


Spring 2011

The Impact of QMM on Social Relations in Fort-Dauphin

Christopher B. Collier
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Recommended Citation

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The Impact of QMM on Social Relations in Fort-Dauphin

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Fort-Dauphin, Madagascar

Spring 2011

This study is dedicated to the people of Fort-Dauphin, Madagascar.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank N'Aina for graciously agreeing to serve as my advisor. His assistance and enthusiasm helped me so much throughout the ISP process. I also want to thank Roland and Hanta, who provided a great deal of support leading up to the project. I am deeply grateful to my Fort-Dauphin hosts, Onja and Ilo, for their generosity and kindness, as well as to Angela and Claudine, who made my stay easy and enjoyable. I thank my Tana host family for all their support over the course of my time in Madagascar. All of these people have made these few months one of the most amazing times of my life. And of course, thank you to my parents, who do so much to support me in academics and in everything I do.

Thank you!

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Introduction

My interest in this subject began with a general desire to understand how Malagasy society adapts to “outsiders.” We learned throughout the semester about the various external forces that have shaped the culture of the island since the arrival of the first people here thousands of years ago. At first, my ideas were focused more on the experiences of people immigrating to Madagascar. I observed very particular patterns: immigrants of certain ethnicities fill specific socioeconomic niches in specific geographic areas, and with varying reception from the Malagasy community.

I came to realize, however, that similar patterns take place even between Malagasy. While many aspects of Malagasy culture are common to all parts of the island, there are definite distinctions between ethnic groups. Regional identity has been an important facet of Malagasy culture throughout history and remains so today.

When I first heard about the current situation in Fort-Dauphin, it immediately struck me as a unique and intriguing example of cultural interaction. The QMM project brought about, in a short period of time, radical changes in the social make-up of the city. Both international and Malagasy outsiders arrived in the area in unprecedented numbers, affecting countless aspects of life in the region.

My goal, therefore, was to explore people’s reactions to the social changes brought about by the installation of this large-scale, long-term mining project. My discussions with both locals and non-locals aimed to expose their opinions on the transformations taking place in the society of Fort-Dauphin.

To guide my project, I created a list of general study questions that embodied the information I wanted to gather and the types of conclusions I hoped to draw. These served to focus my inquiries and gave me direction as far as whom to interview and what types of questions to ask. As I learned more about the realities of the current circumstances, I was able to hone in on certain aspects with my interviews, but my study questions still applied as the general outline of, essentially, “What do I want to know?”

Most broadly, I wanted to know about the people of Fort-Dauphin. Who lives there? How do they identify, especially in terms of ethnicity? What makes the society of Fort-Dauphin different from others?

As I narrowed my scope, I began to take into account the impact of QMM on the social landscape. What is their local history? Who do they hire for the various positions in Fort-Dauphin? How do their employees fit into the context of the town as a whole (where do they live, eat, work, etc.)? What is the level of assimilation of non-locals into the culture of the town? How do the locals view QMM and its social impacts? How have these trends changed during the time since QMM’s first arrival on the local scene?

I was particularly interested in how people envision the future of Fort-Dauphin. As far as QMM’s social impacts, what do they expect to change and what do they expect to stay the same? How does this compare to what people would *like* to happen? What will be the long-term social impacts of QMM on the region? What actions are being taken to change these outcomes by the company, the government, or the people? The pursuit of these questions gave me an idea of the population’s general attitude toward changes in their society.

Location

Fort-Dauphin is the capital of the Anosy region, on the southeastern tip of Madagascar. It is the traditional homeland of the Antanosy people, locally referred to as Tanôsy. This ethnic group is sub-divided by area: northern Tanôsy, central Tanôsy, and southern Tanôsy; Tanôsy further north have traditionally farmed and raised livestock, while those in coastal areas harvest fish, lobsters, and other products from the sea, river estuaries, and lakes.

Like most Malagasy, the Tanôsy share cultural heritage from various backgrounds, including Austronesian, African, and Arab. Their neighbors to the northeast, the Antaisaka, represent more Arab influence, while the culture of the inland Bara to the north is closer linked to its African legacy. To the southwest of Anosy lies the region of Androy, at the far southern tip of the island. N'Aina describes the Antandroy people as the “blood-bothers” of the Tanôsy. In fact, the Antandroy are more numerous in Fort-Dauphin than the Tanôsy, who constitute only about 10% of the city’s population.

There is a long history of contact with outside cultures in Anosy. The Fort-Dauphin area’s easy access by sea has made it a point of contact for sea-going vessels. In the 16th century, Arab sailors arrived along the east coast of Madagascar. Some of the descendants of these populations became the kings of the area, including in Fort-Dauphin—the *zafiraminia*.

Europeans also made early contacts in Fort-Dauphin. In the early 16th century, the Portuguese sailor Luis Mariano arrived in Fort-Dauphin. In an attempt to “civilize” the population he encountered, he took the local prince Andriamaka to India to educate him

in a “Western” fashion. Upon his return to Anosy, however, the prince reverted to local traditions, demonstrating his reluctance to conform to the European norms imposed upon him.

Conflict with the Merina ethnic group of Madagascar’s central highlands began during the expansionist rule of Andrianampoinimerina. They didn’t succeed in invading Anosy, however, until the rule of his son, Radama I. Fort-Dauphin was at least nominally under Merina rule from 1825 until the beginning of the French colonial period in 1896.

Many aspects of Tanôsy culture are shared with the majority of Madagascar. For example, the concept of *fihavanana*, essentially a strong sense of loyalty toward family, guests, and other close relations, is a staple of the society. The elderly hold a place of high respect and are routinely consulted when making important decisions. Particularly in the south of Madagascar, possessing cattle is a marker of social status as well as a form of financial investment. *Fady*, or social taboos, also play a part in the culture; in the Anosy region, many people consider goats to be *fady* (at least as food). In general, tradition is held in high esteem. Reverence for the past often overrides looking to the future, which is seen as the domain of fate (and the Christian God).¹

The town of Fort-Dauphin is relatively small, with about 75,000 residents.² It lies on a small peninsula jutting out from the mainland, and is bounded on the inland side by mountains. Numerous villages, whose inhabitants are mainly concerned with fishing and harvesting resources from the forest, make up the “agglomeration” of Fort-Dauphin. Roads inside and outside of the town proper are mostly unpaved and bumpy, and some are impossible to traverse during periods of heavy rainfall. The town has a port and an

airport offering flights mostly to Antananarivo and Tuléar, with occasional service to international destinations in the vicinity.

QMM

QMM, or QIT Minerals Madagascar, is a company owned 20% by the Malagasy state and 80% by Rio Tinto, a worldwide mining corporation. The company's projects in the Fort-Dauphin area primarily deal with the extraction of ilmenite, a mineral found in high concentration in the sand of the region and processed into titanium dioxide for use as a white pigment in various commercial products.

