

## Induced volition: Resettlement from the Limpopo National Park, Mozambique

Jessica Milgroom<sup>a\*</sup>, and Marja Spierenburg<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*University of Wageningen, The Netherlands;* <sup>b</sup>*Department of Culture, Organisation and Management at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

This paper focuses on the resettlement process taking place in the context of the creation of the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique, which is part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. About 27,000 people are currently living in the park; 7000 of whom are meant to be resettled to areas along the margins of the park. The Mozambican government and donors funding the creation of the park have maintained that no forced relocation will take place. However, the pressure created by restrictions on livelihood strategies resulting from park regulations, and the increased presence of wildlife has forced some communities to 'accept' the resettlement option. Nevertheless, donors and park authorities present the resettlement exercise as a development project. In the article we describe how the dynamics of the regional political economy of conservation led to the adoption of a park model and instigated a resettlement process that obtained the label 'voluntary'. We analyse the nuances of volition and the emergent contradictions in the resettlement policy process.

**Keywords:** resettlement; (transfrontier) conservation; development; Mozambique

They were dreaming when they made this park. They were dreaming ... and when they woke up they found people and animals together. It is like buying cattle. First you have to make the kraal and then you buy the cattle. You can't buy cattle before building the kraal.<sup>1</sup>

The above comment of a village leader destined to be resettled from the Limpopo National Park (LNP) in Mozambique, reveals a strong critique of the planning process of the park. This article highlights dilemmas relating to the resettlement of people who are living in a designated national park area. It illuminates the complexity of conservation-driven resettlement processes, and relates this to the interweaving political economies of state and private-sector-driven nature conservation on a regional scale. In doing so, it reveals why, in the case of the Limpopo park resettlement process, 'the kraal' was not constructed before the cattle were bought.

In 2001 the government of Mozambique declared a new park, the Limpopo National Park, as a contribution to the creation of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park<sup>2</sup> (GLTP). This transfrontier park also encompasses Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa and Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe, rendering it one of the largest transfrontier conservation areas in the world. The LNP is home to about 27,000 people, approximately 20,000 of whom reside along the eastern and southern borders of the LNP. The remaining

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\*Corresponding Author. Email: [jessica.milgroom@wur.nl](mailto:jessica.milgroom@wur.nl)

7,000 inhabitants live in eight villages along the Shingwedzi River, which transects the southern part of the park. These eight villages occupy an area that is deemed to offer the best possibilities for sustaining viable wildlife populations as well as tourism development, and a process has been started to resettle the villagers elsewhere.

Aiming to contribute to a further understanding of how resettlement policy gets translated in practice, this article first describes the politico-economic context that led to the decision to resettle people. We focus on an inherent contradiction of the resettlement process: the resettlement is officially 'voluntary', yet the LNP has adopted the World Bank's 'involuntary' resettlement framework. Then, we analyse the implications of this decision both for park residents and park staff, specifically exploring how voluntary such resettlement can be, while embedded in the context of international conservation lobbies and private sector interests in tourism development.

This article is based mainly on qualitative research undertaken in the area over a period of five years. Our methods included participant observation in the park and interviews with residents, government officials, donor agencies and technical advisers to the project. The authors attended community meetings with LNP staff and other relevant meetings including internal village meetings, district-level planning meetings and donor meetings in Maputo. Furthermore, the authors consulted official documents and reports and analysed the results from two surveys with park residents carried out previously in the park.<sup>3</sup>

### *Transfrontier conservation, resettlement and the private sector*

Many environmental organisations are promoting transfrontier conservation initiatives, arguing that ecosystems straddle international boundaries (Aberly 1999; Wolmer 2003). Proponents argue that the creation of transfrontier megaparks will generate economic development – especially through an increase in revenues from tourism – and that communities living in and adjacent to these megaparks will benefit from this development. Most conservation areas, whether newly established or not, have people living in them who depend on the natural resources in these areas for their livelihoods (Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau 2006). Though in the late 1980s conservation organisations and agencies started to develop programmes to increase local participation in and benefits from conservation, a number of scholars have noted recently that there is a movement back to so-called 'fortress conservation' (Hutton, Adams and Murombedzi 2005). Conservationists – from international conservation organisations and national agencies – seem to have returned to the idea that people and wildlife cannot coexist, that people are a threat to nature, and that the only solution to the potential conflict over resources is to remove people from the area (physical displacement) or to restrict their access to resources (that is, economic displacement, see Cernea 2005). Although this perspective is challenged (Rangarajan and Shahabuddin 2006), and population resettlement is often known to cause further impoverishment among both resettled and host communities (Brockington 2002) as well as considerable resource degradation around and inside the conservation areas (Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau 2006; Rangarajan and Shahabuddin 2006), displacement is still a common management strategy. According to Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau (2006), the number of people displaced from conservation areas will more than double in central Africa by 2012. Brockington, Igoe and Schmidt-Soltau (2006, 250) suggest that many conservation areas worldwide have 'yet to be cleared of people' and seem to be heading in that direction.

