two in that it is an empirical study of an outbreak of the killing of bloodsuckers, the actors and victims involved, and the meanings constructed by community narratives about these events. The research also explores the concrete experiences of capital by communities and the responses such experiences generate.

2.4. A synopsis of labour conditions on plantations

Manuell (2016) shows that there are more than 50,000 people employed as tea pluckers in Malawi and all of them are trapped in poverty despite receiving a legally binding minimum wage. The report by Oxfam which was jointly written with the Malawi Ethical Tea Committee (METC) and a representative committee of the tea plantations, argues that the causes of the poverty traps in tea plantations can be traced not in structural relations of tea plantations and labour, but rather in the 'lazy culture' of the local communities, rapid growth in size of the households in Mulanje district and several other reasons that blame the poor for their poverty.

An independent report by Malawi CARER in (2010) reveals that there are gross labour rights violations in tea plantations, perpetual youth oriented casualisation of labour, long working hours, poor housing, and weak worker bargaining powers and structures. Although one might be surprised by the scarcity of labour strikes against capital in the tea industry in Malawi despite these appalling conditions as observed by Wilshaw (2013: 26). McNally (2011) offers an insightful argument for such passivity. He articulates the concept of the "living dead" or "zombies" to describe the nature of workers on most African plantations, arguing that working conditions in plantations have

sucked the soul out of workers to such an extent that these are people 'lacking all aspects of human personality, save the bodily capacity for mindless toil. These people figures extreme reification- a living labourer capable of drudgery on behalf of others, but entirely lacking in memory, self-consciousness, identity and agency, and the very qualities we associate with personhood' (*ibid:*211).

However, preliminary commentary from Malawi showed that the vampire protests in Malawi also involved youthful workers from the tea plantations (see Daily Times, 2017; Kumwenda, 2017; Nyasa Times, 2017). Such preliminary observations help one dispel McNally's assertions and assumptions that this group could be categorised as the 'living dead', people who lack consciousness, identity and memory. Standing (2011:1) shows the agency of the precariat through the 'EuroMayDay' protests that took Europe by storm and states that they have now become 'a new dangerous class'. Chun and Agarwala (2015:635), while agreeing that the thesis on the 'race to the bottom' in wages, working conditions and labour rights may have contributed to the perceptions of a zombified (dead, inactive and passive) precariat; also show that such characterisations are inconsiderate of the many new methods through which the precariat have started to organise and take agency beyond the workplace. The 'world's informal workers are also organising and using novel approaches to make capital and the state accountable' (*ibid*: 635). For example, an illustration is given on how *bidi* workers in India have combined struggles for redistribution with struggles for recognition.In the same manner, this paper (not exhaustively) also tries to argue that as bifurcated as the protests looked, one can still identify patterns of mobilization of workers around wage concerns through their communities. Some workers still mobilised around their concerns concerning wages and working conditions (though not audible enough) through the vampire protests.

An ILO (2016) study on the *Working Conditions of Tea Plantation Workers in Bangladesh* shows that there are serious labour related challenges on plantations. Just like the Malawi CARER findings, workers in Bangladesh tea estates are also forced to work long hours, live in poor housing, subject to forced labour and child labour rates, and earn very low wages, and are disconnected from collective bargaining structures and labour representation groups.

Though not explicit in the ILO (2016) findings, one can posit that the Bangladesh scenario reveals some significant worker attitudes that could be linked to protests in plantation communities. Tea

pluckers in Bangladesh (62 percent) perceive their work contracts as 'ancestral contracts', because they can only access their ancestral land by working on tea estates "since work in the tea gardens is the prerequisite for residential facilities" (ILO 2016: 35).

The ILO (2016) report does not pursue the implications that connotations of 'children of the soil' which is implied in ancestral contracts would have on the collective organisation of workers. My research interrogated what influence such connotations could have on worker's collective organisation against a capital that is deemed to be sucking from their land. Ashforth (2007) shows that in most African communities, extractive industries have been viewed as sucking life out of people, especially where communities believe that their lives are connected to their land. Although not an extractive business, the workers in plantations usually have strong ancestral connections to their land as seen in the Bangladesh study. Could such narratives of a sucking capital have any influence on the participation of casual workers in the vampire protests in Malawi? The later chapters (4 and 5) unpack these issues in detail to show how connotations of the land and perceived extractive businesses interacted with communities during the protests.

Robson (2010) shows that the development of cocoa in West Africa is directly linked to slavery and forced labour on plantations. It was revealed that there exists a complex context in which the enslavement of people on cocoa farms occurs, 'beset with local issues, buffeted by international economics, and obscured by trickery and corruption' (Robson 2010: 48). He also shows that on the farms, 'work is hard, in oppressive heat, with biting flies around the worker's heads, snakes hiss in the undergrowth, and workers are forced to work from dawn till dusk tending and collecting the cocoa pods' (*ibid*:50). Although most West African states abolished the plantation system after the Second World War, the smallholder farmers running the cocoa industry are forced to adopt these labour punitive strategies in order to cut costs and meet their sharecropper quotas (Castle and Diara 2003). Besides these precarious labour conditions, farm owners have also used child labour to supplement labour demands on their farms. A study by ILO (2002) showed that 30 to 40 percent of migrant labour on Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa farms is enslaved.

From Robson's analysis, it is apparent that class consciousness of cocoa farm workers is passive due to the sharp variations of the labour being used. One can only speculate that the combination of family relations, migrant labour, child labour and female labour has mostly pacified collective

organisation .His work also suggest that trade unions in such areas have been pacified by the influential roles of cooperatives that have, over time, shielded their smallholder members (*ibid*)

The West African case offers a significant articulation of capital accumulation relations by local elites and its implications on labour relations in plantations. The literature on precarity mostly points at global capital and how its devices have rendered local communities vulnerable (sees Standing 2011). As seen in the Côte d'Ivoire's case of slavery and forced labour, one can then argue that private capital of any kind can have 'zombification' effects of labour. Castle and Diara (2003: 5) argue that the West African literature on 'the agency (or lack of it) of farm workers neglects one critical aspect, the relationship labour has with the land'. It is stated that plantation workers historically have easily sustained their battles against capital not just based on the presence of trade unions but most importantly, their perceived relations with the land they work on (ibid). Such accounts are corroborated by the Bangladesh case study discussed in the earlier pages of this section, where perceptions of ancestral contracts on ancestral land have revitalised worker agency on plantations at certain points.

2.5 Conceptualising violence

Violence has been understood in different ways by different scholars in literature and several definitions of violence have projected ambiguity, similarities and contrasts (Marilyn, 2010). Violent protests should be understood differently from violence as a standalone concept (Masunungure, 2011). In understanding violence within the narrative of protests Paret (2015) shows that there is an ambiguity around how society and the media have defined violent protests in South Africa. For Malawi, Mueller (2018) and Meinhardt and Patel (2003) argue that the Malawian literature on violent protests only concentrates on electoral related violence; this is violence that is linked to elections. Between society and violence, the Malawian literature has ignored several other actions and encounters of violence due to what Chikoja (2017) calls 'funded and misguided definitions of violence', where political players especially the Malawi electoral commission and other political players only give attention to definitions of violence that can be appropriated to their advantage during elections. Von Holdt (2013b) expresses the idea that the concept of violence is fluid and could mean different actions of both the state security agents and the protesting groups. These actions can range from property destruction by protesters or even utilisation of forceful crowd control measures by the police.

2.5.1 Catharsis, domination, resistance and liberation

The paper critically engaged and critiques the Fanonian perspective of violence. Fanon (1963) shows that the colonial state maintained its hegemony through colossal violence on its subjects and, that subjects of colonial violence internalised and reciprocated the same towards not just the state but also its symbolic representations. Fanon (1963: 38) states that the colonial state 'is the bringer of violence into people's lives, intruding even their homes and the mind'. Fanon (1952: 145) also asserts that for the colonial subject, freeing themselves from colonialism through violence becomes a cathartic experience-'catharsis adapted from Greek, means purging or cleansing' (Newland, 2017). In his concept of collective *catharsis*, Fanon (1963:146) asserts that 'in every society, there exists a channel, an outlet through which the forces accumulated in the forms of aggression can be released'.

In this Fanonian thesis of violence, the intervening event 'flowing in the social relations of the subjects and hence helps them remove feelings of self-pity and self-loathing which are accumulated and internalised under oppression' (*Ibid*: 148). It is also asserted that violence functions as an avenue to restore the self-esteem, dignity and political freedom of the subjects while they continue to endure oppressive structures (Newland, 2017)

Aghamelu and Ejike (2017:24) argue that in adapting the Fanonian perspective, one cannot ignore the violence that the post-colonial state inherited and found useful to use on its "liberated" subjects. One would also argue today that beyond the violence of the post-colonial state, the democratic states in Africa have continued with the same violence. It is argued that independence and democracy in Africa do not invalidate Fanon's theory because the two have not translated into authentic freedom (*ibid*). Africans have been re-colonised through relations of productive forces by both western bourgeoisie and local elites. Von Holdt (2013a) offers an interesting case of how the democratic South African state has actually transitioned into a state of violent democracy. He argues that contentious confrontations reflected in intra-worker violence including murders have been accompanied by the state's use of colossal force on citizens in a dispensation that promises "mediation of social conflict, redistribution of political and social economic power through the institutions of constitutional democracy" (Von Holdt: 589).

Aghamelu and Ejike (2017) also state that the youth insurgence in the Nigeria's oil rich regions have been in response to lethal alliance of the Nigerian state and foreign capital to enact terror on

the youth and their communities. The Nigerian case also shows how the alliance of capital and state in the age of neoliberalism has re-colonised local communities by not just displacing them from their livelihoods but also coercing them into forced labour. While the colonial state structurally created economic alienation and alienated consciousness through exploitation, the neoliberal state has partnered with capital to create an insecure class of the precariat (Standing 2011).

This study critically engages with the Fanonian *liberation* perspective in a framework of resistance as it helps us theorise that 'violence has an inherent transformative potential because it enables participants to expunge feelings of inferiority and develop a sense of collective agency' (Paret, 2015:108). It is however important to note that the use of *catharsis* does not negate the fact that even Fanon abhorred violence despite recognising it as a necessary evil in some cases. Martin (1970) postulates that violence in the Fanonian perspective only had value in the anticolonial struggle in paving the way for self-realisation, even though in that context, violence remained a psychologically taxing activity. Caute (1998) also shows that violence of any kind was foremost de-humanising and psychologically unsustainable by the perpetrators unless such violence was intricately a means to some higher end, and not an end in itself. Aghamelu and Ejike (2017) also argue that such a framework of violence is useful in psychological understandings of violence on the actors of violence while ignoring the effects of violence on other subjects. However, the later chapters will show and argue that violence means different things to different actors depending on contexts and motivations.

Within a framework of resistance, Aghamelu and Ejike (2017) show that communities can also utilise protest and violence as symbolic resistance, where both become a channel through which the subaltern do not just expunge feelings of inferiority but register desires for a different social order. For instance, Alexander (2010) views mobilisation of the poor around service delivery protests in South Africa as amounting to the rebellion of the poor. In this case, protest and violence are appropriated by the poor as an important channel to challenge the *status quo* of inequality. The study attempts to unpack how the bloodsucker protests in Mulanje district could also be understood as a kind of resistance appropriated through the symbolic protests of bloodsucking. Dynamics of why bloodsucking protests become a convenient tool of protest would help to expound on how community relations of power and other factors have shaped these protests.

Building on Foucault's concept of domination, violence could also be understood as a process through which the state and other structures could actually exercise (rather than possess) disciplinary power over communities. Foucault illustrates how domination by the state could be appropriated through administration of punishments, ranking of behaviours, surveillance of individuals and utilisation of knowledge for govern mentality purposes. Within the same narrative, Sharman (1996) builds on Foucault to demonstrate how the concept of domination could be expanded to also understand tendencies used by the business and political elite in both managing their clientele but also managing competition from rival groups. Sharman's utilisation of the concept of domination is used by this study to understand how the bloodsucker protests became a space through which the state and other groups contested their interests. It will be argued that the protests functioned in a complex space of relations where several groups such as but not limited to the state, security agents, traditional leaders, white plantation capital, local business rivals, youth and women all utilised protests and violence in varying proportions to advance particular interests.

2.5.2 The looping effects of violence: The changing nature of violence

On the one hand, Fanon provides a useful perspective on how violence can be utilised as a tool for resistance by the subaltern against macro and abstract structures such as the state and the elite, on the other hand he also shows the looping effects of the same violence on the actors involved. Auyero *et al*, (2013) illustrates this looping effect of this violence on the same actors of violence. Their study on violence in the urban margins of *Buenos Aires*, shows that society has 'increasingly moved away from violence as being an exclusive resource of the elite and security forces to becoming increasingly available to a variety of social actors' (*ibid:* 3). Their argument shows that new forms of violence go beyond the presence or lack of state security services, rather new violence is an effect of complex dynamics that are also empirically challenging to analyse on the ground. Such arguments are founded on data that shows 'police –criminal "collusion" (sic), that actually promote violent activities in poor communities (Auyero et al, 2013: 6). In their case, we cannot simply locate violence in arguments that show how the modern and thin state has abandoned communities in the margins (especially security services), but in the highly skewed, contradictory and intermittent law enforcement services that militarises poor communities to the convenience of the rich at particular times actually institute new destructive orders (Arias, 2006b: 324 in Auyero, et al 2003:15)

Auyero *et al* (2013: 13) also show that 'violence is the effect of a complex causal chain whose origin certainly lies in the actions and inactions of the state but also in the economy'. They state through Karl Polanyi's ideas that processes of "the great neoliberal transformation" such as informalisation and general degradation of living conditions have both increased poverty and interpersonal violence in poor communities. Using such analysis, this study observes in the later chapters that precarity has a bearing on the matrix of the bloodsucker protests in Mulanje district.

However, what is of importance in Auyero's work is the engagement with the Fanonian thesis of violence. His work illustrates how the drug economy in the urban margins of *Buenos Aires* functions as "a double-edged sword": while it sustains poor communities, it simultaneously tears them apart. While the participation of the youth and drug gangs in the drug cartel related violence could be viewed as resistance against the mainstream economy (which has marginalised poor communities), they also illustrate how such violence tears these marginalised apart. It affects girls, households, women, youth, schools and several other institutions in communities. Violence does not just haunt elites, it comes back to all actors exercising it. My study should not be seen as a glorification of violence, it will also show these looping effects of the bloodsucker violence on individuals and communities involved. However it is still imperative that this study examines concrete means in which external and abstract forces such as the state and precarity interacted and fueled the bloodsucker related violence in Mulanje district (on concrete analysis, see Auyero et al , 2003).

2.6 Conclusion

This section has engaged with literature that problematises the concept of violence especially with regards to the occult. The literature review has also reflected on conceptualisations of the occult especially vampires into a sociological body of theorem as both realist and symbolic. Worth noting are also political, economic and social dynamics that have governed the emergence and understandings of the occult in selected African cases. The section has also discussed the concept of protest and violence, and how these could be understood in a framework of liberation, resistance and domination. These also form the lens through which chapter five of this thesis understands the dynamics of bloodsucker protests in Mulanje district.

CHAPTER THREE

A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON METHODS AND ETHICS

3.0. Introduction

This is a critical reflection on the methods employed in the study but also the ethical issues encountered at both the institutional level and during field work. Apart from offering justification for selected particular methods, the chapter also expounds on the challenges and innovations used in the course of a four weeks field work in Mulanje district. Specifically, the chapter discusses the qualitative paradigm and how it was employed to collect data through in-depth interviews in 3 Traditional Authorities within Mulanje district. The chapter also discusses the purposive sampling and how it was employed to recruit respondents who were later engaged in in-depth interviews and anonymous community letters.

3.1. Research area

The research was conducted in Mulanje district, one of the districts situated in the Southern region of Malawi, bordering Mozambique. Mulanje has an estimated population of one million, almost double the population in 2008 (NSO, 2017). The research was conducted in four traditional authorities (T/As) namely: *Mthiramanja, Mabuka, Mkanda* and *Chikumbu*. In these T/As, the researcher focused on the following six villages: *Kamwendo, Phanisa, Ntokole, Nkumbila, Mwalemela, Mwachande* and Mulanje *boma* (town centre). These areas were chosen specifically because they experienced some form of *anamapopa* protests or incidents of bloodsucking. Beyond this, it is fair to say that the whole of Mulanje district was in meltdown with the protests but not every area could be visited due to limitations of time and accessibility; i.e. in terms of distance, geographical impediments and most importantly, political accessibility. Most traditional leaders either refused to grant access to their communities or made it difficult for the researcher to work in their jurisdictions. The chosen areas granted suitable access conditions to be discussed later in the ethics section.

3.2 Research design

Burns and Grove (2003: 19) state that a research design is a plan designed and executed in order to reduce issues which influence and interfere with the validity of a research.This research used the qualitative design for sampling, data collection and analysis. The design was appropriate for the study because as Corbin and Strauss (2015) show, qualitative research methods allow the researcher to discover thoughts, experiences and perspectives of respondents. This helps one to map together these thoughts, experiences and perspectives into a comprehensive perspective that accounts for many aspects of the experiences being described. The nature of the questions asked in this research required responses that give an in-depth account of people's perceptions and experiences in the "vampire" protests and experiences of community members. The qualitative paradigm offered an ideal avenue for exploring such issues through in-depth interviews.