In 1986, Rio Tinto arrived in Fort-Dauphin to conduct a three-year preliminary research phase. The next three-year period was devoted specifically to the study of social and environmental impacts their proposed projects might have on the region. The Malagasy state ratified permission for their work in 1998, after nine years of negotiations and preparation. Next, Rio Tinto performed studies for the construction phase. In 2001, these reports were submitted for review by the National Office of the Environment (ONE), which considered the impacts and granted them an "Environmental Permit" the same year. From 2003 to 2005, the company assessed the financial feasibility of the project, ending in the decision to invest. The next three years were the construction phase, during which QMM built up the infrastructures needed for extraction using a floating factory on artificial lakes: port, weir, roads, etc. Finally, in 2009, ilmenite exploitation began at the Mandena mining site. Exploitation is projected to take place at the Mandena, Sainte-Luce, and Petriky sites over the next 40-60 years.

According to the QMM/Rio Tinto website, the company strives to promote good relations with the local community. Through development programs, environmental restoration, and other benefits for the society, they believe they can have a “positive net impact” in the region and Madagascar in general.³

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, I was mostly interested in people’s own observations, rather than in objective “fact.” For this reason, my main source of information was interviews with people in the area. I used some second-hand sources to compare and contrast officially published materials with people’s actual perceptions on a local scale.

N’Aina and I had several preliminary discussions about my goals for the project, and we came up with a list of different groups with which to engage to achieve as balanced a study as possible. Among the target groups for potential interviews were locals affected by the mining projects, local QMM employees, Malagasy migrant QMM employees, QMM executives or administrators, and local government officials. Within each of these categories, we determined subcategories based on factors such as age, gender, ethnic identity, educational background, employment level, and personal history. From these lists we developed a rough schedule for my project and began to set up interviews.

I conducted interviews in a fairly formal, structured way. In most cases, I arranged ahead of time with the person before arriving for the interview. I made sure they

knew from the beginning what my intentions were as a student and that their anonymity was always an option if they had reservations about some of the topics we might discuss. I tried to do at least some introduction in Malagasy and generally convey that I am here to learn, not as part of any corporate or government entity. (A Malagasy friend told me he thought that when I finished my study, I would take it back to my country to help the United States better exploit resources in Madagascar.)

In general, I had a few questions written out ahead of time and several ideas of where I wanted the conversation to go, but was open to following what the interviewees seemed keen on discussing. With new information I got from my informants and other sources, I was able to further develop questions to use in later conversations to fill in gaps in my understanding or compare different perspectives on certain issues. Most interviewees didn't express any hesitation indicating that my questions were too sensitive, but nevertheless I tried to make sure I didn't overstep the boundaries of appropriate conversation.

I was also very careful to choose wording that put as little bias into the questions as possible. I tried to use phrasing along the lines of "What do you think about this?" so as to avoid leading questions that hinted at a certain response. Whenever possible, I tried to use open-ended questions to facilitate more lengthy responses than yes-or-no questions, but I didn't generally have problems getting thorough perspectives from my informants.

Because I wanted to make sure my findings represented a variety of viewpoints, my respondents came from different backgrounds and therefore had varying levels of French proficiency. About six of my interviews were conducted entirely in French. The

rest were mostly in Malagasy, translated into French by N'Aina. Many of the respondents who requested translation spoke a decent amount of French but thought they would be more capable of explaining their full opinions in Malagasy. About eight of the interviewees with whom I used a translator understood the majority of my questions in French with minimal clarification from N'Aina but preferred to give responses in Malagasy; a few respondents alternated between French and Malagasy in their answers (and one tried out some English). I also tried to pick out as many words as I could from the Malagasy dialogue in order to aid comprehension and make sure all the information seemed to be coming through accurately (mostly it was helpful to pick out proper nouns I could make out so I could follow up on those).

During every interview, I kept notes on a small pad. Additionally, it was sometimes useful to add details about the setting or comments made after the interview. As soon as possible after each interview (usually right when I got home) I would transcribe my notes into the formal field journal entry—turning any short-hand into ordered paragraphs, adding any explanations I didn't have time to write in the field, and including the date and length of time spent on the fieldwork. This served both to create an official record of the interview and also to help me reflect on what I had learned during the experience.

Although I spent the bulk of my time and effort securing first-hand information, I found it useful to gather a few published resources to complement what I was learning. First, I reviewed QMM's social impact literature and other relevant information posted on their website and at the Fasimainty Center. This gave me a view into the projects and their effects as described by the company itself. Next, I assembled articles about QMM's

involvement in Fort-Dauphin from the online archives of *Midi Madagasikara*, *l'Express de Madagascar*, and *Gazette de la Grande Ile*. These were useful for understanding a recent timeline of the QMM- local relations and the general media depiction of these issues.

Once I finished all of the interviews I had planned and was satisfied with the information I had acquired, I used my field journal to extract general themes present in the responses. These themes reflect topics which are particularly relevant to my stated interest, those that came up multiple times during my study, and/or the ones that elicited particularly impassioned responses from my interviewees.

Hiring

According to their website, QMM makes it a priority to hire as many local employees as possible for their projects. They claim that during the 2005-2008 construction phase, the 4,500 employees working for them or their contractors were 56% from the Anosy region, 24% from elsewhere in Madagascar, and 20% expatriates. They also boast a list of training and educational initiatives in the region to prepare locals to participate in the company's projects.⁴

Despite these assertions, every person I have talked to in Fort-Dauphin has agreed that an unusually high proportion of QMM's employees are non-locals. For some, this is an injustice against the local people; for others, it's a factor of company priorities and a lack of local opportunities. REALY, a Merina working for a local NGO, said he didn't know why there was such a predominance of non-local workers, but it's possible that the

level of competence and training among Fort-Dauphin natives isn't high enough for the jobs QMM has.⁵

For the most part, those who believe the hiring discrepancy is a natural occurrence recognize that a lack of educational resources puts locals at a disadvantage.

RANDRIANAMBININA Yobelly, a Merina mechanical engineer with QMM, believes that Fort-Dauphin has fewer workers who are qualified to take on the jobs QMM has to offer. He explained that when a company invests in a country, they are looking for immediate returns—"they don't come to lose money"—and therefore hire the most qualified people. Because in their 25 years of pre-exploitation studies they couldn't find enough locals able to carry out the tasks they needed, they searched elsewhere. He said it may be that there are a greater number of educated people in Antananarivo.

