

# Take a deep breath:

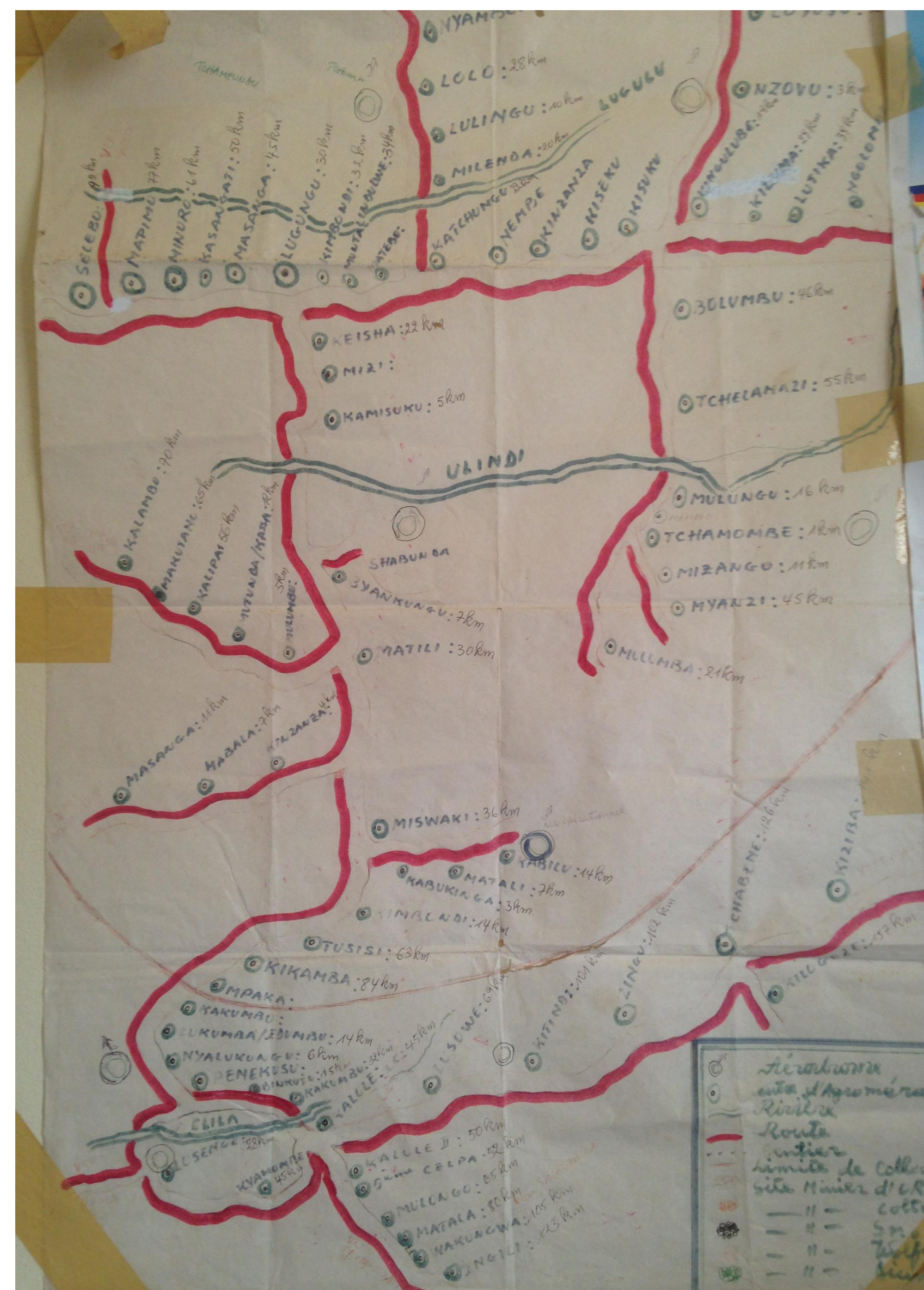
## An idea...

From artisan to industrial mining, different types of 'breathers' pass the revue (Sloterdijk, 2009):

*“people who pay a very high price in the unaccounted-for medical costs of extractive industries” (Choy, 2011).*

Indeed, ultimately we all breathe, but not all us pay the same price, nor are we all afflicted in a same way when we consider the risks of different forms of mining (Cartwright, 2016). But there is more to a 'mere' evasion of risk when we consider the transformations of ASGM.

Here we invite to reconsider the ‘technical’ as an entry-point to imagine informal assemblages of practices, rituals, materials and bodies that make breathing during extraction possible and ingenious.



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## Entry to a tale of technical breathability

Extracting gold is always at the same time a quest for breathability and the possibility to work for prolonged periods in the unbreathable.

**Goal:** to follow the tale in space and time of around 175 *dragues par aspiration* that operate since 2009 in the riverbank of the Ulindi river in Shabunda.

**Object:** *Dragues par aspiration* are locally modified and assembled socio-technical “off shore” vessels often consisting of Chinese Diesel engines, scraps of old Chinese dredges, imported sluice boxes, assembled wooden platforms, breathing tubes.. Yet above all require engineers, machinists, and divers and networks of transferability of know-how.



Where mundane bits and pieces meet  
human ingenuity creating a very  
unmundane “off shore”.

## Stay attuned to

(1.) Traces of wider South-South connections in the assembly process (often originally Lusophone and mainly imported pieces from South-Africa and Kampala)

(2.) and how changes in those objects (access, price) in time affect different usages, operatives and mechanizations.

(3) Circuits of know-how, practices of modification and craftsmanship, and discourses of engineering.

(4) Technical differences between robotic, bucket-chain dredges and artisan dredges; and historical non-technological predecessors (ex. diving without tube *kimbokoto*)

(5.) Breathing techniques and the mastery of skills during 6 month apprenticeship of new difvers (*plongeurs*)

(6.) Traditional, ancestral and ontological claims that move along these technical transformations in a post-colonial context.

## Methodology

- Qualitative fieldwork 2018-2019 and ongoing (Simon Marijse & Divin-Luc Bikubanya) in Mulolo (Shabunda).
- In-depth interviews with engineers and divers.
- In-depth interviews with customary councils to include wider historical, ancestral and spiritual claims.

## Literature cited

- Cartwright, E. (2016). Mining and Its Health Consequences: From Matewan to Fracking. *A Companion to Environmental Health: Anthropological Perspectives*, 417-434.
- Choy, T. (2011). *Ecologies of comparison: An ethnography of endangerment in Hong Kong*. Duke University Press.
- Sloterdijk, P. (2009). "Airquakes." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27(1): 41-57.