The researcher was able to explore several themes whilst adjusting and readjusting questions being asked due to the realities in the field. For example, it was observed in interviews that the qualitative approach gave flexibility to adjust the question on the meaning of precarity. Communities mostly defined their experiences not as precarious but rather as vulnerabilities. This adjustment is contrary to literature that argues for a fixed approach once a researcher enters the field. For example, arguments by Chikosa (2014) and Lee (2008) both give an impression that readjusting research instruments whilst already in the field signifies the weaknesses of the researcher in the planning process. However, the researcher's field work experience shows that beyond the argument on planning, community realities and terminologies are mostly different from the language used in literature. For instance, precarity is a common term used to define different economic conditions of workers within the labour movement yet workers themselves especially in Mulanje define precarious states based on categories of vulnerability.

As much as the research identified some emerging themes from categories of certain data and did not impose pre-existing categories and ideas as discussed by Corbin and Strauss (2015), it is worth noting that my own training and the specific readings in preparation for the field had already contributed to a series of categories, ideas and theories in my intellectual attitude that later played an active role in how the field was approached and data interpreted. These also shaped the questions in research tools, the discussions with respondents and hence the data. The research followed important methodological procedures which would still not produce "innocent data",

innocent in terms of being value free as discussed by Lee (2008: 44). However, what this study presents is a methodological experience that reflects on how my pre-conceived categories, ideas, attitudes and terminology were constantly being challenged by experiences and narratives of respondents. In some instances one would be inclined to argue that my field experience would best be described as a "discursive" experience; one where the planned proposal was constantly being checked and re-checked by unintentional effects of the field itself. For example, it will be shown latter in this chapter how the ideas of my cab driver challenged some elements of the methodology the research was using.

In choosing the qualitative design, the researcher was conscious that the knowledge produced from the study may not be fully generalisable to other settings; for example, other areas where youth have protested against the occult (Babbie, 2004). It was also not the intention of this research to make generalisations about the concrete experiences of unemployed young people living in communities surrounding plantations, being unemployed and how they protest their precarity. The researcher was also aware that by using the qualitative design and employing systematic coding procedures in analysing the data, his opinions and personal biases would influence the research. However, as Hodkinson (2008) argues, opinions and biases do not exist in a vacuum, in this study these are shaped by the substantive sociological readings covered over the course of my studies. It is also believed that the qualitative design mostly allows the researcher to make intuitive judgements in the process of data collection, as analysis starts from the field and not just on the desk (*ibid*).

The qualitative design also aided the data generated from in-depth interviews to be analysed in a way that allowed explanations which reflected the complexity, detail and context it emerged from (Corbin and Strauss 2015). As earlier stated, it was also the aim of this study to analyse data by using both pre-existing and emergent categories from the data. Such an approach allowed the research to treat each emerging theme with its distinctiveness attached to the research questions at hand and the process producing it.

3.3 Sampling

The study used a non-probability sampling technique in order to identify and select the population for the study. The units were purposively selected in order to reveal particular knowledge of the sampled population. In this regard, the aim of the method was not to be statistically correct or

representative. Instead the purpose was to select respondents based on their knowledge about the research topic (see Ruhl *et al*, 2003; Keyton, 2010). In the case of this study, the research participants were targeted because they generally belonged to communities which experienced the "vampire" protests or have knowledge of these protests. In principle, most respondents targeted by the research were chosen to represent a particular social location relevant to objectives of the study and questions at hand. For example, women were targeted due to questions relating to their powerful role in identifying bloodsuckers while male youth were targeted due their prominent role in the bloodsucking protests (Ruhl *et al*, 2003).

For this study, a heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling technique was used. Keyton (2010) identifies this as a sampling method that is utilised to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to the phenomena at hand. In other words, the research explores variation in opinions, thoughts, experiences and perspectives on the issue being investigated. Regarding this research, the assumption is that in Mulanje, these opinions, thoughts and perspectives are not random personal differences, but rather are differences structured by social position such as gender, age, political positions, class and layers of local authorities in existence. It was critical for this research to employ this technique because its aim was to explore community perspectives on the *anamapopa* protests in Mulanje district. It is therefore important to note that the decision to employ the maximum variation sampling was based on the belief that "communities do not hold a single perspective but rather perspectives" (Chingarande, 2006:44). One of the rationales of maximum variation sampling is that the depth of insight into a particular social phenomena is shaped by the different voices and angles represented in its methodology (Keyton, 2010). The units of interest in this research were women, youth, political and traditional leaders. These units were of particular interest following the various perspectives that emerged from press reports explaining the possible dynamics and dimensions of the major actors in the story of bloodsuckers.

To compliment maximum variation sampling, this study also used a snow ball sample at various stages of the research. Corbin and Straus (2015) define a snow ball sample as one where the interviewer asks respondents who have already participated in the research to possibly identify other potential respondents. This study used snowballing in the following way: traditional leaders identified as key informants were asked to identify other potential leaders who would be willing to participate in the study. Four traditional leaders were identified using this approach in different

villages. A different type of snowballing was also adopted especially when identifying female respondents. With the sensitivity of the topic, most women preferred to only talk after they had identified other willing women to participate. Individual interviews were then arranged for the same dates and venues, this guaranteed security to most female participants. This was mostly the case in T/A *Mthiramanja*.

Table 1: Number and nature of respondents

Number of Participants	Ages	Occupational status	Gender	Community position	Type of interview Involved in
20	19-35	Unemployed youth	Male	Participated in protests	Focus groups
7	25-35	Community night patrollers	Male	Participated in protests & worked in patrols	Individual in-depth Interviews
5	27-60	Women in farming & Village , Savings & Loan groups	Female	Mothers	Individual in-depth interviews
8	25-45	Seasonal tea pluckers	Female	Employed women	Focus groups
3	45-60	Plantation manager	Male	White plantation manager	Individual in-depth interviews
5	50-80	Traditional chiefs	1 female & 4 males	Traditional authority	Individual in-depth interviews

As pointed out earlier, participants were selected into this purposive sample criterion due to their particular characteristics. These characteristics were defined by the research questions raised in the research regarding the dynamics of bloodsucker's protests. For example, the study targeted women within the community; this was due to their perceived prominent role in the protests based on initial media reports and observations made by the researcher in preliminary field work. In total, the research involved 23 women who either participated in individual interviews or focus group discussions. The study also involved 27 youth between the ages of 20 to 35. These youth were also selected based on their perceived prominent role in the bloodsucker protests. However, due to ethical concerns, participants were advised to never reveal if they participated in vigilante activities but rather speak in a third person or never say anything that incriminates them. On this basis, the study did not directly deal with youth who participated in the protests, rather, questions were asked on the pretext of rumour and not involvement in vigilant protests. Therefore basis for the selection of youth into the sample was not dependent on their participation in the bloodsucker protests, but rather, their knowledge about these protests. Within each of the key criteria, some diversity was included to deepen the exploration of the concept being investigated. For example, the study included male youths of different ages on tea estates, youth involved in street vending, conveniently unidentified youths and those residing in the villages far from the town assembly (Ruhl *et al*, 2003).

Simpson (2004) states that snowball sampling has opportunities a researcher could exploit in the field but also limitations that can influence negatively the data one generates. In this study, it was observed that the snowball sample was useful especially because it gave the researcher flexibility to expand and accommodate the pool of respondents based on new questions emerging from certain interviews. With the sensitivity of the topic, the sample design also allowed security especially to women who were unwilling to provide interviews unless they had identified a partner to corroborate the story with. This ensured that interviews were mostly conducted in pairs but also helped respondents not to incriminate themselves in interviews. Snowball sample also ensured that the researcher was able to go past certain gatekeeping blocks as traditional leaders always provided the next leader to be contacted in the community.

Despite some of these opportunities provided by this design, it was also observed that the pair interview approach actually limited certain respondents from giving other types of information. Respondents were always mindful of the other person in some instances used verbal gestures to

gain approval from partners before divulging some details. To counter such tendencies, the researcher decided to recruit a research assistant who would help to break pairs, by conducting simultaneous interviews with pair members in the same room. The mere physical presence of a partner in the room though engaged in another interview still provided narrative security to respondents. Furthermore, snowballing limited the calibre of leaders the research would have liked to include, officers from the district offices provided a "rigid" list of traditional leaders the study could include , the leaders in the villages also identified particular leaders they deemed fit for the interviews. It was realised that certain leaders deemed to be of the opposition political parties or deemed to be working against the chiefs were not selected to participate in the research. The study countered this by providing a question list in advance to the traditional leaders; this cleared the fears most leaders had about the research. Most traditional chiefs feared the study was a political story being investigated by a journalist under the disguise of a student, this was despite all the documents the researcher had provided to prove he was a student.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

The study utilised in-depth interviews to collect data from individual interviews with youth, women and both political and traditional leaders. Focus group discussions were also utilised to collect data from women, youth and other community members. Cresswell (2003:18) shows that in-depth interviews provide a confidential and secure conversation between the interviewer and respondent. It is also believed that in-depth interviews are a useful tool when collecting data on individuals' personal perspectives (*ibid*).The interviews were guided by a thorough semi-structured interview guide that directed the sequence of the meetings, though the researcher also had the prerogative to probe unclear responses and new insights emerging from respondents during the interviews.

Cresswell (2003) points that this interview approach has its own challenges when used to collect data. Firstly, in-depth interviews can be time consuming. For example, the field work took 20 working days and sometimes included weekends. While in the field, a single interview could take a minimum of 45 minutes as sometimes respondents needed more time to familiarise with the questions but also took time to explain certain issues. Compounding this problem was the sensitivity of the topic at hand in the particular communities where research was conducted. Most female respondents found it difficult to talk unless they had a pairing partner to be with them for

narrative security. It was later realised through one traditional chief that narrative security meant an atmosphere that allows respondents to corroborate their memory with other people's stories. I perceived this act by chiefs as surveillance of female respondents involved in the research. However, the research countered the above challenges by firstly employing a research assistant who conducted interviews with a separate pair member at the same time the principle researcher interviewed the other member. This gave space to involved women to solely focus on the interviews at hand without trying to seek verbal approval from partners. With all the detailed planning in the research to save time, some respondents still kept postponing interview schedules which consequently affected the timeline of the research. Lacey and Luff (2001) argue that the beauty of field work is the realities found in the field itself, which are commonly differ from the fine crafted proposal plans.

Secondly, in-depth interviews are also prone to biasness. This means that possibilities of respondents trying to tell you what they think you want to hear are high (Cresswell, 2003). For example, after the first round of interviews in the first 4 days of fieldwork, news had travelled across the villages the kinds of questions the research team was asking. The researcher observed in the second round of interviews that respondents came with ready-made answers. For example, almost all women in the first interviews alluded to the idea that they were prominently involved in identifying bloodsuckers. This was contrary to second round of interviews where most women decided to respond with a short answer, "Youth were in the forefront". I realised in the course of the field work that most women did not just consider the question on their involvement in protests as blame on them but they also thought the research was about the youth. However, necessary steps were taken to obviate this by changing the blame tone of some questions. The researcher also avoided sounding superior to respondents by giving them some control of the interview process, and also changed the setup of interviews from formal surroundings to informal setups. For example, 2 focus group interviews in *Phanisa* village and 1 of the same in *Ntokole* village were conducted at water boreholes where women were drawing water. These interviews ended up producing rich data as women operated in their "zones" and felt in control of the situation. Keynote (2010) argues that natural research zones ensure that respondents do not feel uprooted from where their lives are experienced

In-depth interviews proved useful in this research due to the nature of the major question of the research which aimed to explore community perspectives on the bloodsucker's protests. The whole

idea was to capture thoughts, experiences, feelings and insights of varied community members in Mulanje district. In-depth interviews were convenient due to the space they provided for the researcher to capture non-verbal cues that pointed towards uneasiness, confusion or pain of respondents in answering certain questions. For example, expressions of the youth in explaining dynamics of protests came with several conflicting non-verbal ques which prompted the researcher to probe further till several angles of the questions were articulated by respondents.

It is also believed that in-depth interviews function to your advantage when the topic is controversial or sensitive (Cresswell, 2003). This was the case with my study, discussing bloodsucker's protests has become a sensitive issue in Mulanje, where a strict gate keeping system has been developed by leaders around this topic. These in-depth interviews allowed most respondents to articulate deep thoughts and insights around the protests and violence. The privacy these interviews provided allowed respondents to explore with the researcher several other issues pertaining to the issue at hand. However, it should also be noted that this research faced a lot of challenges in providing safe spaces for female respondents to effectively answer questions while feeling safe.

The research also used focus group interviews or discussions to complement the individual in-depth interviews. This was done because as much as in-depth interviews provided detailed data, there was need to corroborate some perspectives emerging from individual interviews. Krueger *et al* (2002:10) states that FGDs are a qualitative data collection tool that involve gathering six to eight people of similar characteristics to discuss their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes on a particular topic. The FGDs were arranged in such a way that members were allowed to discuss with one another without discrediting other participant's views. I believe that this approach helped the researcher gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. Keynote (2010) articulates that this approach collects diverse perspectives from a group of purposively selected people who do not statistically represent the general population.

The study conducted a total of eight focus group discussions in six villages. The questions on symbolic meanings and functions of "vampires" and the characteristics of protesters were mostly tackled through FGDs. The tea estate workers (apart from 2 white managers and union leaders) were also interviewed in pairs or FGDs. Patton (2002) argues that these interviews are suitable for examining sensitive issues from a sensitive population. As earlier indicated, this method became

a form of security and protection to group members as most ideas were corroborated within the group. The approach helped participants to open up through verification, that is, people mostly started to talk and divulge more details after observing others talk freely about the topic. Amongst women, the method was employed by using already existing village savings and loans groups. The researcher used the familiarity concept as discussed by Patton (2002) in order to achieve maximum results. Patton's familiarity concept alludes to the idea that using already existing relations and groups in a community for either snow-balling or focus group interviews ensures that respondents discuss a topic with freedom and without social distance (2002:22).

As much as there seemed to exist a level of security to participating members, the process also seemed polarising as observed in cases where members would argue and moments of silence would follow. In one case, a man walked out of the focus group proceedings claiming that:

> "*Some people in this forum have come to shame their friends, I don't recall everything about the protests but I still think some other faces here have come to prove a point".*

Such incidents happened in two separate focus groups, these only signify the view that these meetings could also be very contentious, polarising and sometimes abused by respondents. The beauty of these forums was that the researcher was able to tap into deep seated issues which could come out of respondents in "hot" moments (slip of the tongue); such issues would then form the basis of later individual private interviews as follow-ups.

The researcher did not aim to persuade the group to reach a consensus on the issues being discussed. However, Cresswell (2003) shows that it can be difficult to take notes in focus group discussions due to the flow of discussions hence this research utilised the services of a research assistant (trained by the researcher) but also with the permission of the group, an audio recording of proceedings was utilised. It was also observed that certain group dynamics such as power relations and reluctance to state views publicly for fear of reprisal were disturbing the flow of FGDs. The research team decided to divide groups based on gender, all discussions under this data collection method never had a combination of men and women in the same category. Women in some villages were also further divided into age categories (age not by number but physical stature), all women looking older had their own groups while those looking younger were approached separately. The only groups which had a mix of different age groups were those

approached at the village savings and loans forums because they insisted to work in their usual familiar groups. The different FGD gender and age categories helped the groups to speak in forums that had fruitful discussions due to openness (see for example Cresswell, 2003; Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

Finally, whilst in the field, the researcher decided to utilise anonymous letters as an approach to soliciting more details from people who did not want to participate in both individual interviews and focus group discussions. With passing time in the field, I realised the topic was sensitive and some people were uncomfortable to agree to interviews, and some people in interviews did not want to divulge more detail to issues being discussed. One evening, whilst sharing my general field experience with a cab driver who used to drop us at the research site, he said:

> "*What if you ask people who do not want to get involved in interviews just to write their views in a letter without mentioning their names*?"

In the following sessions, the researcher asked respondents if they would be willing to share any other issues they did not say in the interview in an anonymous letter. The next day, the research team received 14 letters from one village, these letters contained rich detail about several issues without incriminating any individuals. Some letters corroborated the opinions and stories that came out from the interviews while others brought in totally new perspectives which became our guiding questions for interviews in new research sites.

Earlier in this chapter, it was argued that certain elements of the fieldwork were discursive; the anonymous letter innovation was one of them. If not carefully handled such an idea could present a watershed moment for a sensitive project such as this one. For example, writers would have their individual biases and the total anonymity of letters would also reinforce malicious biases. Suffice to say that the former would also be present in interviews. However, data from the letters was carefully treated, the research utilised a total of 34 letters. The data has become an integral part of this study .The fact that these letters were written outside of the more social format of formal interviews, focus groups and even ordinary interviews makes it a particularly rich source of uncensored data. After a thoroughly considered process, the letters were used as a direct source of data in particular instances while also deployed to corroborate particular narratives that also emerged interviews. These letters also became pointers of new research questions to help the researcher illuminate other story lines.

The letters were written by people who had not known the content of interviews we had conducted in villages 68kilometres away. Although one would argue against the validity of data emerging from anonymous letters in social research, for this research these letters became an important method to complement the interviews due to the sensitivity of the topic at hand. On another day, one would have fears of respondents trying to settle personal issues through the freedom of total anonymity provided by this method. Contrary to such fears, out of the thirty four letters only two had "questionable" details. This approach was only employed because this was a sensitive topic and the approach made sense in this context, but it was also welcomed by the communities.