RANDRIANAMBININA believes it is the regional government's responsibility to provide resources such as job training and education for local people, but they didn't seize the opportunity. If over the 25 years the state had been creating high schools and universities, they would not have the high rate of unemployment seen today in Fort-Dauphin. He stressed the importance of these investments especially in light of the prolonged timeframe of QMM's investment—even if they produced only a handful of professionals a year, over time the region could build up a local workforce of qualified individuals to take on the jobs the company offers.

While he believes the state missed a great opportunity, he thinks that at the very least they should invest in a professional school for arts and job training in order to better equip locals with the knowledge and experience needed for jobs within QMM.

RANDRIANAMBININA also said that citizens should put pressure on the state to create

these jobs. Although he stated that the responsibility ultimately lies with the state, he added that it would also be in QMM's best interest to invest in such institutions in Fort-Dauphin to ease tensions with the local community caused by lack of local hiring. As it is, he doesn't see local hiring increasing in the near future. For example, he said QMM is creating eight new jobs, four in mechanics and four in electrics; he doesn't think they'll find these new recruits here, and if they do they are likely to be locals originally from Tuléar or who were educated in Antananarivo.⁶

RANDRIA Herniaina also explained QMM's hiring practices as part of a profit-maximizing business strategy. A 35-year-old QMM mechanic, he grew up in Mahajanga because his father is Sakalava but said most of his family is Merina. Because QMM is first and foremost a commercial enterprise, he said it is natural that they want qualified workers to maximize their profits. He qualified that it's not a matter of locals being incapable, but because of a lack of experience they don't have the same work capacity. RANDRIA believes the lack of local experience is due to the fact that few large companies have historically worked in the area, so the people of Fort-Dauphin are less familiar with business concepts such as deadlines. He thinks that bringing in experienced workers at first can set a good example for locals of how to work in this type of environment. The problem is that if the company is investing in the long term, it needs to transition to all-local employees over time. As it's only two years into the actual exploitation phase, RANDRIA thinks it's too early to judge whether or not this is taking place within QMM.⁷

RABARIVELO Christian, a Fort-Dauphin native who previously worked for QMM, said that QMM began hiring more locals after strikes last year, but it is not

sufficient. He told me that 3,000 people sent in their résumés for a recent round of applications that offered only 40 positions. When I asked him why QMM didn't employ more locals, he said he had asked people at the company the same thing. They responded that the diplomas and qualifications among people in Fort-Dauphin weren't enough for the jobs they required. RABARIVELO commented that this may be true, but the company doesn't give locals a chance. In 2008, when he worked briefly for QMM, he saw many new recruits coming from Antananarivo to fill positions for which he hadn't seen offers posted in Fort-Dauphin. He believes QMM doesn't make all of its offers known to locals, but searches more in the capital. He too advises QMM to invest in training for locals.⁸

ZANAMIDA Cynthia, a 19-year-old Tanôsy student preparing for the *Baccalauréat* exam (before university), doesn't claim to know how QMM hires its employees but believes there are both qualified and unqualified candidates in Fort-Dauphin.⁹ Her peer JEANNE Melissa (also 19 and Tanôsy) elaborated on this idea, stating that QMM may sometimes hire locals who turn out not to be capable of completing the tasks required for their jobs, and this could ruin the chances for other local candidates. Thus, QMM may be avoiding hiring locals in order to keep from losing profit, and thinks you can't just blame the company for this.¹⁰

I learned about another interesting aspect of the hiring debate from my final interviewee, MOSA Maurile, the mayor of the rural commune of Ampasy-Nahampoana. As the closest village to the Mandena mining site, Ampasy was promised many development benefits from QMM's involvement. MOSA claimed that the company vowed to prioritize the hiring of young people from these riverside communities—not

necessarily for high-up positions, but just for jobs such as tree planters for which anyone could qualify. He described the problem for these villagers not as competition with outsiders, but even between local people: rural versus urban. MOSA stated that young people in his village have a hard time getting the jobs they were promised because they are taken by individuals from the town of Fort-Dauphin. This imbalance increases hostility toward the company.¹¹

There are also people who completely reject the explanation that there are no qualified locals in Fort-Dauphin. ROMULE Operman, a 49-year-old Tanôsy man, worked for QMM during construction and currently holds a position within the conservation projects surrounding the Mandena site. Toward the end of the interview, I posed the question regarding hiring practices and the high rate of non-local workers. Right away he told me that this was the most important thing to discuss regarding QMM. He said he does not agree with this system at all. He reiterated what I heard from others—that every job could definitely be carried out by local employees. He believes QMM underestimates the capacity of local people.¹²

RATSIMANDRESY Herilanto Fernando, a Tanôsy who worked for QMM during the construction phase, said that the excuse given by the company is untrue because he knows many locals with specialized degrees whom QMM hasn't hired. He believes that because QMM's executives are from outside of the region—mostly Antananarivo—they give jobs to people from their own regions. Like RABARIVELO, RATSIMANDRESY said that locals aren't made aware of all QMM's job openings and offers. He denounced this as a form of corruption within the company.¹³

MIHA Antoine, a 55-year-old Tanôsy history and geography teacher agreed that this was a very untrue and unfair excuse. He said there are many local young people who specialize in almost every field, so there is no position that QMM could not fill with a qualified candidate from the region. MIHA believes that Fort-Dauphin natives should be advantaged during the hiring process, but instead the other Malagasy with the good positions are selfish and employ other non-locals. He clarified, however, that this phenomenon doesn't constitute a form of "segregation"—he made the distinction that at least those who get the good jobs are Malagasy. He also offered another possible reasoning: if a Tanôsy employee had a death in the family, he or she might require an extended period of absence from work to attend to funeral proceedings. This type of cultural consideration would disadvantage the company, and may therefore influence hiring decisions.¹⁴

Several of these last responses touch on a related hiring issue as perceived by many inhabitants of Fort-Dauphin: the idea that those already within the company have the ability to hire new recruits based on factors other than capability alone. When QMM first began work in the area, RAKOTO believed good things would happen for local people such as the inhabitants of the *fokontany* (local neighborhood-level administrative district) of which he is president. Instead, he claims the company practices segregation. Because the CEO of QMM is Merina, they hire people from their own region and ethnic group. This has prolonged the joblessness already prevalent in Fort-Dauphin.¹⁵

Another interviewee described a different, non-ethnically motivated type of nepotism he witnessed at QMM. REALY has sought a job at QMM for four years to no avail. He claims that this is because, even though he is from Antananarivo like the

majority of QMM executives, he doesn't have a connection in the higher positions of the company. He told me the story of a recent round of hiring for which he applied. He sent in his application for an offer in search of someone to draw architectural plans and was accepted for an interview. With over ten years of experience, 300 finished building plans (at least 50 of which were in Fort-Dauphin) and many satisfied clients, REALY believed he was more than qualified for the job. He excelled at the simple computer demonstration they asked the applicants to perform, and he was sent away to await their decision. After five months of waiting, he found out he didn't get the job. He got no letter or e-mail explaining the decision, but heard from outside sources that he had been deemed "slow" and "incompetent" with the software. He described the young man who got the job as a former hotel server and music teacher who had given lessons to QMM employees and had friends among the company's ranks. REALY believes this person was much less capable and experienced with the work than he.