The return to fortress conservation coincides with a growing private sector involvement in nature conservation. Private sector representatives promoted the idea that conservation areas can stimulate development through tourism, which supposedly also benefits

communities living in and adjacent to conservation areas. Over the past two decades a number of environmental organisations that are promoting transfrontier conservation initiatives have either been established or supported through private funding, the late Anton Rupert's Peace Park Foundation (PPF) being the best-known example ([www.ppf.org](http://www.ppf.org)). Thus the private sector's stimulation of transfrontier conservation is sometimes seen as turning conservation into a transnational business opportunity (Chapin 2004; Hutton, Adams and Murombedzi 2005). The promotion of the Great Limpopo transfrontier conservation area was further enabled by neoliberal policy agendas adopted by southern Africa's governments (Duffy 2006; Ramutsindela 2004a,b; Spierenburg, Steenkamp and Wels 2008; Wolmer 2003).

### ***Resettlement as voluntary and for development***

According to our research in the area, most residents of the LNP began to feel the effects of economic displacement soon after the park was established in 2001, through the application of new park regulations prohibiting hunting and restricting extraction of forest products for commercial purposes. The decision to resettle people dates back to late 2003, when the inhabitants living along the Shingwedzi River were told they would be moved outside the park. The German Development Bank (KfW), the main donor funding the establishment of the park and the resettlement itself, stipulated that relocation would be voluntary.<sup>4</sup> In a recent article, Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington (2007) warn against the trend of calling resettlement of people in protected areas 'voluntary' due to complications in determining volition, and because of a lack of international (and often of national) policies to guide voluntary resettlement. They argue that the large majority of conservation areas in developing countries do not provide the conditions necessary to call a resettlement truly voluntary (that is, the opportunity for residents to have a 'real choice to say no to the government or conservation organisations') and therefore should be described as involuntary (2007, 2195). Unlike the case of voluntary resettlement, international policies for *involuntary* resettlement do exist. In 2001 the World Bank released such a policy (OP (operational manual) 4.12), which has since become the global standard used to judge the adequacy of resettlement schemes. The LNP adopted this *involuntary* resettlement policy precisely because it is an internationally recognised standard. The resulting inconsistency has created significant problems for both residents and park staff, as will be shown below.

The World Bank policy specifies that involuntary resettlement should be 'avoided whenever possible, and when unavoidable, it should be executed as a sustainable development programme, enabling people to share in project benefits' (Huggins, Barendse, Fischer et al. 2003; Limpopo National Park (LNP) 2007). As recommended by the framework, the LNP resettlement project is presented as a development initiative that will offer possibilities for better access to state services such as schools, health facilities, public transportation and jobs. However, it has been argued that the possibility that either transfrontier conservation or resettlement initiatives will lead to development is doubtful (Brockington and Igoe 2006; Spierenburg, Steenkamp and Wels 2006; Wolmer 2003). Other authors such as Karanth (2007, 323) see resettlement as a viable option for improving human lives if carried out in a 'socially just and equitable manner'.

### Resource management regime change: From a hunting concession to a national park

Originally, the concept of the Great Limpopo was that it would become a vast conservation area, including the Kruger National Park in South Africa, Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe, Banhine and Zinave National Parks and Coutada 16 in Mozambique – then a private hunting concession (Munthali and Soto 2001). However, the political economy of conservation instigated a more radical management change for Coutada 16 in Mozambique. The hunting concession was converted into a national park

because of its location, because it is not alone – it is attached to another ‘total park’ [Kruger National Park]. The idea was to open the boundaries of the Kruger and, if this were to be possible, the LNP also had to be a ‘total park’ ... the LNP had to follow the model of Kruger and Gonarezhou.<sup>5</sup>

The resultant dominance of the national park management regime in the transfrontier area was further reinforced by the effects of this particular conservation regime in the Kruger National Park. Rising elephant populations there were becoming an environmental concern, at least partially as a result of a moratorium on elephant culling implemented in 1995. South African National Parks (SANParks) saw transfrontier conservation as a potential solution to this problem and subsequently invested resources to support the new park (Venter, Naiman, Biggs et al. 2008). Opening the fence with Mozambique would also permit other animals to cross the border at risk of being hunted; therefore SANParks was reported to accept only a maximum park model as a condition for signing the TFCA treaty.<sup>6</sup> Another argument put forward to explain the emerging dominance of the national park management regime was South Africa’s national security concerns; a national park in Mozambique would diminish the chance of population concentrations at South Africa’s eastern border (Wolmer 2003).