The study is also under no illusions that sensitivity has no single definition as observed by Lee and Renzetti (1990). Due to this lack of a single definition of what sensitivity is and how communities might respond to such, McCosker et al (2001: 35) advise that the researcher can decide whilst in the field to "mix and fix" emerging issues within contextual cultural norms and values as long as respondents are protected from harm. Therefore, the research adopted the anonymous letter method not just because the cab driver made sense but also because it allowed respondents to say more, the details never trailed back to them and their stories only complemented data from interviews. These letters also reduced participant attrition amongst the youth who participated in the protests. Cantrell (2012) and Kaiser (2009) both suggest that those people who feel vulnerable with their conditions (participation in violent protests in this case) may feel that the research protocol exposes them to authorities or just inconvenience them in some way. In the case of youth in Mulanje, they are still living in fear due to the infiltration of state security agents and how they arrest those that are linked to vigilant activities during the bloodsucker's protests.

3.5 Data analysis

Lacey and Luff (2001) state that data analysis is the process through which data is broken into sensible pieces as content for meaning extraction by the researcher. Taking it further, Marshall and Ross man (1995:114) describe the process as one which the researcher identifies "salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together". This process basically brings order and structure to the many issues articulated by respondents in the field but also requires creativity from the researcher in making the structure readable and fascinating to the audience (*ibid*).

This research used thematic analysis as an analytical tool for the analysis of data during the process of data collection and after data collection. This procedure involves transcribing the tape-recorded interviews (both individual in-depth and focus group interviews) into readable text but also follows the theoretical memos the interviewer scribbled in interview notes (Lacey and Luff, 2001; Bailey, 2007; and Keynote, 2010). The process also involves reading and re-reading the transcribed data in their entirety and reflecting on the interviews as a whole. In this study, the researcher summarised the interviews while taking note of the several multiple themes that were emerging from the interviews, where both "inside the box and outside the box" methods were utilised (see Bailey, 2007b: 26). The inside the box method is one where data analysis basically follows the questions one asked to see if any of them have generated sensible themes. On the other hand, the outside the box approach according to Bailey is one where the researcher creatively identifies new themes based on patterns outside the research questions.

The research developed codes for the data generated as part of the thematic analysis. Bailey (2007:127) describes coding as "the process of organising large amounts of data into smaller segments that, when needed, can be retrieved easily". The themes that emerge out of the data are mostly based on something that "captured something important about the data in relation to the research questions, and represented some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Brent and Clarke, 2008: 82). However, the researcher has also included themes which show patterns of relationships within the units outside the research questions. Some of the themes in this research are; the social matrix of vampires, suspicious categories, politics of mutual suspicion, symbolic representation of precarity under which emerged sub-themes such as a sucking journalism, sucking legal system, sucking plantation work and sucking development projects. More themes also emerged linked to globalisation, definitions of precarity, the social governance of protests, the social structure of violence, youth and power contestations, and finally women and the history of abuse in Mulanje district. The study therefore used an inductive thematic analysis approach where identified themes emerged directly from the data itself (Brent and Clarke 2008).
In terms of coding, the research utilised the open coding approach, that is several pages of text was broken into structured themes that can easily be arranged and understood as a coherent narrative (Bailey, 2007; Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

3.6 Ethical considerations

The study was granted ethical clearance by the University of the Witwatersrand, Labour Policy and Globalisation Program, under the supervision of Prof Karl Von Holdt and Prof Garth Stevens under protocol number GLUU18/05/01. Any study in social sciences dealing with people needs to adhere to a certain ethical code of conduct, more so this study on violence (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). There were several ethical details the study followed as proposed in the proposal, however, it is important to mention that several field contexts challenged both the researcher and the university requirements on ethics. This does not mean the study negated the proposed ethical codes, rather, it would be important to note that the field experience does not always correspond to certain projections researchers propose in their studies (based on my experience in this field research).

This study ensured that respondents participated voluntarily after seeking their consent. They were also duly informed and assured of their protection through clauses on confidentiality and anonymity, albeit anonymity could not be guaranteed to the researcher since he had to meet them face to face in interviews. However, in most individual interviews the researcher agreed with respondents that they should not share their names with the interviewer, but only participate in the interview. In this case, even though the interviewer knew their faces, their names were concealed not just to him but also people who will read the final report. The researcher also made sure that all the field notes were fully anonymised, effort was also made to paraphrase respondents' extracts in instances where someone might be identifiable through a direct quote. The final research report has used pseudonyms and detached faces from direct extracts.

Respondents were also informed and asked to consent to non-monetary participation but also warned of any potential risks involved in participating in a research of this nature. On potential risks, participants were briefed on the measures the researcher would take to make sure that their identities are not connected to the information they would have given. It was acknowledged when dealing with participants in focus group interviews that confidentiality would not be guaranteed in these forums. The nature of focus group setting links ideas to the actual faces of people. Therefore, all participants in focus groups were being duly informed of this risk. Some literature shows that such a declaration has a potential risk of limiting what participants can say during conversations (Ree, 1999; Gwashu, 2012). Contrary to such assertions, participants in most focus group

interviews were very open and willing to open up. Only in few instances did the moderator observe that some participants actually needed non-verbal approval from group members to say certain things within the group. Nonetheless, focus group interviews generated a rich amount of usable data for this research.The next paragraph expands on how consent was obtained from three different groups of participants.

Firstly, the researcher used three streams of community structures to identify participants; the first was the traditional leaders who had to give consent for the researcher to enter the villages. An officer at paramount chief Ngolongoliwa obtained verbal seal from the most senior chief in Mulanje district. After this approval, the researcher directly went to village headmen responsible for the covered villages. This traditional authority consent granted access to villages and respondents. However, these traditional leaders were not involved in the selection of participants in order to protect the clause of anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher was only paying a cultural courtesy in seeking permission to enter their communities. In cases where a respondent was approached through a traditional leader, the researcher was upfront with such respondents so that they know of the referral, and that their full confidentiality and anonymity may not be granted because of the referral.

The second stream was that of women's groups dealing with village savings and loans (VSLs) in the concerned villages and union leaders on tea plantations. There are several Non-governmental organisations working with women's groups in Mulanje district. Group leaders were identified and verbal permission was granted to meet the women in the groups. In most areas, the group leader briefed the women in advance about the research. These women were then approached by the researcher for group consent before focus group interviews were conducted. In *Ntokole* and *Phanisa* villages, some group members opted not to participate due to personal concerns. For example, one woman declined to participate because she lost her son in one of the violent protests. She was later referred to the community counselling officer (child welfare and protection officer) who was approached by the researcher to offer counselling services should cases of trauma arise during or after interviews. Important to note that this was the only extreme case the researcher experienced while in the field. On plantations, union leaders were approached to grant approval of access to their members. Although the research tried to seek formal or written consent from many participants, in many cases, the researcher used informal consent (seeking verbal permission and

consent in vernacular language). The reason for this was that in large group meeting settings, it was a difficult task to seek written consent from everyone. However, the researcher tried through group leaders to make announcements so that people are aware that they would be approached, and that they also give verbal consent to the process.

The final stream of consent involved individuals, the researcher individually approached potential respondents for their consent. Participants were then told that they were at liberty not to participate in the research but also withdraw from the interviews. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form before participating in the research. The form clearly stated the purpose of the research and the details of the investigator and his supervisors. Participants were also left with a copy of the contact details of the Wits University humanities and social sciences ethics committee.

After clearing most ethical requirements, the investigator and this research assistant went ahead to interview the participants. Most of the interviews were done in villages where women and youth were resident of, although some interviews were carried out at village savings and loans meeting points (church or classroom). The traditional chiefs were mostly interviewed at their court yards for their convenience.

In individual interviews with the youth, the investigator continuously kept on reminding the participants that they should not incriminate themselves, especially if they know that they participated in the protests and violence. They were encouraged to speak of their understanding of the protests and violence that transpired during the protests and not explicitly reveal if they were directly involved in the violence. For example, the researcher asked questions such as, “can you tell me what people say about the violence that took place during the *anamapopa* protests”? Such an approach ensured that the process removes respondents from the events of violence and focus on the proxies of the events that took place. This was a mitigation measure especially for respondents that were involved in the protests and might have accidentally been selected into the sample.

In few unprecedented cases, the investigators came across people who had participated in the protests and had first-hand details of the violence that took place. Diligence was used to not lead them to talk about their individual experiences of those specific incidents although they insisted on wanting to talk about “everything”.

The study also looked at the general relationships that existed between the violence during the protests and social issues linked to it in the community, without focusing on particular incidences and individual acts of violence.

One observation on ethics from the field was the insistence by male participants to have their real names used in the research report. The Wits ethics requirements clearly state that identities of respondents have to be protected, it however seemed to me most male participants insisted their real names be clearly indicated in the research report. To these male respondents, anonymity is a myth in this community as one particular respondent put it that:

> "*All males are culprits in this community, the police don't seem to have difficulties catching anybody especially with these anamapopa protests…the only difficult to catch are real thieves".*

The investigator reasoned with them that their protection from harm was paramount in this research hence the research report would only use pseudo names of their choice. Therefore, most of the pseudo names for male participants in this research are names created by them. Communities also demanded that the final research report should be presented to them by the researcher as part of courtesy; the researcher agreed that presentations would be done in July 2019 but outside the University parameters.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methods and ethical procedures the researcher employed in collecting data for the study. As indicated, the study used a qualitative design where the sample of respondents was drawn using purposive and snowballing sampling designs while the data was collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. It has been argued in this section that research ethical requirements can sometimes limit realities of processes through which field work operates in some contexts. Every field research has got its own experiences, researchers ought to realise specificities of their research and embrace field dynamics that enrich the quality of data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

BLOOD SUCKER PROTESTS: A SYMBOLIC RESISTANCE OF THE SUBALTERN

4.0 Introduction

As earlier indicated in chapter one, several questions and puzzles surrounding the popular bloodsucker protests in Malawi influenced this study. Some of them concerned the reality or myth of stories about bloodsuckers as human and occult figures called *anamapopa* that were sucking blood from women and children at night; the characteristics of these bloodsuckers, the social biographies of these bloodsuckers but also their apparent relations with people from communities in Mulanje. The field work revealed interesting scenarios of how communities organised protests, how these protests turned into violence and how the space of these protests got captured by different groups in Mulanje District, but also stories of who was hunted and when, and scenarios of how the state responded. I would realise midway the field work that the legend of bloodsuckers referred to two things, firstly, the occult supernatural beings that overpowered communities spiritually at night. Secondly, bloodsuckers were also particular groups of people defined by race, class, profession, and significantly some of the bloodsuckers lived in same communities as their victims. Although field results and discussions in this chapter and the next also refer to the first occult figure, it is also mostly discussed in a narrative that is rooted in the second typology of bloodsuckers, the concrete human bloodsucker. This chapter four and the following chapter five are a both a presentation and discussion of findings.

Just as Dingley (2018) explains about the *Mumiami* stories in Kenya, the press reports and other commentaries in Malawi also presented the bloodsucker rumours as "a non-event that never bubbled into the kind of occurrences that have been the subject of rich ethnographic and historical study elsewhere" (*ibid*: 10). To the contrary, this chapter argues that the events in Mulanje surrounding *anamapopa* were actually eventful with a thick texture of issues shaping them. The events represented deep seated issues ingrained in relations between different groups of people, these were not random, unorganised, and ludicrous sparks, rather, they were social operations built over a period of time in a tissue of suspicion ingrained in precarious livelihoods, perceived injustices, violence, displacement, perceived unfulfilled promises, perceived professional lies and hijacks but also several other factors.

In this chapter, I argue based on articulations of people from Mulanje that *anamapopa* are an important part of what precariousness is understood to entail in Malawi. Before I delve into this argument, it is imperative that the paper presents a précis of the bloodsucker protests through a first-hand experience of a sacrifice offering ceremony I attended at the peak of the bloodsucker protests.

Mid way into the proposal development process for this study (mid-March 2018), I got word that there would be a public traditional ceremony organised by the community to deal with the vampire issues. This call came through one of my uncles who has worked for a tea plantation factory and resided in Mulanje district for the past 3 decades. On 28th April 2018, I was already in Malawi to get a closer glimpse of what this 'secretive' public gathering would look like. The few hours spent in this community and function revealed both interesting and confusing dynamics of the bloodsucker protests.

The function was held at a shrine near *Chonde,* the headquarters of Paramount Chief Ngolongoliwa of the Lomhwe people in Mulanje and Thyolo districts. I realised at the function that the bloodsucker protests which had ransacked these communities for some months were a deeply contested issue. Most traditional chiefs, community elders, the police, and business people who spoke at the function were all booed by the people. The youth steered the booing and jeering of these people. Interestingly, the few women paraded at the function seemed to have the approval of the community, they got a lot of cheering hands, to a stranger they seemed to have some kind of power and respect within this community. Interestingly, journalists and the entire media fraternity did not get near the function, at least to my observation.

This was an emotionally charged function whose singular purpose was to necessitate community cleansing and healing from the omen of bloodsuckers but also the violent community protests around these figures. It was confusing to observe that bloodsuckers were both understood as concrete flesh and blood agents of oppression but also as occult figures that strike randomly especially at night.

I would later gather from the function that the protests and attacks mainly targeted journalists (both local and foreign), white plantation managers, politicians, some local business personalities, and traditional chiefs. The media narrative and public discourse mostly indicated that the protests

were organised by unemployed youth from communities, yet stories from the function indicated that these protests involved various people from communities; women, male youth, plantation workers and other community members.

The observation exercise taken on this trip was not ethnography in real sense; it was an informal field trip that Emerson (2009) would call 'ethnography of other type'. I did not know what was necessary to be captured but the focus was just to get initial impressions of 'tastes, smells, sounds of the physical environment, the look and feel of the locale and the people in it' (ibid: 35). After the ceremony, I started to question several issues observed such as the power and approval of women, the jeering of those in authority, the cheering youth and their murmurings, the absence of the media, the secretive and exclusive nature of what was to be a public ceremony, and how all these issues related to the actual bloodsucker protests and violence. Before attempting to understand these questions through interviews conducted in July - August 2018, the next section will give an overview of the bloodsucker protests, attacks and vigilantism.

4.1 An over view of the bloodsucker protests: Attacks, protests and vigilantes

As Masunungure (2014) and Mpofu (2018) show about the Zimbabwe protest space over the past decades, it is difficult to confine the African protest space into particular "boxes" due to the diversity and spread of protests in post democratic Africa. However, 21st century South African scholars have generated and shaped a particular discourse of protests around the processes that have intended to commodify life and the responses of society to such processes in the form of service delivery protests (See Von Holdt, 2013a, Alexander, 2010; Paret, 2015; Naidoo, 2007). My overview gives a general picture of what happened during the vampire protests without specifically developing any particular arguments.

From 2004, the country has been experiencing sparks of vampire protests in Southern districts such as Mulanje, Chiradzulu, Zomba, Phalombe, Thyolo and Machinga (Malawi Police 2018). The country has also experienced several other electoral related protests that usually take place after the announcement of presidential results (Mueller, 2018; Meinhardt and Patel 2003). In January 2016, the country started to experience warnings of rumour about the existence of what the media termed "vampires" while communities understood them as *anamapopa* (literally meaning bloodsuckers). Between 2016 and 2018, the country experienced more than 36 forms of protests across different districts in the Southern region. Mulanje was the most affected district recording

19 forms of protests within this period (Chikoja, 2018; Malawi Police Service, 2018; USAID, 2018). It is believed most communities had experienced such protests in between 1989 and 1996, the press reported some but the absence of social media suppressed such events (Masunungure, 2013). Historically, bloodsucker protests have usually escalated in lean farming seasons such as January when most communities experience food insecurity (Ashforth, 2014). However, the 2016 to 2018 were have been different from the other past protests, these indicated novel ways in which communities protested, the level of violence was way beyond any other protests historically but they also lasted long, including seasons when communities had bumper harvests (Nyasa Times, 2017: 3; Daily Times, 2018 :7).

Based on several interviews I conducted in Mulanje district between the months of July and August 2018, several accounts transpired regarding the bloodsucker protests. For instance, it was gathered in the interviews that protests depicted characteristics such as; locally organised community meetings that started with few individuals discussing their fears regarding security, the missing of community members, the night bloodsucking ordeals for some community members. Some of these meetings would grow into 30 to 40 people marching to the headman's house to ask what the leaders are doing about these issues. As one respondent would put it:

> "*We just walked in a group to demand answers from our leaders who also seemed loss of answers"*.

In some instances, a protest would mean youth organising themselves in groups and marching to the District Commissioner's office to deliver verbal petitions to 'whoever' is there. Apparently, none of these well organised marches were ever registered at the district commission office. An employee from the DC's office had this to say:

> "*We have never received any petition from anyone on this issue (bloodsucker issue) in the district for the past 3 years, yes several groups have been here but to deliver petitions on other issues"*.

It transpired from this interview that these 'other issues' were issues of youth unemployment, land concerns and other development related issues. In most cases, different community groupings came forward as concerned citizens to discuss issues of bloodsucking cases and the violence that emerged from communities responding to such incidents. One village headman narrated that:

> "*People just meet for other reasons but it seems they later just decide to come and make noise at the court yard"*.