Although REALY claimed that QMM chose this employee based on personal connections, he stated that he was upset only because the company had lied about his performance in the examinations. He considered it disrespectful that they gave him no formal notice of their decision. If they had told him honestly that he was more qualified but that they were obliged to hire their friend, he said he would understand. His problem was more with what he considered poor communication and a lack of respect for him and his abilities.¹⁶

RASOA, a photographer for QMM, shared the flipside of the perceived favoritism in the company. He explained that some local people become angry because they feel incapable of competing for jobs with the limited means of attaining the necessary

qualifications in the Fort-Dauphin area. This anger, he said, is mostly directed not toward the company but toward those individuals who manage to secure QMM jobs. He said there is a misunderstanding about how the hiring process works, and people sometimes think that his position within the company gives him the ability to help others get jobs. Even his own family resents him because they feel he doesn't do anything to get them employment, regardless of the fact that he doesn't actually have a say in the company's hiring practices.¹⁷

In the context of inter-ethnic relations, QMM's hiring practices have brought about significant tensions within the community of Fort-Dauphin. Many locals feel it is simply a matter of nepotism and prejudice. Many also acknowledge that education and training are contributing factors, but believe the lack of these resources in Fort-Dauphin to be a result of the company's (and/or the government's) unwillingness to make an investment in the local community.

Whatever the actual percentage or justifications regarding non-local employment, it is undeniable many citizens of Fort-Dauphin perceive a significant discrepancy. Despite the logic that may be behind QMM's hiring decisions, the consensus I gathered from everyone I talked to is that ideally—and in the future—Tanôsy people should be the ones gaining employment from a project exploiting their own natural resources. The fact that locals and non-locals all agreed on this point shows the close cultural relationship between people and the land—"The things QMM promises are not favors but our *rights*, because they're taking riches that belong to the local people."¹⁸

In 2010, tensions over non-local hiring came to a head in the form of strikes in Fort-Dauphin. As many as 400 local people participated in the demand for hiring local

candidates and posting all QMM job offers in Fort-Dauphin. After a brief period of turmoil, the conflict was resolved, and QMM promised to take action.¹⁹

The main result of the strikes, according to my interviews, was the creation of a *Guichet unique*, an entity managed by the region for the collection of applications for work. In theory, the applications would be looked at by an “objective” third party to avoid corruption at the hands of QMM administrators. Those people who discussed the *Guichet unique* during my interviews, however, were skeptical that this would solve the problem.²⁰ In fact, the system may allow for the regional government to demand bribes in exchange for hiring, creating the potential for non-qualified candidates to buy positions as well as jeopardizing the chances of qualified candidates, local or not.²¹

While the struggle over coveted QMM employment has caused tensions between various groups, several of my respondents believe the company has injected a competitive spirit into the local environment. Before, people were “a little passive,” not moving to improve their lives. Now young people are beginning to put their own interests first and strive to attain a level of expertise like the workers coming in from elsewhere in order to compete for jobs.²² Another referred to QMM’s impact as exciting a “sleepy” town.²³ RANDRIA, who believes local workers should eventually be allowed to take over the majority of jobs at QMM, counts it as a positive sign that young people are creating movements and showing interest in working “like the foreigners.”²⁴

Housing

Given the tensions caused by QMM's reportedly high rate of non-local Malagasy hiring, I tried to get a sense of how this played out in the context of everyday social interactions. I was interested to find out from many people that in fact QMM employees from other regions sometimes have little contact with locals. QMM has constructed housing for its workers during various phases of its projects in the Fort-Dauphin area, and incoming workers are given this option. These subdivisions lie outside the town and are somewhat isolated from the rest of local society (see photos in Appendices). They have gates and security that allows only residents and people with specific clearance to enter, and QMM also imposes rules such as noise ordinances.²⁵ Residents go into town to buy food, go to church, walk on the beach, etc. but otherwise some have little contact with local people.²⁶

My respondents expressed varying opinions on this subject. Some are residents of these locations and shared first-hand knowledge, but most have never had reason or clearance to visit.

Several of the people I interviewed condemned QMM's "camps" for creating inequality—they are equipped with electricity, water, stoves, ovens, and other equipment. ROMULE posed the question: if QMM can afford to house its workers in these conditions, why can't they invest in the same improvements in local communities? Looking at the difference between a house in a QMM neighborhood and one in his village of Ampasy-Nahampoana, he said, just shows the inequality between benefits for employees and those for locals.²⁷

RAKOTO expressed similar disdain. He believes that locals try to accept incoming people in the same way he was accepted by people in other cities around Madagascar in which he used to work. Isolated, secured neighborhoods, however, don't facilitate good relations—locals can't even enter the subdivisions without permission. RAKOTO calls this housing system an “error from the start;” he described it as promoting segregation and believes the policy must be changed if locals and non-locals are to live together peacefully.²⁸

RATSIMANDRESY believes that the benefits QMM provides those employees who live in these neighborhoods does nothing for Fort-Dauphin. He called it a new form of colonialism and said it divides the society. Additionally, he said QMM runs its own bus services and ships in food from Antananarivo for these families, eliminating the local competitors that could profit from providing these services for the growing population. In this way, RATSIMANDRESY believes the QMM housing developments create inflation in the local economy.²⁹

Possibly the most heated reaction I got was from VOGNARIVO, a sixty-something-year-old (he didn't know his exact age) man who has lived in Fort-Dauphin since QMM and the regional government forced him to sell his land in Ehoala in preparation for the port project. VOGNARIVO is fervently against QMM's involvement in the area, accusing the company of stealing land from local people. When asked about the separate housing developments built for QMM employees, he told me it was shameful that non-local workers have their own isolated neighborhoods. He said these Merina employees are like colonists, working in the area but not wanting to cohabitate with the local people. VOGNARIVO made an analogy to a sisal plantation in the region during

the French colonial period: the French bosses built separate housing facilities because they didn't want to live with the Malagasy locals or those who worked in the fields.³⁰

Although his analogy drew a fairly extreme comparison, several people I talked to shared VOGNARIVO's ideas about the segregationist, "neo-colonial" connotations of separate housing for non-local employees, especially in light of the comforts provided in these neighborhoods. Other respondents, however, told me that these developments are standard, and even beneficial for the town.