The Peace Parks Foundation was assigned an important role in implementing the park model; the foundation has deployed some of its South African personnel to serve on the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) in Mozambique that is directly responsible for making management decisions in what is now the Limpopo National Park. The brochure that the PPF published in collaboration with SANParks to celebrate the signing of the final treaty on the Great Limpopo between the heads of state in December 2002 shows how both organisations interpreted the concept ‘park’:

“All a transfrontier *park* means is that the authorities responsible for the areas in which the primary focus is wildlife conservation, and which border each other across international boundaries, formally agree to manage those areas as one integrated unit according to a streamlined management plan. These authorities also undertake to *remove all human barriers* within the transfrontier park so that animals can roam freely” (South Africa National Parks (SANP) and Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) 2003, italics added).

According to Mozambican law,<sup>7</sup> a national park is conferred the highest status of protection and it is illegal to reside there. However, in practice all national parks in Mozambique have people living in them, while generally the national parks in the surrounding countries are void of inhabitants.

### Implications of adopting the park model: The decision to resettle

Despite different realities within Mozambican national parks, the adoption of the park model and its integration into the GLTP implied the need for resettlement, as was acknowledged by a senior park official:

It is clear that there is competition for resources – for land, for water, for forest resources between the animals and the human inhabitants. Since this kind of [park] model was chosen, there is no choice but to resettle people.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, alternative explanations for the emerging need for resettlement were put forward. A representative from the park's main donor organization pointed to South Africa's conservation regime:

We knew that there were people from the beginning, but somehow we thought that given our experiences in other parks people would be able to stay inside without a problem. However, shortly after, Kruger decided not to manage their fences and animals started coming in. The human–wildlife conflict began to be complicated and we realized that the best option was to resettle people.<sup>9</sup>

The human–wildlife conflict began to emerge not only as a result of unmanaged fences, as the donor suggests. Wild animals were translocated to the area and fences between KNP and LNP were actively cut (Anderson and Pariela 2005).

Following the Kruger model, the LNP was divided into three major zones: the tourism zone, the wilderness zone, and what is called the support zone, where the remaining 20,000 people live and for whom there are currently no plans for physical displacement. The tourism zone was superimposed on the Shingwedzi River valley and eight resident villages. The LNP management plan (DNAC (National Directorate for Conservation Areas) 2003) describes the rationale for this zoning in terms of a need for up-market development areas offering suitable game viewing and a 'wilderness' type experience that would attract private sector investment. Economic necessity, in combination with certain ideas about what 'wilderness' should look like to attract tourists (Draper, Spierenburg and Wels 2004), thus became a third apparent driver for resettlement:

The issue is that we needed to be able to prove that a park can make money. And in order to be able to make money we needed to be able to attract tourists. To attract tourists, we had to have some animals. At that time the park had no animals at all. Right now, we are the only park in Mozambique making money. At that time, resettlement was not even part of the plan. The government still did not see resettlement as necessary. We tried to convince them of it, but they did not agree.<sup>10</sup>

A fourth justification for resettlement was a perceived threat of poaching. In 2002 the PPF and the Mozambican Ministry of Tourism hired a team of consultants to conduct a socio-economic and attitudinal survey among the residents of the LNP.<sup>11</sup> They concluded that poaching was a 'very likely' threat to the park. The report speaks of 'bandits' in the area posing a threat, but also fears that residents will take advantage of

the potential 'resource' of high profit game coming into an area where the population is currently struggling for subsistence [which] creates a high potential for this to be seen as a potential means of additional income ... This is especially relevant since the Limpopo National Park was formerly designated as a hunting concession, where the killing of game for subsistence as well as economic purposes was viewed as the norm (Woodburne, Prangley and Mabuza 2002, 3–29).

Though the consultants noted that the former status of the area may have shaped residents' attitude towards wildlife, they suggest that the solution is to be sought in educating residents and by 'integrating them into the conservation process' (Woodburne, Prangley and Mabuza 2002, 4–11). No mention was made of the need to provide alternative sources of income and food before limiting their existing livelihood activities through implementing park regulations.