It was also noted that these protests usually turned violent. This violence was mostly defined by the police as, torching maize fields, burning tyres, singing politically provocative and obscene songs while marching (especially lyrics that portrayed hate to the president, politicians and traditional leaders), stoning houses and marching without obtaining permission from local leaders or the police.

One senior officer from the district office indicated that these should not be called protests, but rather illegal attacks of few misguided communities on others. This claim separated protests from attacks. He said in one of the two separate interviews we had that:

> *"Protests are what you see in the city; people have a proper reason to march. Here, its jealousy individuals influencing communities to attack well to do Malawians, successful business people, and innocent visitors confused with tourists, traditional leaders and politicians are being attacked in the name of vampires. These are just senseless attacks".*

Chisenda (2017) would argue that this is an elitist definition of protests, where the urban population is perceived to deserve the protesting rights while the rural subaltern is deemed not worth to protest. The second element of attacks was that they also involved more male youths than protests. Such a narrative was articulated by a female village headwoman who said that:

> "*Anywhere you find the youth gathered discussing this issue (bloodsucker issue) just know attacks on people are being organised".*

From her narrative, protests only turned into attacks when the youth were in majority. Such a view is corroborated by another popular business man in Mulanje who said:

> *"Protests are peaceful but attacks happen when hungry boys want something from our shops, they initiate meetings and instigate others to break into shops in the name of protests".*

At another level but within the same space of protests, the press reports also discussed the vigilante activities that mostly characterised the bloodsucker protests. The vigilante activities are understood to have killed more than 30 suspected bloodsuckers. Interviews in communities showed that most of the killings were conducted at night by the patrolling youth. A senior police officer indicated in one of the interviews that the youth who were conducting community police patrols were responsible for most of the deaths. From his perspective:

> "*The youth pursued their individual interests at night, as much as they got involved in day protests, the night belonged to them totally. They had control over who walked at night, they killed people in the name of protecting the community…these are pure vigilante activities".*

Such an account shows that as much as the bloodsucker protests were understood as a single entity in the press, they also had internal dynamics that separated protests, vigilantism and attacks. As it shall be discussed in the next chapter, such dynamics had a bearing on how violence was understood by different actors during and after the protests.

4.2 The making of 'the vampire': Discourses and knowledge production

In this section**,** the paper tries to present a particular argument on how the concept of *anamapopa* has been at the centre of power inequality within a particular range of discourse politics. It is my view that the space and process of discourse that shaped the appropriation of the term bloodsuckers to "vampires" by the press and academic commentaries has not been interrogated in the Malawian literature of bloodsucker protests. The field of discourse informs us not to take for granted processes that shape the language economy. As Foucault would argue, the construction and use of language can arrange and naturalise social reality in specific ways that inform, influence and shape how certain issues and people are perceived and acted upon. These processes can constitute subjectivities of human subjects to be managed by the elite in certain ways (See Foucault 1980 in Alvesson and Karreman 2000:1128).

4.2.1 Elite discourses, meaning making and contestations

Interviews in Mulanje indicated that from the onset, communities had always referred to the people involved in this business of bloodsucking as bloodsuckers and not vampires. For example, a certain traditional leader said:

> "*We only know bloodsuckers here, these are creatures we are fighting in this community, the journalists and the government are the ones who are preaching this vampire nonsense".*

An analysis of 24 news articles between 2012 and 2017 explains how the use of bloodsuckers was appropriated by the powerful academia and media. Local people in Mulanje have always used the term bloodsuckers to literally mean the process of losing blood through sucking by a magical being

(usually at night). However, the whole story of community protests against this perceived act has been popularly known through the media as vampires.

It is ironic to note that the early documents and expert reports on the protests in Mulanje were mostly written by western anthropologists who were involved in the Malawi journals project. Through this rural based project, these experts had direct and first hand access to communities that experienced these protests. Their early unpublished commentaries and latter published papers became an authoritative source that shaped public discourse of bloodsuckers (See Allen, 2015; Ashforth, 2014). One would not wonder why these reports used the term 'vampires' or 'bloodsucking vampires' instead of bloodsuckers. Their understanding of the phenomena at hand was influenced by the western fiction industry of vampire folklore and movies. A youthful *Maxon Kulesa* (pseudo) had this to say in one of the interviews*:*

> "*Of course we watch vampire videos in our show rooms. But the bloodsuckers we have here are not the white vampires we see in movies, those using this word are not from here"*.

There seems to have been an orientation of discourse engineered by the academia, the media (both local and global), the urban population and the state in creating the legend of the vampire, in the process snatching and distorting the original meanings of the concept. This is not a strange process, In Mexico and Puerto Rico, a similar process happened when the meanings of the urban legend of the Chupacabras was snatched from local people by the global media to create a brand on the market (See Derby, 2008). In Malawi, the vampire quickly spread both out of Mulanje and Malawi as it now became a bulletin popularised by foreign media and academia. To some extent, the vampire accounts also disprove the assumption that superstitions are a feature of the primitive atavisms. I will argue to the contrary that the bloodsucker belief is intricately linked to the modern economy and its manifestations of precariousness, to some extent it becomes a convincing commentary on modernity and its perils as they are perceived in Mulanje district just as the Chupacabras was to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans (Derby, 2008:298).

Basically, the use of language and terminology seemed to also work in creating specific knowledge and understanding about the victims and perpetrators and also cast them in certain roles. I will

argue later in the chapter that such politics and dynamics on how different actors were represented in discourse afforded them specific allowances on their actions. Notwithstanding other perspectives, this chapter also seeks to discuss the discursive elements intertwined in the bloodsucker accounts to uncover some of the meanings bloodsuckers held, especially for the residents of Mulanje.

4.2.2 Typologies of "suckers" and meaning making

As indicated earlier, the dynamics of bloodsucker identification reflect deep seated issues in Mulanje communities. What is striking about the nature of the identification matrix is how the same discourse discussed above was reconstructed at community level. Identification of bloodsuckers within communities took a pattern dependent on discursive formations that later created subjects who would act in a certain way but also objects that are acted upon in another way. From these processes, protests were organised around particular identities of people and institutions from within the community but also outside it. For people in Mulanje, the definition of bloodsuckers is intricately linked to institutions and figures deemed to be responsible for their current precarious lives. To an extent that one would argue that the discourse of bloodsuckers amongst community members created and projected symbolic figures that would later be used to organise and mobilise protests. This chapter argues that the different types of bloodsucking and the meanings communities have attached to them are a symbolic representation of precarious livelihoods. In his work on the legend of the Pishtaco and institutionalized fear in Highlands Peru, Oliver-Smith (2005) shows that people in particular communities have historically created symbolic images of social reality to represent negative forces and powers both within and outside their communities. This argument is critical for this chapter because the images the people in Mulanje have created and attacked depict such perceived negative forces and structures. While as the western vampire legend would represent the living dead, the Mulanje bloodsucker represents the living objects which continue to inflict pain on vulnerable communities. One critical picture reflected in the figures to be discussed below is the coherence of the meaning of bloodsucking, in all cases there are connotations of blood, dispossession, extraction and violence whether of their stories and moral sense of the world, or of their water, their oil, their land, their wages or of their upward mobility versus what is probably not just hardship but downward mobility. The paper will argue that these are not just discrete incidents, but part of a worldview of precariousness.

The paper proceeds by firstly discussing the symbolic meanings of bloodsucking and later expounds on the concrete material conditions and relations that birth these symbols. This research argues that there are three levels of discourse used to articulate and identify bloodsuckers within the discourse of bloodsuckers. The first one looks at external forces where the narrative and practice identifies bloodsuckers as those people and forces perceived as symbols and forces of injustice, oppression and a source of precarity. The second one locates bloodsuckers as internal forces and people abhorred by communities based on strange wealth accumulation, association with external forces, and them being symbols of internal oppression. These two are also perceived as concrete flesh agents of blood but rooted in a narrative and practice of symbolic representation. The last characteristic of bloodsucker discourse is one that locates them as a mysterious cult that pounces on its victims at night to literally suck their blood. The protests were organised around this cult figure, yet attacks were carried within the two concrete levels already mentioned.
On external forces, attacks were extended to external forces such as state, journalism, development and tea plantations as synonyms of 'life sucking' and the other that looks at external forces ., and these are discussed below.

The *state as a sucking machinery*: as much as targets of bloodsucking protests varied across different villages, state agents were still some of the most vilified figures. Community protests in different areas targeted state security agents (Police and Judiciary officers) and local government officers. A closer look at issues behind these attacks revealed a closer link between inconsistent public service provision, unnecessary tax charges and service fees, and corrupt state agents with the story of vampires. One would be tempted to label such protests and emerging narratives as what Alexander (2010:25) deems 'rebellion of the poor', where protests are 'about service delivery and against uncaring, self-serving, and corrupt leaders of municipalities'. While in South Africa these protests were a direct attack on the state, Mulanje residents have ingrained their narrative within the bloodsucker movement. For instance, Agnes from T/A *Mthiramanja* reflects on these issues in a clear attack of the state:

> "*Police men have become very dangerous; they have never liked to visit our villages until recently when we have had to solve our own problems. They defend the enemy, they suck our blood together. They connive with*

> *our traditional leaders and the government to protect those that kill us. What kind of government denies that its people are under attack? When you go to the local courts, they make you pay unnecessary charges. They connive with court officers to steal from poor people at the Boma (district offices). They arrested my son this other time for a fight he had with his friend but we ended up paying them all the little we had to have him released. They sucked all our little savings".*

Drawing mainly from social media reports, Chingarande's (2016) account approves Agnes' assertion. It seems beyond having elements of service provision protests, communities also protest services which come after they have already initiated collective community responses to their own problems. The state becomes a 'sucker' not just through its corrupt officers but also due to its ill-timed provision of services. A youthful leader of a certain community based organisation argued that:

> "*Some services by government just come in order to discredit initiatives by locals or to steal the glory of local initiatives".*

It is such a discourse generated by locals around service provision, theft, corruption and self-enrichment of public officers that is linked to narratives of bloodsucking and attacks on public officers. For instance, anonymous letter Z argues that: *"*even our poverty is taxed, then the police still take a lot from us, the hospital takes from us, the government takes from us all the time, attacking a policeman or court official shouldn't be news…that is what you do to a mosquito that sucks without getting full, punish it with more blood".

Interestingly, the state as a sucking machinery is not only found in the narratives discussing issues of theft, corruption and service provision. Interviews in some villages also pointed towards a different angle of state 'vampirism'. Other villagers have linked their stories to the foreign debt the government owns other foreign governments as a sign of being sold out. In some communities, people have heard stories of how bad the country continues to borrow from whites (I guess both Chinese and the West) and how community members are meant to pay the debt through their blood. This is both the depth mistrust in their state but also the mist surrounding globalisation. One respondent in T/A *Mkanda* commented that:

> *"Rumour from the city actually says we are a sold out nation….we have been sold to the Chinese. My brother works in the city with a Chinese company, apparently the government borrowed a lot of money from these foreigners and we are paying through our blood".*

To others, bloodsucking is a phenomena attached to the hand-outs politicians give in the rural areas, especially the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Take for instance what this woman said:

> "*It seems bloodsuckers come to homes of people who have received free things from these politicians… The woman attacked in this village had just received a free chitenje (wrapper) and cell phone just a week before she was attacked".*

In these communities, foreign debt and free gifts as used by politicians have become tools through which their blood is sucked.

These dynamics are close to what Ashforth (2014) illustrates about politics and bloodsucking. He argues that some rural Malawians have linked the bloodsucking and organ harvest stories to foreign debt repayment, especially concerning the farm input subsidy program. Malawi experienced serious stories of bloodsuckers between 2008 and 2011, during late Bingu WA Mutharika's reign. Ironically, this was the same period when the country experienced for the first time a bumper harvest in maize, due to the funds the state borrowed to fund the Farm Input Subsidy Program (Chinsinga 2014). It is worth noting that the cases and stories of bloodsucking resurfaced in 2014 to 2018, the late president's brother is the president during this period. No wonder people like Mr Niwati in the rural areas have actually argued that:

> *"The Mutharika's love to borrow from evil outsiders, they always use our blood as collateral".*

This narrative only shows that to some extent, bloodsuckers are deemed to work with or for politicians, narratives concerning them are rooted in an expansive ethical criticism of how political power functions in Malawi. As McNally (2011:15) shows, these stories 'condense and reimagine a range of concerns and dissatisfactions in a bodily language of depletion, dispossession, theft, and death for profit'. One would also argue just as Dingley (2018:4) shows about the *Mumiami* in Kenya that attacks on public officers are part of a critical discourse about the 'intermediary figures

who mediate, restrict, and redirect flows of value between home and away and, at the same time, are representations of that discourse; both in metonym and metaphor.'

Sucking journalism: as articulated in the preceding chapters, journalists were some of the alleged blood suckers. Two freelance journalists have died between 2010 and 2018 while several others attempting to pursue stories in rural Malawi have met mobs of angry communities (See VOA, 2019; Nyasa Times, 2018; BBC, 2017; Zodiak, 2018). Contrary to the popular commentary that journalists are attacked due to the ignorance of communities about the modern equipment used by journalists, people in Mulanje mostly viewed journalists as 'vultures' of the living. While at the macro level of society the powerful media was part of the actors shaping the discourse of vampires, at community level the same media was at the centre of a different discourse shaped by communities. To these, the media has visited rural areas to pounce on their struggles and shame the rural people. Journalism is viewed as an extractive profession, extractive in the same sense as bloodsuckers. Van Dijk (1993) articulates how discourse is a double edged sword that is appropriated not just by the powerful in society, but it can also be shaped by those at the receiving end of it. Journalists have been viewed by community members in Mulanje as uncaring people who extract stories for transaction at the expense of rural people. There is a strong case by rural communities against journalistic tendencies which have commodified rural life and misery. One would argue that in the rural discourse, journalism has been symbolically understood as a sucking institution.

It is also worth noting just as Gwashu (2012) notes how the modern media has commodified 'the cultural and the rural', the narratives of communities in Mulanje also show discontentment with how the same media has commodified their emotions and feelings such as fear, anxiety and pain. For instance, one respondent stated that:

> "*They (journalists) just see us as stories...our fears and pain of the bloodsuckers is what sells in their papers".*

Broadly speaking, power is also at the centre of community narratives of bloodsuckers. Communities have objectified journalists in a particular notion that allows them to attack such 'sucking journalists'. For instance, anonymous letter x indicates such tendencies as seen here: "We are powerless when we appear in newspapers or television stories, their voices (journalists) go far and are heard by everyone, their stories become the truth….they were indeed attacked, but we were

just writing our own story". Such articulations only show how communities have perceived journalists and journalism as complicit in the whole process. It is also clear that probably on their own journalists would not be viewed in such a way, but within the big picture they begin to be viewed as associates of the state.

Extractive development projects have also become institutions of target by bloodsucker protests. The paper refers to them as '*sucking development projects'*, one case of such is the pilot Mulanje Mountain water tapping project. This project was initiated by the government of Malawi in 2014 and it is still in its pilot stages though drilling activities have taken place at minimal levels. One senior traditional chief, mostly viewed as custodians of tradition and culture in rural Malawi (Chiweza 2009) had this comment on the project:

> "*Our ancestors live in this mountain; white people connived with the government to extract water and our spirit out of us. Anyone who disturbs the mountain for personal gain is actually disturbing our foundations, this project is transferring water from our Mountain to people in the city, we benefit nothing"*.

It is worth observing that these articulations are not just about extraction but also the denigrating nature of outside and insider relations between not just whites and blacks but also between urban settlers and rural dwellers. Just as Carmen (2017) shows, the construction of language around environmental violence especially in the extractive industries has a discursive and cumulative effect on how communities describe and understand violence on their communities. Mulanje communities do not just abhor extraction of their water to the city at their expense but passionately challenge the spiritual impacts of the project on their ancestral privacy invasion.

One last category of external forces oriented discourse is the *sucking white race and plantation work*. White plantation managers were also victims of bloodsucker protests. The media and the state mostly indicated that the white managers were attacked out of unnecessary community anger which was mostly influenced by primitive fears of the local people. This narrative was plausible especially in the international media. However, data on this issue indicated a totally different picture of the motives behind attacks on white managers. As communities have drawn from a long history of land and life dispossession to describe outsiders who come to threaten community livelihoods and resources. To these communities, the white managers represent a white capital that

continues to exploit them on tea plantations. As Pellegrini (2017) shows on white oriented attacks around Bolivian petroleum plants, indigenous people directly relate their daily misery with not just the continuous exploitation of their minerals, but also the continuous exploitation of labour. However, one of the white plantation managers' pseudo named Mr Thomson articulated in one of the interviews that:

> *"These are unnecessary attacks, communities mistaken us with the other white people involved in the water tapping project, this is the only issue at hand…Hhhmm the environment and nothing to do with our factories"*.

However, as much as the white plantation managers dismissed the issues of labour and their role in the bloodsucker attacks, one plantation worker's union leader had a different view in this interview:

> "*…….you really think people are fighting many battles around this community? No no….there is only one battle. We fight for us, and our communities join because our sweat and blood is buried in these plantations. We have been sweating blood on this land, it is our land by the way, our ancestors gave these whites thinking we would benefit. But what do we see now? These people continue to suck life out of us. They suck from you until you retire and dump you for the youthful ones. These are not friends, they are enemies….the new white bosses that have come are apparently earning too much money, all our black salaries are eaten up by their fat white salaries. Look at this, when you see me here, it is by the grace of God, I am a dead man walking, anytime they will dispose me these people. So when our families hear these stories, they feel sad, sad because this bread we win from our work is not sweet bread, it is bitter, it is from our dripping blood. We drip (blood) for the white bosses and people see. This work is dangerous, we wake up at 3am every day, they load us on trucks to the field like dead wood, we sweat and blood under the sun, we live our lives counting snakes in the field, and we live by the grace of God"*.