Citing the social studies QMM conducted before their decision to invest in the Fort-Dauphin project, MIHA said these neighborhoods are a calculated move on the company's part and don't have a negative impact on the town. QMM's prior research determined that the town didn't have the capacity to absorb the influx of workers that would be needed to work for the project, so these developments were created during each phase of work in order to house those who wouldn't have been able to find a place to live given the size of the town. Also, MIHA believes it is in the company's best interest to accommodate these workers well in order to help them work effectively.³¹

JEANNE agreed with the overpopulation reasoning, saying the town is already crowded. She thinks it would be hard to live all together if these new workers were added to such a crowded place. She also believes these developments constitute an extension of the town of Fort-Dauphin, which is good.³² Her classmate, ANDRIANJAFIARISOA Tania, added that these workers have a good life.³³

Some of my respondents expressed both positive and negative views on QMM's housing projects. While he believes the local population welcomes people from outside (specifically from Antananarivo) RABARIVelo acknowledged that naturally QMM

would try to house its employees closer to the actual worksites, where these developments are located. What he does not approve of is that local recruits don't have the same opportunity. He thinks this separation is unfair.³⁴

A non-local QMM employee, RANDRIA lives in Fort-Dauphin but has visited some of QMM's subdivisions. He began by saying that they were very different—much calmer and safer than the town itself. He sees that the company is trying to take care of its employees to help them better carry out their jobs by giving them a comfortable lifestyle. His problem also lies in the preferential position accorded to certain employees and not to others. This sense of distinction, he said, causes conflict between those who live inside the developments and those who don't.³⁵

Clearly, many people take issue with the perception that only non-local workers could attain housing in QMM's subdivisions. RANDRIANAMBININA gave me a different perspective. A Merina QMM employee, he lives in Antanimenabe, a housing development built to accommodate workers during the first phase of QMM's involvement in the region. While everyone who lives in the development is employed either by QMM or a related organization (mostly the affiliated clinic nearby), there is no rule barring local recruits. He describes his neighbors as people from all over Madagascar—Diego Suarez, Antananarivo, Mahajanga, Fianarantsoa, and the Anosy region.

What RANDRIANAMBININA explained is that housing and other QMM benefits are doled out based on a points system. Employees can do certain things that earn them points—namely, the fact that he agreed to move from the capital to Fort-Dauphin to take his position earned him enough points to reserve housing in

Antanimenabe. The locals who are able to get housing in QMM's developments, he admitted, usually hold higher-up positions within the company.

I asked him how he found life in his subdivision, and he said it was fine—very calm, with some restrictions (“You can party, but softly,” he joked). He, his wife, and their two children have had somewhat of a hard time adapting, but mostly because they generally don't like the heat and humidity as compared to the highlands. As far as assimilating into society, RANDRIANAMBININA explained that, compared to other non-local employees, he has a lot more local friends. Despite living in Antanimenabe with access to Clairefontaine, a school built by QMM, he and his wife plan to send their daughter to Sacré-Cœur, the Catholic school in Fort-Dauphin, when she is old enough.³⁶

Where people live understandably has a bearing on how they interact with other groups. QMM obviously has motives for providing comfortable housing for its employees, especially those who chose to leave their home to take jobs in Fort-Dauphin. The perceived inequality, however, has definitely strained relations with some local people, who believe privileged, isolated housing constitutes ethnic and/or socioeconomic segregation on the company's part.

Communication

Several different social groups have shaped the current social climate of Fort-Dauphin because of QMM's investment. While Malagasy from outside the region have been blamed for taking local people's jobs and participating in a form of social segregation, several of my respondents commented on other new arrivals. *Vazaha* (a

general term for foreigners in Madagascar, usually connoting Caucasians) employees and immigrants from other countries brought in for the construction of the port and other QMM infrastructures have had different impacts on the society of Fort-Dauphin.

Through my study, I wanted to get as full a picture as possible of all the social changes that have come about in the area due to the mining project. In this section, I compiled all of the testimonies I received concerning communication between locals, other Malagasy, and foreigners in the workplace and in the broader context of Fort-Dauphin society.

Close contact between people from different ethnic backgrounds in the workplace can lead to tensions, as explained by several of my respondents. These conflicts often come about because of cultural misunderstandings. The people I interviewed distinguished two types of workplace conflicts at QMM: those between local and non-local Malagasy and those between Malagasy and *vazaha*.

Describing relations in the workplace during his time at QMM from 2008 to 2009, RATSIMANDRESY stated that there were really no conflicts between employees—that is, between Malagasy, or involving workers from the Philippines and elsewhere brought in for the construction projects. He stated that most of the conflicts occurred between Malagasy and their *vazaha* bosses. Most of the executives in his workplace were Canadian, and the Malagasy workers perceived inequality in the type of work done by each group. The *vazaha* at QMM seemed not to be involved in the “hard labor” like the Malagasy, and this caused bitterness between the two groups.³⁷

RANDRIA shared a similar observation about conflicts between Malagasy and *vazaha* in the workplace. While conflicts between Malagasy usually come about because

of jealousy over salaries, etc. many Malagasy feel that their *vazaha* colleagues underestimate their abilities. RANDRIA said *vazaha* at QMM sometimes automatically assume that a Malagasy person will be incapable of completing a certain task before even getting a chance. This type of prejudice leads to conflicts that take the form of a sort of competition to determine which employee is more proficient with the given technology or task.³⁸

In the middle of my interview with RANDRIANAMBININA, he asked if he could pose a question to me: he wanted to know why people “like me”—not me, personally, but *vazaha* in general—undervalue the capacity and education of Malagasy workers. He went on to tell a personal story that reflected the type of communication problem described above. After arriving in Fort-Dauphin, he underwent a three-month trial period with QMM so they could verify his qualification before giving him the job and allowing him to relocate his family. During this period, there was a problem with some of the machinery on the floating factory. Several engineers tried to find the faulty component but were unsuccessful.

My interviewee asked if they would let him try to find the problem, but they ignored him, despite his engineering degree. Weeks passed, and the leadership in charge of the situation changed. RANDRIANAMBININA asked again. They finally allowed him one week to look at the machinery, although still skeptical that he could find a problem others had failed to solve. It didn’t take him long to find the default in a small piece of machinery and pinpoint the exact solution to be carried out. Everyone was astonished; his bosses immediately ended his trial period at one-and-a-half months and let him go to Antananarivo to help move his family to Fort-Dauphin. In the aftermath of his

success, he also stipulated that his position be upgraded to include some capacity as engineer, in addition to technician.

RANDRIANAMBININA stated that this type of underestimation is quite common among the *vazaha* with which he works. Although his question was mostly rhetorical, he seemed genuinely frustrated with the perception that his skills and training are so underappreciated.³⁹

Another respondent described a similar case of underestimation between Malagasy. ZANAMIDA gave the example of her cousin, a Tanôsy employee at QMM, who worked under a Merina supervisor. A conflict arose because the supervisor prejudged her cousin to be incompetent and unable to carry out certain tasks in the workplace. The dispute went on until an international worker tried to intervene to resolve it. While the tension eventually subsided, the immigrant worker was sent back to his country.