The counter argument by the union leader shows that just like in Bangladesh where the ILO (2016) report highlighted issues of ancestral contracts and their role on the collective organisation of workers, tea plantation workers have similar attitudes in Malawi despite imbedding their discourse in wider community struggles. Precariousness of tea pluckers on plantations has become an integral part of the bloodsucker protests by targeting white planation managers. For example, workers in Mulanje district do not define salary scales as a rational economic process, rather they view salary variations based on which race takes more from the other and in whose territory. They have also viewed their work as one that 'sucks life out of them'; they also do not just sweat, but sweat blood which they gossip to be propelling machinery. In *Speaking with Vampires*, Luise White (2000) argues that 'vampire' stories in the context of exploitative work and modernity were used by native migrant workers to make sense of colonial power. The experiences of plantation work as 'sucking' by tea pluckers is similar to what Ashforth (2014:853) illustrates that African workers in Nairobi who made 'their way to towns, mines, farms, and plantations, found much to please and worry them in these strange new worlds where the work must at times have felt like having the life sucked out of you'. The study however argue that stories of bloodsuckers and attacks on 'white bloodsuckers' in Mulanje is one of the ways through which locals are making sense of precariousness.

As much as the external allegories described above are one way of looking at how communities have described targets in a complex set of relations, the broader literature on the violence surrounding bloodsucker protests in Malawi has evidently ignored one important aspect, the 'social faces' of individual victims (bloodsuckers). The protests have left several people dead (Mkhalipi-Manyungwa, 2017), yet literature has only documented statistics of the dead and not showing the real stories about these people.

The study traced at least ten victims of the hunts in order to avoid falling into the trap of reproducing 'statistics of the dead' (Mieldman 2004:22). Apart from showing social biographies of people hunted by protests, this section will also try to locate the second symbolic figure within what I would call an *internal forces oriented discourse*, where bloodsuckers are individual members of the community, their attack signifies the complexity of the issue at hand. Some of the individuals are linked to the same institutions discussed earlier, such links also highlight that one cannot merely categorise the community discourse surrounding these protests into rigid

classifications. However, the paper argues that the individual oriented discourse is more pronounced in the precarious livelihoods and relations.

*Suckers of other people's opportunities***,** the data reveals that unequal access to skills and economic opportunities within communities was one of the schemas that informed communities in identifying some people as bloodsuckers. Such a schema became more pronounced when youthful business men prospered within a context of economic misery and unemployment amongst the youth. Take for example *Jamini* (pseudo), who was turning 35 the month he was killed. He was born and raised in one of the villages that experienced the bloodsucker protests and violence. *Jamini* was fortunate enough to have married a woman from the city who connected him to white research consultants. He was picked to undergo a training in micro finance in the city of Blantyre, given a loan to start a business (which grew quickly) and later enrolled for a distance learning course in the city. His case reveals how unequal access to economic opportunities for the youth in the communities becomes bedrock of suspicion. His case echoes what happened in old Transvaal where black youth lynched unprecedented numbers of witches believed to have been eating up their opportunities but also those conniving with the apartheid state. The income shock theory illustrates this scenario by showing that most victims of occult violence are a scapegoat by families and kin, while both Miguel (2005) and Delius (1996) also show the same pattern. For example, in an interview with a woman we shall call Zione, she signified this about *Jamini*:

> "*Jamini was attacked because he did not just do well but he did well in his business in the village during a time when most of his age mates were unemployed".*

However, the attacks on bloodsuckers in Mulanje show a different pattern of relations. The victims and their accusers are linked not just through kinship but also histories of abuse, oppression and dispossession. As for the same case of *Jamini*, a different interview with one of the community members revealed the following:

> *"Aaaah in 2009 in a case where a white man bought land from a helpless widow by force….he was the agent of white people displacing us in this village using their money ….he was also working for politicians and NGOs because he knew how to speak English".*

.This case shows that as much as unequal access to economic opportunities in this community was a valid issue, the violence used on *Jamini* could also be linked to the sour land deal he was involved in years back. It seems that access to land through state related land re-distribution projects or private purchasing deals is an issue that continues to haunt communities in Mulanje. Furthermore, suspects of bloodsucking are not just individuals that prosper when the collective is suffering as was the case of *Jamini*, in some cases suspects are people whose close relations have had misfortunes coincidentally at such times when suspects breakthrough in business or careers. Class formation and wealth accumulation are processes that are taken for granted in the urban areas, in rural Mulanje these two become central tenets of suspect identification.

4.3 Precariousness beyond work: Different types of precarities

Ashforth (2014:856) argues that "when people gather at a borehole in rural Malawi and talk of bloodsuckers, they are not, unbeknownst to themselves, engaging in a critique of neoliberalism or speaking of vampires as a way of commenting on their marginalization within the global order or reflecting on the ironies of dependence on the largesse of outsiders for survival". Rather, these communities define, conceptualise and understand their lives in a complex framework that only emerges from their lived experiences, expressing fear, anxiety, hopelessness, pain, disbelief, vulnerability and lost hopes. They are not discussing metaphors about global social structures, rather they are discussing about real people, real figures, real issues, death of people they know, and concerns of family members and friends being killed by either bloodsuckers or mobs. Their discourse on precarity especially point at other elements of precarity such as sexual precarity, employment precarity, cultural and spiritual precarity, political vulnerability but also vulnerability and threat that comes due to the changing nature of work and wealth accumulation in the 21st century. Whether it is on the plantations or in the community, precarity to them goes beyond labor struggles or just economic relations. This narrative about precarity emerging from the bloodsucker protests goes beyond what Standing (2009) stipulates in terms of precarity being understood around issues like labour market security, employment security, occupational security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security and representation security. As Duell (2004) shows, most definitions about precarity focus on employment precariousness. The understandings of precarity in Mulanje district signify the importance of looking at precarity not just based on work but also insecurities of how capital has captured life beyond work as articulated by Barchiesi (2012). In Mulanje, there are variations in terms of how the youth, women and men define and articulate issues of precarity,

consequently these understandings also affect how these groups relate with trade unions but also their appropriation of the bloodsucker protest space.

Work on ancestral land and spiritual precarity: Interviews on the plantations show differing patterns in the articulation of vulnerability (precarity) in this case. Workers on tea plantations have deep seated beliefs of work beyond wages especially because plantations are on their ancestral land. These workers do not just come to work in search of a wage; they come to work because it also offers them the opportunity to pay homage to their ancestors who "sleep" on this land. The consequence of these understandings of injustices experienced at the hands of capital, are also viewed beyond individual workers. These workers believe work injustice is injustice not just to them but also ancestors who sleep on this land. Poor wages are not just wages, they are spite to the "sleeping elders", and there is therefore a close link between notions of the dead and the living into the wage relations. The western literature on precarity as seen from Standing (2009) perceives this concept from a purely economic and employment relations aspect, on the other hand we have these plantation workers who believe in the wage but their relation to it is rooted in a cultural and spiritual discourse. Precarity in this case becomes both an economic and spiritual concept. It is also worth noting that this spiritual wage narrative is mostly dependent on age, workers above the age of 50 and near retirement often hinted at this concept. In this edited excerpt, an elderly man we shall call Mr *Phendula* had this to say*:*

> *"We do not have separate lives, you see us here as workers but in this community….home and work is the same thing. Our organisers from the branch come here and try to look at us as workers only, they keep us in long meetings as long as the meetings are here at work they don't care about anything else. But you see now, me especially I am home and work at the same time. My ancestors sleep on this land, these plantations are built on our ancestors. When I come to work, I come to pay homage to them but also earn for my family. My family is here with me in spirit, last year our families joined us to strike. They were chased by comrades from the branch, these comrades do not understand that when I am here, it is not just me. When these bosses pay us peanuts, they are disrespecting everything about us, our women, our children and ancestors".*

While the ILO (2016) shows how the Bangladesh estate workers remain precarious and do not have collective bargaining structures due to being structurally isolated, the workers in Mulanje have used the same ancestral contract beliefs (where work on plantations is understood within a narrative of ancestral land ownership that was leased to plantation companies) to fight for respect through community wide bloodsucker protests. As the interview shows, workers have deliberately blurred the boundaries between work and the family through the discourse of ancestral contract in order to mobilise support beyond the factory. To some extent, the general bloodsucker protest movement could be argued to be another indication of the politicisation of precarity as argued by Neilson and Rossiter (2008).

Sexual precarity: Interestingly, the same plantation workers (female) produce a totally different understanding of their experiences about precarity on the farms. These women argue that '*We suffer as wives, mothers and workers*'**.** Theirs is what I would call *sexual precarity***, t**hey posit that precarity is not just about wages, they perceive fighting for better wages as just one small side of their lives. They go to work as mothers, in-laws, and wives, beyond these issues these women feel insecure not just from bloodsuckers in the community but also husbands and male colleagues at work. Their narrative equates bloodsuckers with their husbands and fellow male workers at the plantations. Mrs *Liwondeka* (pseudo name), has worked in the plantations for 12 years and here is her definition of precarity:

> *"You see what these male comrades think, as long as we fight for a better salary then our problems are all gone. Women we are suffering not just as workers but also as mothers, wives, in-laws and everything. We go home with our little pay, our husbands drink with it and on Monday we come back to work knowing we have nothing not because we are not earning but because our enemies are many. I need to take care of my family, my church and several other things. We are vulnerable in this area, our girls are being raped by their teachers, our bodies are touched against our will by both bosses and colleagues in the dark of the field, and we have to fight that every day at work. These men only come to fight for a better pay. We come to fight many things and as if that is not enough, we have to go back home and fight again while these male workers go out to drink and forget these problems. And you see, now with these*

bloodsuckers, they are only attacking women, why? They are afraid of men. So this is not an attack on our community, it is an attack on women".

In understanding gender and precarity in artisan mining industry, Bond and Kirsch (2014) implicitly show how vulnerable women are in some sectors. Their vulnerability transcends the wage relationship workers share with employers , as articulated in the interview above, one can argue that women fight not just capital but also several other obstacles. While male comrades focus their battle on the wage, they are both allies and enemies of the female worker on plantations. To an extent that trade unions are viewed as obsolete tools by women on plantations due to patriarchal tendencies ingrained in such institutions. An anonymous letter by a female plantation worker actually said: "unions are for men, they meet odd hours to strategise, and they mix funny jokes mocking women in those meetings then during the day they smile at us". No wonder only 6 women from the several tea pluckers claimed to have belonged to a trade union before.

Living on the edge: Whilst working men and working women had their own understandings of precarity, communities viewed precarity as everything. For instance, a certain farmer we shall call Mr *Chikafa* actually said:

"*We live today without dreaming about tomorrow, anything can happen anytime to people like us*"

From escaping hunger, escaping vampires, escaping the police, escaping dry hospitals (hospitals without drugs and doctors) and living to see their children lose identity. Their articulations projected what I would call precarious lives or precarious societies, they live on the edge of not just the edge of income but everything. Barchiesi (2012) hints at this concept in utilising the Foucauldian perspective where insecurities are believed to emerge from the power of capital in capturing life beyond work. In this case, as much as capital has 'hopped' from New York to Johannesburg as argued by Ferguson (2017), communities as far as rural Malawi can still experience the impacts of its "smell". Such communities argue that they live on the edge of life, they fear everything, if spared by bloodsuckers, they are afraid the state will eat them up, if it is not the taxman then it will be famine, or the police, and dry hospitals. Precarity in this case is what Mole (2010b) would call "precarious societies".

Soft work versus hard work: As Ashforth (2014) shows, rural Malawi just like the city enterprise

mostly relies on foreign aid and enterprises. These economic processes coupled with a 'hopping' neoliberalism still produce limited opportunities to a particular class whose fortunes rely on fast and service oriented enterprises such as rural insurance agents, mobile money businesses and others. Just as Geschiere (1997) shows, such quick and suspicious class formation processes are the bedrock of occult suspicion in rural Africa. For communities in Traditional Authorities *Mthiramanja* and *Mkanda,* one critical aspect came out about the characteristics of suspected vampires, "*chuma chongobwela osatuluka thukuta ndikhasu*" (wealth created without sweating on "real" work like farming). These dynamics correspond with what Kishindo (1993) found in Malawi on how soft work threatens not just subsistence agrarian economies but also pose a threat to rural life, power and consequently erode traditional power structures. Such differentiation is more pronounced between the youth and the older generation in Mulanje. One traditional leader who used to work on plantations signifies this argument in this interview:

> "*Somehow our tradition is the one questioning how most of these boys are acquiring "soft" wealth. We understand people that sweat on the fields farming, we can all tell where their wealth comes from when they construct a house or go to purchase a motorcycle in Mozambique. There is real work (factory or farming), But most young people just run around without sweating ,they accumulate interests from nowhere and they become rich, they stop respecting elders ,they live city life in the village , we end up losing our authority to these boys …money talks yeah?"*

One can tell that agrarian economies and the traditional authority of elders are all threatened by the modern rural financialisation or 'soft work'. McNally (2011) would agree here that unlike Ferguson's idea of a hopping capital, rural areas are also experiencing key symbolic registers such as these in which they experience capital threats and commodification of their lives. However, opposed to him, Mulanje communities have found a way to articulate their experiences of capital through the symbolic and material figures of bloodsucking and precariousness. Indeed, the occult should be a subject matter of any field in social sciences as it is the pinnacle of rural life not just in Africa but also other people of the South. The definition of what is real work then becomes the born of conflict and suspicion. The modern financial economies (soft economies) have then been interpreted as sweat less and suspicious. These jobs are mostly viewed as a front for other unscrupulous activities behind the scenes. There also seems to be dissatisfaction by communities

though not overt, about how these "soft" businesses actually enrich few rural individuals at a speed which does not correlate with "real" work. Such "soft" businesses have brought fast profits to those that engage in them yet most rural Malawians have slim chances of making it to prosperity through their small plots used for subsistence farming. The country has eighty percent of its population languishing within circles of such farming hence I argue that watching few people create quick monies outside the "prescribed" methods does not only become a platform of suspicion but also a threat to the already precarious communities.

However, such articulations are in sharp contrast with how the youth have understood their involvement in modern work. For these young people, they strongly think their modern livelihoods have born envy and jealousy among the older generation. For example, one young respondent *Vivikanani* (pseudo) states that:

> "*These old guys are full of jealousy because we young boys are achieving more at a young age. Most of us have achieved before the age of 30 what took them 50 decades, for example I bought a motorcycle from Mozambique and bought a piece of land just last year. These things could take 60 years of their lives to acquire".*

These variations are not just about how people understand precariousness in these communities, as seen earlier , these can become a concrete base for the articulation of a discourse that informs identification of bloodsuckers. Subjectivisation of the bloodsucker narrative emerges and is sustained in these complex relations and spaces.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the different dynamics that informed bloodsucker identification in Mulanje district. It has been argued that the matrix of bloodsucker identification was ingrained in deep echoes of precariousness, precarity that transcends the generic definitions. Significantly, the chapter has also showed that discourse was at the centre of the creation of the 'vampire legend', this necessitated communities to also recreate a discourse that would subjectify particular individuals as targets of attacks. These attacks would in the process reveal the functions and meanings of the bloodsucker narrative to these rural communities.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONTESTED MEANING OF PROTEST AND VIOLENCE

5.0 Introduction

Several accounts have been written regarding the bloodsucker protests and the violence that defined it. These accounts represent what one would call 'misguided narratives' of violence and protest (Chikoja, 2018), they leave many unanswered questions around what violence means within the context of the bloodsucker protests but they also confuse protests and 'just mobs'. On understanding protests, the media mostly labelled the protests as impulsive vigilant activities carried out by unemployed youth. On the other hand, violent protests was an over-used cliché meant to explain anything that came out of the bloodsucker protests, notwithstanding the fact that violence can be a fluid concept referring to several social processes perceived and explained differently by particular people in specific contexts (See Paret, 2015; Alexander, 2010; Alexander, 2013;Von Hodt, 2013a). This does not mean this chapter has answers to these misgivings; rather, the paper would like to unpack and reflect on these contestations by using concrete examples and perspectives from the participants of both the protests and violence in Mulanje district.

The chapter starts with an overview of the nature of protests and the blurred lines they present, then it later adapts the Fanonian concepts of domination and liberation to understand how communities appropriated or related around the issues of violence. Liberation is only understood within the context of resistance as understood by Sharman (1996), where violence and protest are used as a symbol of objection of the status quo.

5.1 Conceptualising violence: The meaning of protest and violence

Though community protests have been understood in different ways by different authors, there is usually a consensus on most community protests as collective actions carried out in particular local areas by community members (See Paret, 2015; Naidoo, 2007; Von Holdt, 2013a; Von Holdt, 2013b). The post-Apartheid South African literature on protests, especially after 2002 tends to focus on the service delivery protests. In Malawi, the protest literature usually focuses on electoral related protests that usually take place after every presidential election since the country attained democratic rule in 1994 (Mueller, 2018; Meinhardt and Patel, 2003).

Karl Von Holdt (2013a) proposes an interesting correlation between democracy and violence, he posits in his idea of a violent democracy that the post-Apartheid South African social order shows how democracy and violence have become symbiotic especially in a context of deep inequality and poverty. Paret (2015: 108) builds on this argument to state that such an analysis allows us to argue that violence and democracy are actually 'mutually constitutive', where democracy creates necessary conditions for the use of violence by both ends of the social strata (the rich, the poor and powerful). Sharman (1996) demonstrates that protests and violence can also reflect resistance of the subaltern, where protesting and exercising violence basically the message of rejection in repressive systems. Sharman's ideas also show that such resistance rooted in violence and protests are actually a reciprocation of how perceived sources of injustice have also dominated the oppressed (*ibid*: 64).

For Malawi, Mussa and Masanjala (2015) showed that inequality has increased over the recent years in a context where 50 percent of the population is living in extreme poverty. At the same time, Chinsinga (2008) and Booth *et al* (2006) all show a mixed picture of Malawian democracy, where a democratic 'neo-patrimonial' state' is very dependent on a repressive traditional authority system. The paper will argue in this chapter while building on Von Holdt, Paret and Sharman that the violent bloodsucker protests have to be understood within a framework of how resistance to forces perceived as sources of precariousness, oppression, displacement (physical or economic) are fought by communities.

On domination, liberation and resistance, the argument being raised is that the bloodsucker protests functioned in a complex space of relations where several groups such as but not limited to the state, security agents, traditional leaders, white plantation capital, local business rivals, youth and women all utilised violence in varying proportions to advance particular interests within the protest space. It will be argued that the powerless and the poor (women, unemployed youth and exploited plantation workers) appropriated violence as a tool for resistance and transformation as they expunged feelings of inferiority and vulnerability to strengthen their collective voice and gain respect from both local and national leaders but also white plantation capital. On the other hand, the powerful (politicians, state and its security agents, traditional authorities and local business men) appropriated the space of protest violence to legitimate positions, scare off competitors, and

control communities.

It is such a picture of complexity that has made the public to view the bloodsucker protests as neither service provision oriented nor electoral related. The absence of an 'ideal type' image of these protests is more pronounced when one considers the inside dynamics of these protests, which reveal more contestations than similarities. This argument does not (at least to these communities) discredit the validity of the concrete conditions of fear, anxiety, insecurity and exploitation communities live in.

5.2 Contesting the meaning of protests: "Vigilantes are different from protests"

Why did communities gather and what was the meaning of their gathering? These questions would be a good starting point in understanding the nature of the protests in Mulanje. In agreement with what Ashforth (2014) found in a different district about bloodsucker protests, communities in Mulanje district also showed that when they gathered at boreholes to talk of bloodsuckers, their concern was about family members, colleagues and members of the community being killed. To them, these are issues linked to their insecurity, doubts, anxieties, anger, vulnerability, and powerlessness besetting their social and individual conditions. As argued in the previous chapter, these concrete conditions and fears are also being shaped by precarious material conditions. However, what starts as a mere conversation in several villages grows to become a wave of social unrest signified by attacks on suspected bloodsuckers.

In their narrative, communities protested the lack of concern by the government and their leaders over their insecurity and vulnerability to increasing cases of mysterious blood sucks. They had evidence of people whose blood had been sucked though each time these people went to the hospital, medical personnel insinuated their sickness was never because of blood sucking but malaria. District health records for Mulanje showed that 6 patients in selected dispensaries reported to have had their blood sucked, though lab tests for all the cases showed other medical problems (Chikoja 2018). The district police office recorded more than 24 cases of protests linked to bloodsucker issues.

What is puzzling about the protests is how different villages and individuals understood the meaning of the protests even within the bloodsucker narrative. For instance, in *Phanisa* village, one young person (laid off from tea estates in 2016) saw the protest as one that would send a

message to the white plantation managers that they cannot continue to deprive young black people of jobs. He categorically said:

> *"I have my own views but here we are fighting for jobs, but even my employed friends are also here, beyond jobs we are all insecure with these bloodsuckers".*

In the same village, a village headman vehemently denied the legitimacy of the protests, he said:

> "*Sometimes these people raise real issues but that only happens in particular days maybe. .mostly they are just angry impulsive and jobless youth"*

These articulations are coming from two persons with differing social positions it is worth noting that in the local discourse of bloodsuckers, traditional leaders were perceived as both compromised and complicit. Before discussing the issue of social position, it is puzzling to note that the same protests were also viewed differently by different people, such that the definition of a 'normal protest' seems different from what communities differentiated as 'vigilantes'.

A closer look into what the traditional chief said earlier about legitimacy of protests reveals that the legitimacy and illegitimacy of protests depended on several other factors including but not limited to: how far the protest includes the interests of particular powerful groups or individuals, to whom is the anger of the protest being directed, where and when is the protest taking place and who is leading the protest. Elaborating on these dynamics, two community members from *Ntokhole* village had this conversation with me:

> **Respondent 1**: "*when you are marching to the chief's courtyard, make sure you do not involve enemies of the throne …otherwise the leaders will not listen to your grievances"*
>
> **Respondent 2**: "*aaaaa! actually the best way for them to recognise your protest is to start talking bad issues about the enemies of the chief…then you know the authorities will join you that day".*
>
> **Respondent 1:** "*They (chiefs) are not different from the government ….if you want the police or the DC (District Commissioner) to listen to come here…start*

badmouthing the opposition leaders and appreciating the ruling party…they will come quickly and protect you as you protest against bloodsuckers".

Respondent 2 : "*But also….the youth are killing people at night …these boys are on the loose, we can't join those activities …they are illegal at night …but if they do that during the day together with us it is okay ,not the night vigilantes".*

Social positions clearly influenced how different actors understood the protests, these positions also had a way of defining particular interests of different groups within this space. Mgomezulu (2012) shows in a study on education inequality in Malawi how social position has had a significant effect in shaping community interests and perspectives around several issues. I argue here that social positions within the strata of Mulanje social order had a large influence on how various categories of people understood the protests. These positions entail gender, age, economic position, business interest, type of authority (traditional or political) and others. Alexander Gallas's argument that 'protests are not neutral spaces' nor 'united marches' makes sense in this scenario (Gallas 2013). Apart from social positions influencing how protests are understood, the bloodsucker protests actually became a contested space where power relations were produced, reproduced and effected in varying ways.

Some interviews especially in *Mwachande* and *Phanisa* portrayed an interesting image of how the protest space produced and reproduced different power relations and roles of different groups involved. Worth noting is the fact protests evolved into two different characters in almost all the villages concerned. Protests (carried during the day) were understood as different from vigilante activities (carried at night by the youth). These two structures also presented different roles and responsibilities to those involved. These dynamics are different from what Gallas (2013) posits on strikes. He argues that main actors usually have full control of the protest space as they advance their agreed upon interests. In the bloodsucker protests, the protests adopted a discursive pathway where the interests of different groups played out at different times in the period of protests. In one interview with a senior police officer, he said:

"*These protests are out of our hands, we knew at first the key leaders of these protests, but of late…they are no longer in control, the protests have a life beyond them".*

One youth member who was involved in the night patrols also agreed with this analysis:

> "*you see…the patrols and the bloodsuckers we meet have changed, at first we were all in control but today you hear other youth are catching their own bloodsuckers without some of us knowing…it's strange yeah?"*

While these vigilantes and protests seem antagonistic in the space of the protests, it is also noticed that they became mutually constitutive as time lapsed. Although it is one of the major ambiguities of the bloodsucker protests, the link and the roles of protests and the bloody vigilante activities is scarcely differentiated in the public discourse and other academic commentaries (see Chikoja, 2018; Bandawe, 2017; Nyasa Times, 2018). Commentary on the protests is mostly dealing at surface level with the vigilante activities carried out at night by the youth, yet I argue that there is a deep rooted link between the two. The nocturnal actions of the youth are not mostly in a vacuum of the general protests. Those bloodsuckers hunted at night are usually names discussed or alarmed by women during the day. As highlighted by Chikoja (2018), the daylight protests are mostly peaceful and dealing with service delivery issues, political dissatisfaction, labour exploitation on the plantations, sexual abuse issues and other issues. Two anonymous letters come to my mind at this point, the paper labels them letter Y and W:

> **Letter Y**: "*We sometimes met new bloodsuckers at night, but mostly….we had an idea of these bloodsuckers. Women had a clear idea but we needed to discuss these names and see the validity of the stories, mostly the stories were true".*
>
> **Letter W**: "*I had one experience where a suspect my mother talked about was exactly what other boys were also briefed by their mothers. ..But we did not hunt this one…as we were patrolling this other night we heard a cry from some widow's house…when we arrived there we found the same bloodsucker trying to run away".*

Two things are clear from these letters, firstly, women discussed suspected names during the day in the peaceful protests while their sons or brothers took over to 'manage' the suspects at night. This argument is cemented when one considers the power wielded by youth who were involved in hunting down bloodsuckers, provided community night security. I noted from interviews that women were involved in almost all the 7 cases where the youth had successfully captured the bloodsuckers. Secondly, one cannot separate the youth oriented vigilante activities from the community oriented protests. These are mutually constitutive structures that have their activities intimately linked. This is an observation the media and public discourse have missed, they have

dealt with the night activities without understanding the dynamics and relations between the two processes.

While the state, local authorities and those from far disparaged the vigilante activities, locals within Mulanje had a different view. To these locals, the night powers of the youth were not just about the security from bloodsuckers. Significantly, this was about the 'symbolic violence' which the state and authorities have always unleashed on them, this space provided the opportunity to also make them pay back (See Von Holdt, 2013a & Paret, 2015). A Mrs *Thengulo* gives an interesting account to support this narrative:

> *"We feel safe with our boys patrolling communities at night, they are our own and they cannot eat us like the police and the chiefs have done before. The state has put us in this predicament, they have opened us up to foreign bloodsuckers and they have also killed our sons. We are safer with our boys, they can't sale us out, and they are paying back to anyone who has attempted to rob us".*

Her use of the terms 'state', 'police' and 'payback time' are convenient in revealing the story behind the attacks. While people like her felt safe to have the youth patrol communities. One of the police officers at the district office lamented that:

> "*The night patrol boys have become so powerful that communities no longer respect us, actually we have become an enemy. They forget we are just working for the government we also come from communities".*

While the police thought they had lost moral authority over communities to the patrolling youth, traditional leaders felt the youth generated dangerous authority that was not just 'another authority' but directly threatened their legitimate authority. One of the traditional leaders suggested that:

> "*The youth have become disobedient, they have become a force utilised by enemies of the throne, we'll put a stop to this nuisance very soon and they will pay for it".*

Again, each section of the power structure was protecting their interest in disparaging the youth activities. Such articulations made by authorities also filtered into the public discourse to produce a totally different version of the protests to the outside communities. Youth were the enemies,

while the police and the traditional leaders were viewed as victims.

But as earlier discussed, precarity also played a significant role in these protests. The material conditions of these protests have been exhaustively discussed in the previous chapter. Just to demonstrate what was discussed earlier, I will try to show how unemployed youth not only used the space of protests to reproduce the same violent power relations they have had to live with under traditional authorities and state security agents but also how they made 'a livelihood' out of the protest. Two issues are important in these dynamics, firstly, While Dingley (2018) shows how the youth in Kenya mobilised and financially benefited from the *Mumiami* stories by virtue of their connection to a more powerful patron, the youth in Mulanje eked a livelihood from the *anamapopa* stories by becoming patrons themselves. Secondly, while Ashforth (2014) wonders why the youth volunteered to become the face of these dangerous events, I argue that their initial volunteerism turned into a lucrative trade by their ability to sustain the stories and the 'fear of bloodsuckers' in the community. Two young people we shall call *Yohane* and *Kamtinkhiwa* explain in this interview:

> **Yohane**: "*The youth were not just protesting as most people might think, those boys were making money from their night jobs. They are not stupid to stay outdoors in rains and the cold, you see of course it's not like they had proper jobs during the day…most of them were just loafers so spending the night outside was not an inconvenience to them. When it was starting, they were just helping as any responsible young person would do then some chiefs were mobilising money from households to help patrollers buy food at night, after that we only started to hear reports from the night patrol boys that they encountered a bloodsucker at night …no evidence at all. They managed to keep the whole community in fear for a long time just for them to make money. They were making good money in fact, some got married with that money, and some have processed passports to go to Theba"* (South Africa)
>
> **Kamtinkhiwa:** "*The boys have spoken for us all, the issue you must know is that these elders don't respect us, we are jobless in this community, we fail to marry or we marry miserably because we have no incomes. We cannot say anything in our own communities, our job is to drink and smoke? What I wrong with them*

creating their own job as we are always told to do? Let the boys make money for once!"

These community articulations correlate with other literature on the role of unemployment and precariousness on community mobilization (see Hobson & Goldin, 2015; Oviasogie, 2013; Chinsinga & Kayuni, 2010; Chukwurah, 2015).

As it has been implied in most of the arguments above on the nature and organisation of the bloodsucker protests, and their evolution as portrayed in the previous chapter portrays various contestations and coalitions. In a more pronounced design, it will illustrated here some deep contestations that engulfed the space of bloodsucker protests. As Saunders *et al* (2005) show, protests are social processes on their own, they can either capture interests of groups but they can also simultaneously be captured by particular groups of protestors, this does not exclude strikes. Ashforth (2014) hints on how communities understood the bloodsucker stories by linking it to political processes, he however does not comprehend the detail of how politics shaped and captured these protests. One of the ruling party ward councillors in Mulanje had this view on politics:

> *"These protests are disturbing the image of the boss (president Mutharika), we have intelligence that most boys are pursuing their own interests. They are being sponsored by the opposition to de-campaign the president. We also do not trust the motives of our member of parliament from this area, he has issues with the party and he trying to score some political mileage by siding with protestors, this is nonsense, why is he not condemning his people to stop this? most of us believe he is working against the government by not condemning what these people are doing. Yes, we might have bloodsuckers around but they are not who these boys are chasing, they are chasing wrong people. The opposition has sponsored the "real" bloodsuckers and the youth to cause unnecessary problems. When the government gets angry, it will come and smoke out the real monsters together with these youth".*

In the same view, the state president, Peter Mutharika addressed a political rally for his

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Lilongwe on 8th October 2017 ahead of the parliamentary by-elections on 17th October 2017. In his public speech he condemned the violence and said:

> "*We know the opposition parties are behind these attacks but are also in the forefront spreading the messages to tarnish the image of my government, I ask you (DPP youth paramilitary wing) not to retaliate, we know how to deal with them".*

This apparent politicisation of the bloodsucker protests was not mere political rhetoric, as on the ground people took these messages seriously. One political commentator noticed in the media that the impending by-elections took a twist soon after these presidential remarks, '*Mulanje experienced serious political violence where the ruling party supporters unleashed pangas and knives on opposition candidates and followers while citing their president's remarks' (*unknown, January 2018*).*

Apart from the political violence, one woman we shall call *Anabetha* noted that:

> "*The landscape of the electoral campaign just changed after the president said those words….ruling party politicians used his remarks to abuse the opposition while the opposition mobilised communities to continue protesting and shame the government*".

These processes only signify Dingley's arguments that stories of the occult in Africa can be both a myth but also a representation of modern political visuals.

As Chingarande (2006:44) shows, communities are not a homogenous group, nor are protestors. The protesting groups and night patrollers also consisted of people from plantations being led by their leaders. These workers used the community to formulate a kind of social movement unionism that depended on bloodsucker protests to resist an exploitative capital. They utilised the existence of community based organisations such as 'The People's Land Organisation' under the leadership of Wandale (a vocal land activist) to fuse in labour issues in the bloodsucker and land reclamation discourse. When asked about how Wandale's organisation has been involved in the protests, one union leader from the plantations said:

> "*Actually he visits our communities, he is also the face of youth struggles in this community…we cannot separate land from work".*

These actions by Mulanje plantation workers problematises literature that has viewed plantation workers as passive zombies, the living dead, and 'lacking all aspects of human personality due to sucking working conditions' (see McNally 2011:211). One would argue that these workers do not show any attributes of a workforce lacking in agency, identity and memory. These workers fused their issues into the protest space to fight for their plight upon realising that different groups were also claiming their stakes in this space. Beyond this agency, it is also imperative to observe how these workers also appropriated the protest space just as politicians did. An edited interview I had with one white plantation manager only signifies how these things played:

> *"These are compromised protests, innocent communities have been misguided by disgruntled boys from the plantations. We have details of everything that happens in this area, it's the union leader who tries to score points by using his people outside the community. You know how things are in rural areas, sometime, these boys take advantage of people's problems and feed them with lies. They have been trying to turn us against people in the communities…But it is not possible".*

However, in one focus group on the plantations, workers discredited this argument by articulating that both white and black managers do not understand and respect the history of the land on which the plantations are located. They argued that their salaries, their work and conditions tied to plantation work all discredit the value of workers. Their land has become a slaughter house, they think that their ancestors are ashamed to see them suffer in silence and not raise their voices. To these workers, the community cannot be separated from the planation work. For instance, one group member said:

> "These *people force us to work even when one of us is bereaved, this is a community …we can't be seen working while our colleague is mourning …now if you don't report for work on such a day, they deduct your salary".*

This combination of community and work life is also intimately ingrained in the narrative of the bloodsucker protests.