ZANAMIDA explained that the Merina supervisor's preconceived notion about local people's capacity shows that ethnic prejudice does exist. She cited historical tensions between Malagasy ethnic groups, especially highlanders versus coastal peoples. Lingering traces of these historical disputes, she said, sometimes cause distrust between ethnic groups to this day.⁴⁰ RANDRIA confirmed that, while Malagasy culture is similar throughout the island, regional differences exist. Tensions predominantly linked to historical conflicts are "felt, not seen" in the context of the workplace and the broader society.⁴¹

Many of my respondents didn't mention these conflicts at all, saying there were no real problems between Malagasy. RASOA stated that interpersonal relations have

been smooth.⁴² ANDRIANJAFIARISOA agreed that Fort-Dauphin hasn't seen conflicts, although the workplace may have different dynamics.⁴³ Others shared similar statements.

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MIHA gave an explanation for why there aren't many conflicts between Malagasy ethnic groups, even when brought together by forces like the QMM project. He said that all Malagasy people share some cultural beliefs and customs, regardless of regional variations. Therefore, if a Malagasy feels he has wronged someone else, he is quick to straighten out the situation and make up for what he did for fear of going against cultural expectations. In this way, the cultural sensitivity common to all Malagasy helps prevent serious confrontations. MIHA conceded, however, that interactions with non-local Malagasy in Fort-Dauphin are limited by the isolation of QMM's housing developments, and that the situation in the workplace may be different.⁴⁶

MOSA also believes there is little conflict between Malagasy. He went so far as to say there is no such thing as a "non-local" Malagasy. MOSA believes the regional differences in Madagascar aren't enough to constitute separate groups that would come into serious conflict.⁴⁷

I asked some of my respondents how they perceived *vazaha*'s attitude toward Malagasy culture. ROMULE gave an example of a serious problem stemming from lack of cultural understanding or respect. During his first stint with QMM, he worked under a *vazaha* who severely violated Malagasy cultural taboos. In particular, he said the boss mistreated many Malagasy girls. ROMULE could not bear the boss' disrespectful attitude, and eventually it caused him to quit.⁴⁸

To the contrary, RANDRIANAMBININA stated that most *vazaha* he works with actively try to learn about Malagasy culture and aren't too disrespectful. He gave as an example the fact that on holidays, when they aren't returning to their homes in Canada or Europe, many *vazaha* take excursions around Madagascar. They explore rural villages and national parks and try to learn as much as possible, and when they return they have questions about cultural points to ask him. He said that there are some exceptions, but around 90% of the *vazaha* he knows are respectful of the local culture and actively try to understand it better.⁴⁹

RANDRIA had two interesting inputs as far as cultural communication. First, he believes that immigrants and non-locals in Fort-Dauphin are a good thing, bringing their lifestyle, intelligence, and training to the region. By transmitting these ideas, he believes outsiders have a positive impact on the society.

I asked him how he feels he has been received by the existing population as a non-local living in Fort-Dauphin—has he assimilated into the society? He told me that it has been hard adjusting to life here because of cultural differences that keep him from fitting in. He has a hard time communicating with locals because he feels like even simple statements are often misinterpreted and become difficult. He feels like these communication barriers are caused by cultural isolation, possibly because the poor roads to Fort-Dauphin keep outsiders out of the area, and this may be why he can't communicate fully with people here. Maybe with better roads and more contact with other groups of people, he said, the local population won't have these communication differences.⁵⁰

Another facet of intercultural contact in Fort-Dauphin includes non-*vazaha* expatriates, specifically the large numbers brought in for the construction phase from 2008 to 2009. Although I had previously heard that these people came from various countries, my respondents consistently cited only two groups: Filipinos and South Africans. Brought by QMM to work construction, the majority of these people stayed only for a short period of time and represented a socioeconomic group much different than the status of *vazaha* within QMM. My respondents expressed varied opinions about how these workers interacted with the people of Fort-Dauphin, but most were decidedly resentful.

The five students I interviewed shared a negative view of these international workers. They perceived the South African workers as impolite and inconsiderate of Malagasy people in their speech and actions.⁵¹ Specifically, they would get drunk and start fights. They treated young girls unacceptably, getting them pregnant and leaving them with no means to support the baby. ZANAMIDA used the words “monsters.”⁵² The Filipinos weren’t sociable with locals⁵³ and arrogantly flaunted their money.⁵⁴

MIHA had a similar impression of the international workers’ impact on the community. While people who come to Fort-Dauphin from other regions of Madagascar respect similar cultural norms, he said expatriate workers didn’t value the lives of Malagasy locals. He too claimed that they mistreated young girls in particular—they thought of them as property to be bought and sold. They would frequently drink lots of beer, then insult people and make rude gestures. They also flaunted their money. According to MIHA, these immigrants didn’t respect local *fady*.⁵⁵

RABARIVELO didn't have the same recollection. He said most workers brought for the construction phase related well with locals. They were kind and conversational, and there weren't many problems.⁵⁶

Another aspect of communication that I inquired about was language itself. Because QMM employees come from several areas of the world, language barriers are an important part of the social environment in the workplace. I asked some of my interviewees what language is used at QMM for certain types of communication and how they perceive the effectiveness of communication with other groups.

RASOA said working relations are conducted in Malagasy, but French is used for official purposes. When dealing with international communication, he said, they use French out of courtesy.⁵⁷ RANDRIA cited both French and English as languages for official communication within QMM. He said people mostly understand each other when using common words and phrases (in English, French, and Malagasy alike), but technical language requires more effort to communicate across language barriers.⁵⁸

RANDRIANAMBININA described that at the outset of the project, most factory managers at QMM were Canadian and spoke French. Many positions, however, have been transitioned over to South Africans, who mostly speak English.

RANDRIANAMBININA cites language as a great professional barrier (there are no translators). He, along with most other Malagasy employees, studied English in school, but only on a basic level and never very seriously. When communicating with an English-speaking South African worker, he usually only understands the gist of what is said and responds using the limited phrases he knows. He believes that while other parts of Madagascar are advantaged by learning more French, there is more English education

in Fort-Dauphin, and the exposure to tourists and students like me gives locals some advantage in that regard. He is learning English (in N'Aina's class, along with RANDRIA) because he has inferred that it's practically a requirement for management-level positions, and he is looking to move up in the company.