It was not just politicians and workers who hijacked the protest space, other internal structures also did the same. For instance, individuals who are a threat or a pain to some rural political and

traditional authorities became targets within an organised network of those that hunted bloodsuckers, especially the youth groups on night patrols. One FGD had a consensus on how community structures of power had actually turned community members against each other. It was learnt that in some cases, suspicion became a two way traffic between community leaders and members. For example, one woman narrated this:

> *"These night patrols have really helped to give us a sense of security at night especially with the darkness we face in our villages. You can only go out to piss because you know the boys are nearby. The boys are innocent, they are working for the common good, but sometimes their night patrols are dangerous to us community members. I heard that a business man who is also close to the chief in some village actually pays the patrollers to go and rough up people who do not agree with him. There was a Burundian man in this village who was threatened in his own house by these boys, he was doing the same business as the other man. Apparently, these patrollers are also protecting the chief from those that accuse him of shielding anamapopa (blood suckers). It is difficult nowadays to say views which are against our leaders in public meetings. You become an enemy and the dogs that bite you patrol at night" ("dogs" referring to night patrollers).*

In a related case, a respondent had this to say about a victim known as Mr *Chizete* (pseudo name), a man who was killed in the middle of the night by an angry and suspicious mob:

> *"Apparently he was attacked because he had gone to meet certain girls in their hut without any prior arrangement. When he knocked on the door, the girls thought it was a bloodsucker and they shouted for help. The youth on night patrols quickly showed up and sorted him out"*

A short visit to the village of the deceased produced a totally different story, revealing concerns and suspicions of foul play from local leaders. One of the villagers asserted that:

> *"Aaaaaaaaah that one was not a normal death. Apparently the unknown youths who attacked him as a blood sucking vampire were paid by some unknown leaders in the area. He was attacked not because he was a blood sucker but because he refused to do some dirty work for some of the leaders. He was being forced to divert people's attention from problems people have with the running of some community project and the funds that were eaten (embezzled) by the village development committee and the ward leader. But you see, they have no jobs and no business so selfish people are paying these youth to achieve their selfish goals'. At the end of the day, the boys have started tormenting us instead of protecting us…some of our friends have lost their sons because of these internal conflicts"*

Such cleavages of distrust and community politics found their way into the vampire space. The platform became a space where scores against enemies were settled. Most importantly, these dynamics also show the looping effects of violence on its actors. As Auyero et al (2013) illustrate, violence can function as a double-edged sword, and it can empower the poor but also tear them apart simultaneously. The interview above shows how communities became fearful of the youth they initially entrusted to protect them.

5.3 The contested space of violence: Moral logics of violence

As already articulated in the introduction, violence can mean different things to various categories of people, it can be subjectified but also objectified, and it can also be a dynamic, fluid, and complex concept that is usually misunderstood (see Wieviorka, 2011; Von Holdt, 2012; 2013a; Alexander *et al*, 2014). In relation to the bloodsucker protests, the media portrayed the protests as one of the most bloody and disruptive episodes the country has ever experienced save for the ones linked to the fight for independence prior to 1965 and democracy in 1994 (Daily Times, 2017; Malawi Nation, 2017, 2018). In Malawi, these commentaries have used the concept of violence to refer to processes such as vigilante killings, burning of suspect houses, stoning of cars by protesting crowds, chasing and stoning of police officers, stoning of politicians, chasing and killing of

journalists, and killing of white plantation managers (Nyasa Times, 2016;2017; Bandawe, 2017; BBC, 2017).

While the media and academic commentaries have invested their efforts to understand the bloodsucker violence by only looking at community actions, Human Rights Watch Malawi (HRWM) was one of the institutions that viewed the past bloodsucker violence from another angle as seen here:

> 'The 1999 to 2002 vampire protests and vigilantes had been characterised by high levels of state violence on its citizens. The police invaded privacy of families by entering homes unannounced at night, they used unlimited force to abduct, arrest and torture suspects of vigilantes, they used tear gas, and rubber bullets to retaliate protester's violence. The state had used the constitution to punish innocent protestors, bar them from conducting peaceful protests using archaic legislation' *(*in Booth et al 2008:15).

I think it is such tendencies of reducing violence to particular actions of protestors that have informed policy level decisions which have misfired or backfired. In these protests, the definition of violence was mostly obtained from the discourse articulated by the media, and as already observed, its definitions were all elite protective while blaming the poor. Paret (2015) identifies these elite protective definitions as those that look at interpersonal attacks, property destruction and social disruption. Such definitions have a tendency to only locate violence in the actions of protestors and the powerless. The second part of the definition used by HRWM isolates another important element of violence this section will discuss, structural or symbolic violence (see Therborn, 2013).

Firstly, to demonstrate how violence was used as both a liberating and resistance tool, the section will dissect several interviews to understand how communities used and understood violence within the bloodsucker protests. These articulations present ambiguities of the definition of violence as used in the media, and other academic commentaries over the bloodsucker protests in Mulanje.

"They only listen when we slaughter one of them"

There seemed to be a utilisation of violence by communities just to get the attention of the state but also local officials. Violence was used in this case as a communicative instrument by communities to either their chiefs, local government officers or the president himself. However to

understand this communication, one needs to understand that the 'hotspots' of bloodsucker protests were Mulanje, Thyolo and Zomba districts, this is where the previous 3 presidents have come from (Bingu Wa Mutharika, Joyce Banda and the incumbent Peter Mutharika). Ironically, the public political discourse has viewed these districts as the most favoured by development projects due to their link with the presidency. However, such a discourse seems misguided by the political positions educated people from these districts are given, the business tenders urban based people from these districts access and several other benefits (See Kajoloweka, 2018, Wandale, 2017). Interviews in these rural areas revealed these rural dwellers think they are not close to the president or their urban based "relations" who access such benefits by being virtue of 'presidential kinsmen'. For example one traditional chief stated that:

> *"Here we are dying for nothing, people in other districts think we are benefiting from state resources just because two presidents have hailed from here…but the truth is we don't benefit. We are victimised by other districts for nothing. …But you see, these protests have made the president and his people to visit us quite often and see our problems. Maybe this helps yeah?"*

It is important to note that this traditional chief is also an enemy of the protesting community, yet he still thinks these protestors are right to use violence to invite the attention of the rich political kinsmen. As much as the opposition parties took advantage of these protests as observed previously, it is worth noting that the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the presidency did not lose the support of the grassroots as seen from the results of the 2017 ward and parliamentary by-elections where they won the seats in all concerned communities (Daily Times, 2017). It seems just as observed by Alexander (2010:33) in South Africa during the Zuma era service delivery protests, opposition to the local leaders did not mean destabilising or unsettling the presidency of the DPP. Such observations are fundamentally correct when you review the presidential visitations prior and after the by-elections in these hotspots. The president received overwhelming support from these communities each time he visited them during the bloodsucker protests. The only political figure from the ruling party chased and stoned by protestors was the then minister of agriculture George Chaponda. He was embroiled in a huge maize corruption scandal at the time he visited this community and protestors were apparently

calling him a "*namapopa*" (Daily Times, 2017:2), one would then understand why protestors vilified this minister.

Amplifying voices from the wilderness

It would not be wrong from this perspective to argue that communities used violence or 'slaughtered one of them' just to get the attention of the powerful kinsmen from the palace who had apparently ignored them. An official from one of the local human rights organisations in Mulanje said:

> "*These people have realised their voices are only respected when they burn, fight, kill or stone the state, we are rearing dangerous tendencies in this community, let us give them a non-violent voice".*

What would a non-violent voice entail in this case? Interviews with women in three villages identified a non-violent voice to them would entail issues like; development without begging, leaving the environment alone, dealing with sexual abusers swiftly in the courts, not waiting for a pregnant woman to die while walking to the hospital before releasing an ambulance. For the youth, a non-violent voice entailed; providing jobs, no corruption when providing state loans to rural youth, and the state to control white plantation managers. These are both calls for a decent life but one can also identify elements of resistance within them. As the liberation perspective would argue, violence is utilised in this sense as an alternative to participation in other democratic channels but beyond that Sharman (1996) would also perceive it as a form of resistance to symbols of exploitation (See Von Holdt, 2012, Von Holdt, 2013a; Paret, 2015; Chinsinga, 2013).

The utilisation of violence in the above argument is seen as one that calls the outside kinsmen or powerful patrons to come and listen to the community, but what about violence on outsiders such as journalists? They are not in the category of powerful kinsmen nor powerful patrons with resources to distribute. There is need to think of something different that would necessitate such violence within the bloodsucker protests. Derby (2008) shows that Mexicans and Puerto Ricans got angry and helpless for losing the meaning of the *Chupacabras* to the powerful global media. One would argue that this anger did not materialise into violence on journalists maybe because the global media and capital were both intangible and too far to be 'touched'. However,

narratives of Mulanje communities show that this was also a battle for their voices, anger, anxiety and fears to be presented without alteration in the media. A young man we shall call *Mduliro* said the following in one of the interviews:

> "*When you deal with a journalist, everyone hears it…but it is beyond being heard, it is about teaching these people a lesson. They are given access to see us yet they distort our voices, the real voices only come out when they are 'sorted' (attacked)*".

The local media was tangible in their case, it came to hear their stories and take pictures of them for trading. This sucking media was so close that violence on it was just about 'teaching them a lesson'. Just as Nhlema (2011) shows; the voice of the poor can mean a lot when represented in the 'front pages' of both print and electronic media. There are several accounts that have linked the issue of participatory democracy to a free media and representation of the marginalised in such. The media is only perceived as the fourth estate by virtue of its powers to represent voices of the powerless (See Nhlema, 2011; Kasakula, 2017; MISA Malawi, 2016). However, Mulanje residents have perceived the media as a 'vulture' that has turned on the powerless it was initially meant to protect. To them, attacking such an institution is not just a lesson but amplifying a voice from the wilderness as argued by one retired teacher in this interview:

> *"We have a voice here, but I think the voice has really been loud recently. For us the poor, our chiefs usually speak for us but they are also sold out. Journalists have always been good in speaking for us…especially when politicians don't want to hear us….but now even the journalists are siding with politicians. But after the youth teach them a lesson, our voices are amplified from this wilderness"*

"How can it be violence? Bloodsuckers are not human"

In Mulanje, bloodsuckers are perceived as beasts or monsters that pounce on defenceless communities. From this narrative, communities have negated the humanity of bloodsuckers by viewing them as supernatural immortals to be dealt with by force. Communities have also argued that bloodsuckers have unleashed more emotional violence on communities than communities have reacted. In this case, the fear of being sucked by vampires is more tormenting than the actual violence enacted on these beasts. As Ashforth (2010) shows in *Human Security and Spiritual Insecurity: Why the Fear of Evil Forces Needs to Be Taken Seriously,* the psychological torture of

living with spiritual insecurity is rated as worse by African rural communities as compared to war. A woman we shall call *mai Banda* articulated in one of the interviews that:

> *"Waking up, surviving the day are the most happy parts of the day…but going to bed is the most tormenting feeling in our lives, you never know if you will wake up or not, you are not sure if your kids are safe".*

One elderly man solemnly said:

> *"It is better for our friends in the hospital, it is safer to sick and sleep at the hospital than living in our community in these dangerous times".*

Such is the extent of psychological torture in Mulanje within the context of bloodsuckers that their understandings of violence are not linked to what they do with suspected "immortal" bloodsuckers but their welfare. One young person involved in the vigilante activities said the following through anonymous letter G:

> "*It is not a question of life or death when dealing with these monsters; we deal with them to give peace to the community. The peace of our people is the most important".*

On another note, just as other African communities have negated the humanity of suspected witches before unleashing violence, Mulanje protestors have also done the same. They reject to acknowledge that the violent encounters that emerge from the belief in the supernatural can be defined as violence (On dynamics of negation see Ally 2015; Douki *et al* 2003). One youth had this to say:

> *"How can it be violence? Blood suckers are not human, these are spirits among us. Noooo violence only works between human beings. These have no life, they pretend to be human but when the youth meet them they just see bloodsuckers. I think it doesn't matter if they know them or not, the issue is that at that point they are no longer human to them".*

Therefore, the meaning of violence in its literal sense does not make logical sense to these communities, such narratives of collective community violence call for a reconceptualisation of violence: As Ashforth (2010) illustrates, issues of human security including precariousness should

go beyond the objective because and communities are insecure in various ways. The communities in Mulanje would agree with Roxburgh (2014:4) that acts 'which may seem to be violent to those outside the logic of the occult may be sometimes preventive or protective in nature'.

While the Fanonian liberation concept as used by Von Holdt and Paret looks at the formal democratic channels as being alternated by the use of violence, the violence against 'immortals' is liberating in a different way. Violence and liberation in this context operate within a moral logic framed by painful experiences and relations within communities as articulated by Hart *et al*. (2014:14). To these communities, killing a bloodsucker brings relief as one community member articulated:

> "*Just know that freedom from these things is more than the other freedoms you people cheat us with, it's not easy living with evil spirits"*.

One would argue that this liberation is spiritual yet experienced in both the physical and social. This is exactly what Hart *et al.* (2014) meant by saying that such moral logics mediate how violence is enacted on those believed to belong to the occult economy in different contexts, allowing people not to define violent acts as violence.

"Why are protests only violent when we fight back?"

In one particular community under T/A *Mthiramanja*, communities argued that there should be a distinction between violence that occurs naturally and one that is a retaliation to state brutality. As earlier said, property destruction took place in some protests, but protestors only viewed it as retaliation to the police use of force. As Paret (2015) shows, most protests only turn violent when protestors are pushed by the presence of state security agents. Other literature on electoral violence in Malawi shows that most violent protests start peacefully until the police or the army execute force to manage the crowds (Mueller, 2018; Kanyongolo, 2014). One youth group leader said the following on protests and violence:

> *"There are two kinds of issues we should talk about, one is the reckless and dangerous use of force by our police each time citizens protest. Two is the force protestors use to retaliate to such provocations. Like in March (2017) protestors were peaceful but the police force pushed them to start stoning and burning things. Communities are now getting used to stoning*

in order for politicians to intervene; it seems protests are only violent when we fight back".

Such articulations only show how violence by communities is actually provoked by the state in some instances. Once more, it is such social disruptions to order that protesters think is more helpful in dealing with authorities. These examples also signify the idea that violence could be a channel of liberation especially if viewed in the context of a democracy and a repressive traditional authority within precarious conditions. These examples also reveal that there is something located in the state narratives of violence that further complicates the understandings of violence within the locus of bloodsucker violence. It will be helpful if this section also deals with such configurations of violence which is identified as structural or symbolic violence in other literature (see for example, Von Holdt, 2013; Paret, 2015). I will try to argue below that structural violence was mostly associated with configurations of domination in bloodsucker protests. The state, traditional chiefs and security agents used such violence in a fashion that both concealed violent intentions but also overtly exercised such.

"Environmental violence is violence on our bodies"

Women in Mulanje have perceived the state as the most violent institution through the discourse of development. They mostly argued that the extractive business linked to the water drilling project on the mountain is as good as violence on their bodies. Interestingly, women equated the definition of violence to not just vigilante activities but also any activity that has a direct negative impact on their bodies. Their argument is that the state has used "development" to subject them to displacement and torture. One cannot take such concerns lightly, especially that history teaches us the African states have in the past used the development discourse to subject populations to unforeseen violence through forced immunisations, displacements, invasion and extraction (See Rossi, 2004b; Gwashu et al, 2002; Munasiirei, 2007). The discourse of infrastructural development within rural development has allowed the state in this community to offer extractive rights for water that would be transported to Blantyre city through huge pipes. As James Ferguson shows through the case of Lesotho, such a development discourse could have discursive effects, but generally it is a discourse that enables the state to govern and legitimate its position over citizens.

Women in Mulanje have curved narratives that point at elements of structural violence by the state on its people. There are two different narratives emerging from three distinct generations of women. The first category of the old generation links environmental violence to matrilineal identity, authority and the threat such violence has. For example, when asked what this meant, one old traditional woman had this to say:

> *"We are being attacked everyday by the authorities that are meant to protect us, you see…we carry the clan names here, our names are linked to this land .We are mothers of the land and hold it for the next generation…the project up there (at the mountain) will be piercing this land without our consent, the land is being undressed in the eyes of everyone".*

Different from this is a second category of mid-thirties, a group of women that is exposed to literature on sexuality and violence. They articulate not only a strong case of sexual violence that is intricately linked to environmental violence but also bloodsuckers. For example, a woman I shall call *Abiti Mbumba* argues that:

> *"There is a shift and resistance growing in these communities, we women are saying it as it is, we directly experience the impacts of this violence, degradation and destruction on our bodies. From where we stand, there is no separation between this land, its production and our reproduction. These are ancestral struggles for land and livelihood, being violated by the government and business community. Every drop of water from this project will symbolise violence. The city will drink from these violated bodies. Watch out the consequences".*

This group also links the narrative of environmental violence to sexual violence, a kind of violence that according to these women requires more of our attention than the violence on bloodsuckers. To this community of women, environmental violence is an equivalent of rape. See for example how this woman argues her case in an anonymous letter:

> "*How do you kill and poison the fountain that gives life to its people? Why suck it for business? This mother mountain is being turned into a prostitute who offers her body to everyone. Tourists come here its fine because they just see this mountain, but drilling it and sucking from it for*

> *business? It's an abomination. You undress this mountain, you undress all women in this area, and they are covered by this mountain. You poison this mountain, you poison this community. This is the violence you and me should be talking about, not the one which concerns people who are in the forefront undressing your mothers. We are being raped by this project. If it were up to me, I would slaughter these bloodsuckers without any remorse*".

A common theme from these reflections is the idea that environmental violence cannot be separated from the other forms of violence, and they locate the state as an engineer of this violence. To the state, this development is a symbol of progress and development under the leadership of the DPP government. It is such a structuring of knowledge that allows the state to exercise violent agency on the population and rendering their resistance as unthinkable and archaic. For instance, one of the ward councillors labelled women protesting this environmental violence as '*enemies of development'*. He said at a public rally that:

> "Be careful *with these groups coming to tell you we cannot drill water because we'll damage the environment. Do we eat the environment? We eat development"*.

In the same vain, the DPP government has identified the Salima-Lilongwe water tapping project as central to winning the central region votes in the May 2019 watershed elections (Chikoja, 2018). In this case, the state is using the discourse of development to normalise environmental violence but also as a tool for domination.

"The state selects who should protest and who should use violence"

By the time I entered communities for field work, the government through traditional chiefs, the police and district office had established community level task forces to deal with the issue of bloodsucker protests. Several groups of protestors had been included in these forums to discuss and contain the situation. These task forces eventually developed and implemented community guidelines to govern protests and grievances of community members (Mulanje District Commissioner report, 2018).The guidelines stipulated that communities needed to obtain protest certificates or permission from the police and traditional authorities. They also stipulated that a verbal notice ought to be given seven days to the date of protests containing reasons and the

leadership of the protest (from interviews on 25 July, 2018).When asked why the guidelines were not controlling the protests, one community organiser said the following:

> *"You see, that forum was designed to stop our voices…they have also tried to profile leaders of protests through those guidelines. The requirements for a protest to take place are just ridiculous, why should you seek permission from someone you are protesting against? It is a non-starter. Actually that forum has increased community frustrations and anger"*.

Another community member alluded to this and said the following:

> *"That grouping is useless; people just go there to eat. Their guidelines allow the state to select who to protest and who should use violence and on who. The police have been allowed to patrol and ambush us, the boys have disappeared…they can't even walk at night in their own communities. The result is what you see now, more chaos"*.

The recurring theme in this analysis is what Foucault would call governmentality. In this case, a process embedded in profiling of individuals (leaders) involved in the protests, giving them new knowledge to self-govern, rooting them in a new regime of rationality and subjecting them to new forms of power and domination (see Ebrahim, 2003; Foucault, 1984; Rossi, 2004). Communities realise that these forums have only become an extension of state power to easily manage them. As much as the guidelines emerge from a consultative process, it does not reflect universal truth because it is an outcome of a discursive process initiated by the state whose singular purpose is to govern. One of the senior police officers also stipulated in an interview that:

> *"The forums will eventually work, they have already helped us teach communities what a violent march is, how different is it from a genuine community protest…these will eventually help us contain the situation"*.

As Beresford (2014) articulates, such notions of violence from the state could be used to counter dissent, legalise the use of force by the police, and justify killings of protestors in the hands of the state security agents. However, communities also felt their violent methods were less evil as compared to what the state security forces have done against protesting community members. This narrative of state violence is against Auyero *et al* (2013) who shows that with increasing

democracy, society has 'increasingly moved towards interpersonal violence. The democratic state still remains highly violent in some societies such as Malawi but also South Africa (see Von Holdt 2013a). However, this literature in Mulanje still agrees with Auyero especially when one sees how communities have increasingly exercised violence, violence is indeed "becoming increasingly available to various actors in society" and not just an exclusive resource for the state and elite (*ibid:* 3). For Mulanje communities, there seem to have occurred a process of violence decentralisation from the state to communities as observed in this interview by one youth leader:

> "*Aaaaaaaaah this is very important, you should already know that the police kills, shoots, kidnaps our brothers for interrogations, they beat without mercy, they implicate innocent boys just to force the truth out of people , they intimidate, they blackmail and they do everything evil on this earth. We see and experience all these things, why would anyone call what we do as violence? NO WAYS! We prefer to call it sharing responsibilities. Each time we have issues and call the police from the boma, they always come late or complain about fuel or shortage of personnel. So this issue of anamapopa should not concern them, our boys are handling it well, just like the police"*

This interview also shows that it is not just decentralisation of violence that has taken place, but also it is the "skewed, contradictory and intermittent law enforcement" services that only come to the poor when it is convenient to the state that have increased the institutionalisation of violent orders as argued by Arias, (2006b: 324 in Auyero, et al 2003:15).

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented and discussed contestations surrounding the bloodsucker protests but also the violence that embroiled it. It is clear from the discussion in this chapter that there are contestations to how violence and protests were understood within the context of bloodsucker protests but also how protests were carried out. The state, the media, the public and communities

in Mulanje have all defined and approached the protests and the violence in Mulanje depending on particular discourses they are exposed to. These contestations emerge from the ignorance of the dynamics that shaped the protests but also informed violence. The chapter has argued that violence was utilised by both ends of the social strata for resistance, liberation and domination.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by summarising the major findings and arguments raised in the two previous chapters**.** This conclusion mostly deals with specific theoretical issues aligned to the findings. As much as the conclusion mainly deals with the findings and arguments raised in chapter 4 and chapter 5, it will start by providing few insights into methods issues.

6.1 Methods and ethics

Methods are an important part of any research project, there is literature that has presented methods as a linear process where details and stages of the research process are made to look like a linear object and highly dependent on the pre-field planning exercise (see Chikosa, 2014; Lee, 2008). To the contrary, I have argued in this study in line with Corbin and Strauss (2015) that every study including this one presents fresh and unique challenges but also opportunities whose onus is on the concerned researcher to exploit to the advantage of the process. The field work for this study was not a linear process, it was a back and forth process challenged by community ideas.

As much as research planning provides necessary preparation for the field, researchers ought to think on the spot while in the field in order to achieve particular results. For instance, the use of a field assistant as an extra person in interview rooms to provide narrative security to female respondents helped the study to collect substantive data from a category of responds whose voices became critical in understanding some critical issues discussed in this study such as roles of women in the protests and violence. Once more, exploiting the ideas suggested by our cab driver on using community anonymous letters also became a watershed moment in freeing the community from shackles of fear.

However, this study has also observed that such innovations in the field could be limited by university requirements on ethics. It is my considered opinion that some ethics requirements are made from the 'ivory towers' of higher education institutions. To some extent, doing research in the field of violence actually felt like being a subject of university ethics committee governmentality tactics. While Zipin and Brennan (2010) in their work on '*repositioning university governance and academic work'* argue that state fiscal policy changes has evolved to become a tool for governing university work, I would also argue that even within the university setup there

seem to be tools that could shape and affect both positively and negatively the process of acquiring knowledge. This is the first area I would suggest further studies to be done by scholars on how research ethics committee methods and requirements could actually produce a discursive process against the process of acquiring knew knowledge.

6.2 Theoretical and practical conclusions on the bloodsucker discourse, precarity, protests and violence

Based on the several interviews conducted in Mulanje district, the study has argued that the bloodsucker narrative has become an important part of what and how precariousness is understood to entail for communities. While Fanon (1963) has argued in the later chapters of the *wretched of the earth* that violence on and belief in the occult is an indication of displaced aggression by the subaltern (instead of fighting the oppressor), this study has argued otherwise by showing that the occult has become intricately tied to how power, resources and social relations are transacted in African communities. Precarity cannot be separated from the actions of the oppressors, the discourse on bloodsuckers is a representation (not in mystical terms) of what society and life has become as also argued by McNally (2011).

The study has also showed that the discourse on vampires as shaped by the media and the state as opposed to bloodsuckers was meant to weaken, divert and trivialise the concrete fears and experiences communities went through in the hands of their traditional leaders , the state , the police , exploitation on tea plantations , journalists and the elite in Mulanje district. To the contrary, communities appropriated their own discourse to stage a symbolic struggle of resistance against such forces. However, the study has also warned against using such a simplistic analysis to think that this discourse was only about outside forces. As observed in the targets of bloodsucking attacks, the study has illustrated that the community discourse became discursive such that it empowered particular groups of the subaltern to create new oppressive structures against their own people. A good example was on how a Pentecostal pastor but also the youth appropriated the discourse and protests to achieve personal interest.

While arguing that the bloodsucker protests could be understood as both a protest around a society that is increasingly falling into precariousness, the study has also attempted to show that it is limiting to view precarity from the confines of employment. As much as Standing (2011) provides an important ideal type of the precariat, the bloodsucker protests also project a society that is

precarious beyond work. Precariousness transcends employment and the 'race to the bottom' thesis, where the bottom is based on working conditions and sagging labour movement (Silver, 2003). For communities in Mulanje, they live at the margins, their lives have always been in the bottom, both the bottom of plantation work but also development projects, power and politics. Even within the confine of employment, precarity is understood differently by different groups, women perceive sexual precarity at the hands of male workers as more critical than wages. To male workers, wages are important but their perceived importance is more amplified when they think that their ancestors are also victims of this waning wage and dilapidating working conditions.

McNally (2011) shows that workers in plantation areas have become dead zombies , the living dead, and lacking any agency to forge new futures in a neoliberal oriented society. However, the findings of this study for plantation workers in Mulanje show the contrary. Tea plucking workers have appropriated the bloodsucker protests to advance labour issues in a social movement unionism approach, where they have rooted community concerns into labour and vice versa. They have also done this by deliberately advancing a discourse that blurs the boundaries of work and community to engage issues of ancestral land dispossession into a narrative of precarious work. This is a living work force, ready to appropriate opportunities presented by community protests to also achieve their interests. Such examples approve what Agarwala (2013) also presented on Indian *bidi* workers and how they have used citizenship and not employment status to claim new demands from the state and employers.

On protest and violence, the study has discussed the conflicting matrix of relations and forces that shaped but also got shaped by the protests. For instance, it has been argued that protests are not a neutral space or carry standardised interests of protestors, rather, they are a conflicting and dynamic process reflecting different interests of groups and individuals involved (see Gallas, 2013) For the bloodsucker protests, different groups appropriated the protest process to wage factional wars, score individual points while at the same time committing to the ideals of the general protest. As much as the protest and violence in Mulanje reveal elements of a resistance against the oppressors, the paper has also argued that violence has looping effects at both ends of violent subjects and objects. While the youth were empowered by the community to exercise violence against bloodsuckers, they later turned out to reproduce the same oppressive structures and tactics

communities were fighting against. Fanon's thesis of violence as a tool for resistance is questioned when one also sees how these new oppressive structures by the youth actually loop back to haunt the same society they tended to protect.

The study has also concluded in agreement with other literature that violence has to be understood as a dynamic, multifaceted and contextual process (see Von Holdt, Paret and Alexander). Violence and protests have been understood differently by different groups in society, more especially within the time of bloodsucker protests. As presented in chapter five, it has been a tool for resistance to some sections of the subaltern, it has also been a tool for domination within the same group but also by the elite. The study has also presented how the protests also empowered and disempowered different groups simultaneously at different times of the protests and violence. Women were empowered in a particular context to utilise violence through the youth on bloodsuckers, while in other contexts, the same women were haunted by the violence that was later exercised by the youth on fellow youth. Some women lost their sons, such women viewed and interacted with the two kinds of violence differently. While violence on bloodsuckers was supported, the one that claimed the lives of their sons was abhorred. Such experiences continue to question the instrumental definitions of violence as portrayed by Fanon. Violence can empower and disempower the same people in different contexts.

While Delius (1996) and Geschiere (1997) show that women have mostly become victims of occult related violence , dynamics in Mulanje show that women were an empowered force within the community relations of bloodsucker violence, they shaped the violence and protests in an unquestionable way. However, this does not negate the fact that they also became victims in other contexts as articulated earlier. The picture of bloodsucker violence portray that violence cannot be reduced to simple and particular typologies, as much as this is important for analytical purposes. Violence takes various forms and shapes but also shapes other forces as it moves in different angles.

6.3 Conclusion.

This chapter has summarised the major arguments raised in the study but also illustrated the multifaceted nature of the bloodsucker protests and violence. Most importantly, the study contributes to theoretical arguments on protests and violence as tools for resistance but also domination. Within this, the study and the chapter show that the matrix of protests and violence can be appropriated differently by different groups in states of violence. Understanding states of violence ought to go beyond face value indicators of violent triggers, there seem to be deep seated issues and relations that define and shape violence but also simultaneously get shaped by the same violence. The study has also questioned universalising theories and ideas of violence by illustrating that particular social areas could produce and reproduce bifurcated pictures of violence as observed in the bloodsucker protests and violence.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM- FGDs

Title of Research Project: Protesting unemployment and precarity? Mapping community perspectives on the 'vampire' protests in Mulanje district, Malawi.

Name of researcher: Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata

a) I hereby agree to participate in the above mentioned research project (focus group discussion) and I have understood what participation entails.
b) I agree that the interview may be tape- recorded and transcribed.
c) I agree to keep as confidential what other participants have said in this focus group discussion.
d) The data gathered in this study are confidential and anonymous as far as possible with respect to my personal identity, unless I specify otherwise.

Participant 1 signature ----------

Participant 2 signature ……..

Participant 3 signature ……..

Participant 4 signature ……..

Participant 5 signature …….....

Participant 6 signature …….

Participant 7 signature ……..

Interviewer's signature ----------

Date ----------

APPENDIX B : PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Dear Sir/Madam

Good day,

My name is Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata and I am a Masters student in Labour, Policy and Globalisation at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating the dynamics of the a*namapopa* protests that have been taking place in Mulanje district. The aim of this research project is to explore the social economic and political dynamics of the *anamapopa* protests in Mulanje district.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group discussion. The conversations will involve questions on the protests, violence and your understanding of these. The interviews will take around 30 to 40 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device. The recordings will only be used for this research and later kept in a safe and protected place.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no penalties for not participating. You may wish to withdraw from this interview at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. Although I might know you through this interview, my notes will not include your identity and the final research report will be completely anonymous. Both my notes and final research report will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation. Please note that I cannot guarantee you anonymity and confidentiality in this focus group discussion. However, you are advised not to share with others what people said in this focus group discussion.

If you were involved in any violent acts during the protests, please note that you should not say anything that incriminates you. When speaking about the protests and violence, concentrate on the general protests and violence and not specific incidents, and please do not reveal if you participated in the protests or violence. If you need some support or counselling following the interviews / focus group discussion, the village development committee counselling team is available free of charge.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details below. If you have any queries or concerns regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non- medical), telephone +27 (0) 117171408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata, 1708970@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor - Prof Garth Stevens, Garth.Stevens@wits.ac.za , +27 (0) 11-717-4535

- Prof Karl Von Holdt, Karl@yeoville.org.za , + 27-11-717-4456

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Dear Sir/Madam

Good day,

My name is Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata and I am a Masters student in Labour, Policy and Globalisation at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating the dynamics of the a*namapopa* protests that have been taking place in Mulanje district. The aim of this research project is to explore the social economic and political dynamics of the *anamapopa* protests in Mulanje district.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. The conversations will involve questions on the protests, violence and your understanding of these. The interview will take around 30 to 40 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device. The recordings will only be used for this research and later kept in a safe and protected place.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no penalties for not participating. You may wish to withdraw from this interview at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. Although I might know you through this interview, my notes will not include your identity and the final research report will be completely anonymous. Both my notes and final research report will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation.

If you were involved in any violent acts during the protests, please note that you should not say anything that incriminates you. When speaking about the protests and violence, concentrate on the general protests and violence and not specific incidents, and please do not reveal if you participated in the protests or violence. If you need some support or counselling following the interviews / focus group discussion, the village development committee counselling team is available free of charge.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details below. If you have any queries or concerns regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact my supervisors as per contacts below:

Prof Garth Stevens, Garth.Stevens@wits.ac.za , +27 (0) 11-717-4535

Prof Karl Von Holdt, Karl@yeoville.org.za , + 27-11-717-4456

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata, 1708970@students.wits.ac.za

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM- INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Title of Research Project: Protesting unemployment and precarity? Mapping community perspectives on the 'vampire' protests in Mulanje district, Malawi.

Name of researcher: Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata

a) I hereby agree to participate in the above mentioned research project and I have understood what participation entails.
b) I agree that the interview may be tape- recorded and transcribed.
c) The data gathered in this study are confidential and anonymous as far as possible with respect to my personal identity, unless I specify otherwise.

Participant's signature ----------

Interviewer's signature ----------

Date ----------

APPENDIX E: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

SOSS Human Research Ethics Committee
Clearance Certificate

Protocol Number: GLUU18/05/01

Project Title: 'Protesting unemployment and precarity? Mapping community perspectives on the 'vampire' protests in Mulanje district, Malawi'

Investigator's Name: Mr Daniel Kabunduli Nkhata

Department: Labour Policy and Globalisation

Date Reviewed: May 2018

Decision of Committee: Approved

Expiry Date: June 2020

Date: 17 July 2018

Head of School _____

Professor Mucha Musemwa

CC supervisor: Professor Karl Von Holdt and Professor Garth Stevens

Declaration of Investigator

To be completed in duplicate and one copy to be returned to Ms. Sarah Mfupa in the School of Social Sciences, Room 152, 1st Floor, Robert Sobukwe Block.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorised to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. If any departure from the research procedure as approved, I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the committee.

_____ _____

Student Signature Date