I asked whether international QMM employees such as Canadian and South African executives ever try to learn Malagasy. He replied that they learn basic phrases: *salama* (hello), *tsara* (good), *veloma* (goodbye), etc. but that it's not a problem for him that they don't learn much. What he does take issue with, however, is that many of these immigrants don't even speak or try to learn French. In Francophone countries such as Madagascar, Mali, and the Congo, he said, French is the "ambassador language" between outsiders and the locals, regardless of which native languages exist among the populations. Therefore, RANDRIANAMBININA believes companies investing in Francophone countries should always use French to communicate.⁵⁹

Finally, there is the subject of communication between the company and local people. This topic was reflected in an overwhelming number of statements from my respondents. Through a summary of these responses I will give an idea of how communication between QMM and the community are perceived from the Malagasy point of view, compared to the goals toward which the company claims to work.

ANDRIAMANDIMBY Tanya Florence, a 19-year-old Merina student, described her tour of the QMM mining site at Mandena. She said she asked a lot of questions concerning environmental and health repercussions of the project, and representatives of QMM responded quickly with official statements. Their answers did not convince her that the company's mitigation of these risks was feasible; she told me the guides were

insincere.⁶⁰ Her classmate ZANAMIDA agreed that she felt the QMM guides didn't tell them everything, especially about their environmental restoration efforts.⁶¹

Several of my respondents commented that they felt QMM has no transparency and withholds information from the public. One way people feel the company maintains this distance from the community is by communicating through intermediaries. For example, I asked VOGNARIVO about his general attitude toward QMM as a company. Normally the most outspoken critic of QMM's work in Fort-Dauphin, he told me he had no opinion on the company. He explained that they use the regional government and local officials to communicate indirectly with local populations; VOGNARIVO believes that many of the communication problems with the company, such as the price discrepancy for land they bought from Ehoala fishermen like him, may stem from corruption in local government and not from QMM.⁶²

One of my interviewees described a particular problem related to the intermediaries sent to do QMM's dealings with local communities. RAVELOMANANA Emile, the tax collector for the rural commune of Ampasy-Nahampoana, said the company often dispatches representatives from Antananarivo, Tuléar, or elsewhere in Madagascar to speak with his village. Communication can thus be difficult because of differences in dialect. Although all ethnic groups in Madagascar speak the same language, Malagasy dialects are distinct enough in certain areas as to make communication hard for people not from the same region. For example, RAVELOMANANA told me about a case in which the commune asked for plows from QMM. The negotiator they sent didn't understand the local dialect, and therefore may not have comprehended their situation—he thinks this may be why the plows never came.⁶³

Analysis

Because QMM represents a huge project relative to the size of the existing town of Fort-Dauphin, it has unquestionably had a considerable impact on many aspects of life in the region. Over the course of my study, I found that relations between different groups in the community are one of the aspects significantly affected by QMM's direct and indirect consequences. Where people live, how they support their families, and how they communicate with others are just three of the major ways in which QMM has shaped the social environment of Fort-Dauphin and the surrounding area.

When I first began to consider this topic, I was unsure of exactly how much harmony or tension existed between various ethnic groups in Madagascar. I didn't know, for instance, whether people in Fort-Dauphin were openly hostile toward QMM and its employees, like news articles on the strikes last year might suggest. I began my research under the general assumption that there must be at least some strain on the local society brought about by the company's presence.

While I did find that many people recognize a variety of social inequalities and transformations related to QMM, one of the most interesting observations I made was that my respondents seemed to be aware of broader structural patterns at work. Even when explaining occurrences that have negatively affected their lives, the majority of my interviewees didn't place all the blame on a particular person or group. Very few people told me they thought QMM has an overall negative impact on Fort-Dauphin, citing the potential for development and employment if they could reap the full benefits of the project's presence. I was surprised by the number of people who reasoned that QMM

simply acts in its best interest as a profit-maximizing corporation. Because QMM is principally concerned with making as much money as possible, my respondents generally believe they are at least somewhat justified in whatever it takes to keep their company economically efficient, regardless of the consequences.

A way I commonly encountered this attitude was through conversations about who QMM hires and who they don't. The company is exploiting raw materials underneath the very ground that local people have lived on for generations. They have promised time and time again to make local employment a priority for the purposes of helping the community develop, fostering good relations, and benefiting local people. Given this reasoning, I would have imagined that the company continuing to bring in non-local employees would by now be perceived as a considerable insult to the local community. Again, however, the majority of my respondents framed their explanations in terms of a structural inequality between the Anosy region and elsewhere in Madagascar or other countries. They recognize that their region lacks many of the educational and occupational training resources necessary to prepare its citizens for the positions QMM needs. While they cited many reasons this imbalance exists and suggested that some responsibility lies with either the state or the company, pure ethnic resentment almost never entered the discourse.

I gathered through my interviews a sense that the cultural commonality between all Malagasy genuinely facilitates relatively smooth relations between groups. There certainly are regional differences and, as I have heard several times, historical tensions do still influence people's perspectives to some extent. I believe the greater Malagasy identity, however, engenders mutual respect despite regional variations and possible

misunderstandings. The concept of *fihavanana* does, in my opinion, promote a great deal of tolerance between Malagasy people. This unifying force can also apply to relations with non-Malagasy, but those individuals must show a willingness to respect Malagasy culture and tradition as well. Those outsiders that my respondents viewed as generally making an effort to comply with Malagasy norms are regarded more or less as equals. Those who do not—including, according to many of my informants, the South African immigrants during the construction phase—are somewhat alienated because they are seen as showing no respect for local culture.

The impacts of QMM on the Fort-Dauphin area have been manifold and are certainly not limited to what I have described through this study. I count among the most significant, however, several changes in the social environment. The company has brought a sense of competition, for better or for worse, which has driven young people to go to greater lengths to secure certain positions and increase their socioeconomic status. The strikes that have taken place over employment and other perceived injustices show both people's urgency to reap the supposed benefits QMM offers the community and a form of social expression relatively new to the area. In general, for a region historically less connected to global commerce (relative, for instance, to Antananarivo), QMM's work has forced the society to adapt to incoming people from other regions of the country and the world. This, I believe, is one of the most significant indirect impacts of mining on the Fort-Dauphin area.

Future

Based on how they described current social patterns, my respondents had quite varied predictions for the future of Fort-Dauphin and its transformation over the QMM era. Their testimonies have also given me my own outlook on what might happen and what I believe should be done to point the inevitable changes in as positive a direction as possible.

As I have already indicated, many of my interviewees saw the potential for Fort-Dauphin to benefit greatly from QMM's presence. There were those who assert that they are optimistic about the future, citing improvements in both the physical and social development of the community.⁶⁴

I also spoke with several people who had pessimistic outlooks. Some predicted bigger conflicts to come if QMM doesn't change its policies toward locals⁶⁵ or even threatened to fight the injustice themselves.⁶⁶ Others foresaw no change in the negative impacts⁶⁷ or even told me there is "no future" for Fort-Dauphin: QMM executives will continue to profit at the expense of the local community.⁶⁸

Three of my respondents concluded our interview by saying they hoped people would read my study and find out the truth about the situation in Fort-Dauphin. VOGNARIVO told me he was glad that "at least someone is listening," and hopes my report will raise awareness about the injustice he feels after being forced to sell his land and subsequently underpaid for it.⁶⁹ RANDRIANAMBININA said he hopes people will read my paper so that more companies will invest in Madagascar, but under the condition that they don't undervalue Malagasy people's competence.⁷⁰ MOSA also thanked me for

my willingness to listen and thinks maybe my study will instigate some improvements in the relationship between the company and the community for the benefit of his commune.

As a third party who spent just one month scratching the surface of the topic, I don't feel nearly informed enough to claim any solutions to the problems I have encountered. I heard many recommendations from my respondents, however, that truly aim to change the structures at the source of the problems. First and foremost, I agree with the idea expressed to me by so many people that Fort-Dauphin *must* be equipped with the training and educational resources required to prepare its residents for the work QMM will have over the next 40-60 years. While I understand the economic imperatives that dictate corporate hiring, I believe employing local people is the best way to support the communities in which the mining is taking place, and the more the delay the more hostility will build toward the company and its non-local workers. As MIHA observed, taking raw resources from Madagascar for processing in Canada with no benefits for local people constitutes a new form of colonialism.⁷¹ Today, however, it is abundantly clear that people want to seek employment with QMM but lack the qualifications, and I see it as the company's responsibility to provide those institutions.

It may also be true that regional government is neglecting its obligation to the citizens. Some of my respondents complained that it is the source of the corruption that hurts local people. I believe investing in infrastructures such as education and roads would greatly increase the local population's ability to reap the full benefits of QMM's presence. The company is invested for the long term, and the region has a responsibility to help its people take advantage of the project instead of becoming its victims.

My recommendation for the people of Fort-Dauphin is to maintain solidarity in an effort to make QMM's impacts on the community as positive as possible. As the company claims, good relations with the community are in its best interest as a business. By coming together to negotiate with the company and the state, I believe the people could effectively enact change in their favor.

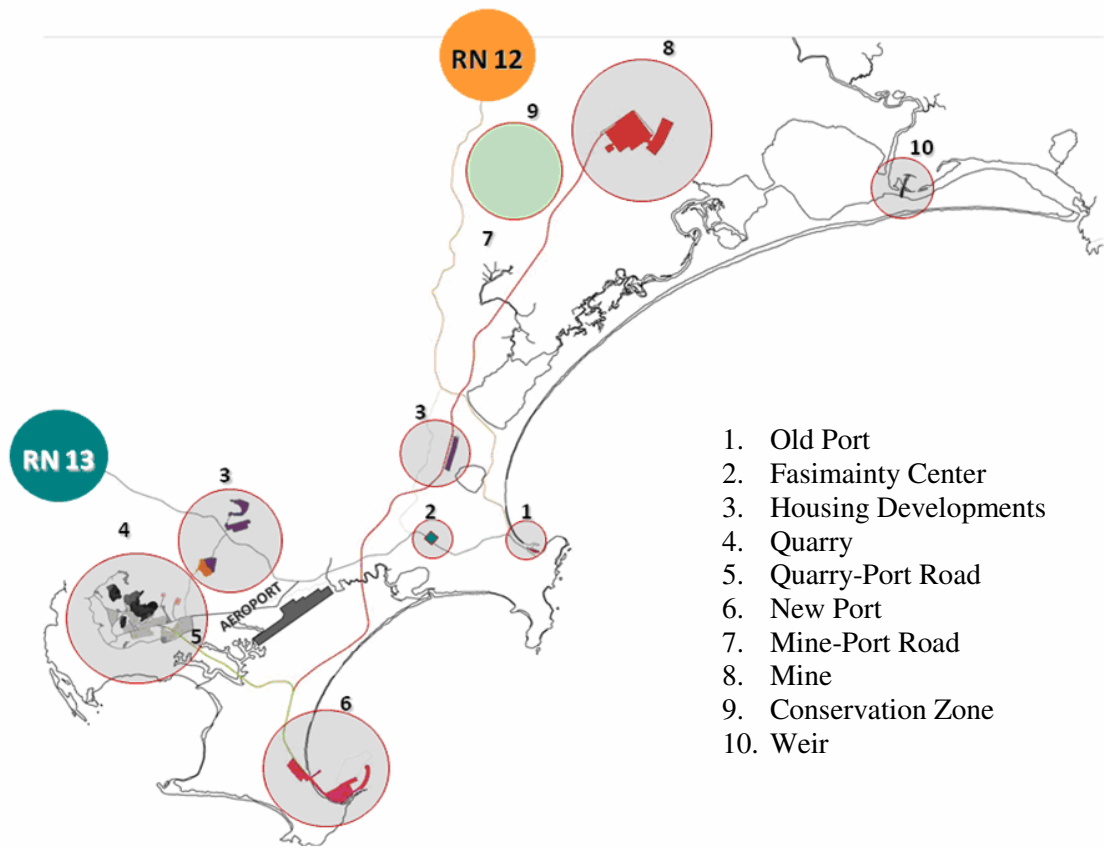
Also in the future, I hope further studies will be done to assess the situation in Fort-Dauphin. If I could continue my research here, I would be interested to delve more into people's perceptions of the international workers who have since returned to their respective countries but who seem to have made quite a negative impression on the community. I would be interested to get their perspective, if possible, and to figure out what particularities of this wave of immigration shaped the way in which they functioned in society. The possibilities for further study on my topic are virtually endless, and I believe this type of research has a great potential to improve communication and relations in the community.

Conclusion

QMM's impacts on the town of Fort-Dauphin reach into aspects far beyond the direct consequences of the process by which they extract ilmenite from the sand. One of the most significant indirect impacts is that the company has brought new people to the region with their own culture, language, attitudes, and experience. I have been sincerely interested throughout the course of my study in the ways in which these people interact in the context of Fort-Dauphin.

Taking cues from my various respondents, I have reason to be both optimistic and hesitant about the future of social relations in Fort-Dauphin. In each of the themes I dealt with, I found both positive and negative trends that promise to play out in the future. What gives me confidence is the capacity I found among the vast majority of people I met to process the transformations taking place with respect to root causes. I have faith in the patience and understanding of the people of Fort-Dauphin as the QMM project continues to affect the society in which they live.

Appendices





Three QMM housing developments; Mandena mining site; town of Fort-Dauphin
(as seen from Pic Saint-Louis)

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69 VOGNARIVO.
70 RANDRIANAMBININA.
71 MIHA.