As problems became more acute, a number of options were discussed, including fenced enclaves. These debates resulted in a plan to resettle villages from the Shingwedzi River valley. Arguably, resettlement was implicit in the adoption of the park model. The decision was justified in terms of the mitigation of human and wildlife conflict, the promotion of tourism and reducing the threat of poaching.

### **Contradictions of resettlement: Residents' views**

In line with the World Bank involuntary resettlement policy, the Mozambican government and the LNP staff present resettlement as a development opportunity for residents. However, the understanding of what development means differs between those designing it and those subjected to it (see, for example, Laurie 2005). At a press conference on 23 May 2005, the then coordinator of the PIU of the LNP stressed that resettlement would benefit not only the park but also the communities. He announced that the first hundred families would be resettled soon, and remarked:

It is hoped that this will lead the remaining families to understand that the park will not damage their interests but will actually improve their lives. Families in this area can never rely on farming [alone] to escape from poverty: the soils are poor and the semi-arid climate guarantees that yields from agriculture will always be low.<sup>12</sup>

Residents are thus portrayed as poor and unable to develop themselves as long as they stay inside the park. Such views are also reflected in a comment by an ex-administrator of the LNP, who considers that 'people will learn that it is better to have a job than cattle'.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, these officials' statements are part of a certain discourse of (state-driven) modernisation or development. However, at the moment the resettlement process itself does not provide for alternative livelihood options that can bring this development.<sup>14</sup>

Interviews with residents in four villages designated to be resettled suggest that many feel that outside the park they will not have access to resources that hitherto have been key to their livelihood security. They are concerned about not having access to suitable land for agriculture, and facing a lack of forest resources and reduced grazing land. Elderly people in particular express concern about not having access to certain plants and resources to which they currently have easy access: 'When there is no rain and we cannot produce our maize, we will die because we won't know where the trees are that have fruits. When we get sick we will suffer because we won't know where the medicine trees are.'<sup>15</sup> Some residents are also concerned about access to land for their children. As part of the resettlement compensation, some agricultural fields will be replaced, but access to land for future generations 'will be identified but not developed' (LNP 2007, 37).

Wealthy families are even less likely to see advantages in the move, especially those who have very large numbers of cattle. They commonly cite three major reasons: they consider that working for money is not an attractive alternative option, that grazing is likely to be problematic as their cattle will have to compete for food and water with those of the host villages, and they are afraid of cattle theft which is more common outside the park. One man foresees, 'My children will have to stop studying because they will have to look after the cattle. Here we just let the cattle free for days at a time without having to watch them.'<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the power base of these influential families is likely to be eroded by merging into another village, or living on 'someone else's land'.

Quite a number of young people, however, claim that if all of the promises that government has made are kept, indeed there will be benefits that they consider

‘development’, such as proximity to health facilities, jobs and concrete houses. As one young woman said,

Life that we will have there will be an advantage if they take us out of this poverty. We will be living in a city because there is city life there. If they build houses for us it will be very good. We will be very satisfied there. We will be able to work [jobs] when we don’t have food. We want that type of city life.<sup>17</sup>

However, our studies also found that many residents doubt that the promises of better services, water pumps, houses and proper compensation (including job opportunities) will be fulfilled, and they have a deep distrust of the park project. When asked about how life outside of the park will be different, residents rarely perceive that it will be a positive change or bring development, but they recognise that resettlement represents respite from the emotional and physical damage inflicted by elephants.

### *Willingness to move: Changes over time*

Residents’ willingness to move is tied closely to their concept of where they think they can live a better life. Their weighing of advantages and disadvantages is a dynamic process which changes with the changing circumstances. It is important to reiterate that our study found that there is no unanimous local opinion about moving, but rather a wide range of opinions that have fluctuated over time (see also Woodburne, Prangley and Mabuza 2002, 7–14). Evidence suggests that while very few people actually *want* to leave, many have realised that in the long run it is potentially beneficial to ‘*accept*’ to leave. According to a survey carried out by IUCN<sup>18</sup> in 2001 when residents were first informed that they were now living within a national park the idea was met with considerable resistance.<sup>19</sup> In 2002 another survey was carried out by the Refugee Research Programme (RRP) from the University of Witwatersrand, when villagers were asked, ‘If you had to move, where would you go?’ – 95% of the respondents replied that they would refuse to move.<sup>20</sup> Although there are still people who claim to refuse to be resettled, five years later many people have ‘accepted’ to leave for diverse reasons associated with what resettlement means for them, including previous experiences with relocation and increasing problems with wildlife.

### *Previous experiences relocating*

The villagers in the Shingwedzi valley have already been forced to move a number of times (some up to five times) for various reasons over the last forty years. The rural villagisation policies of FRELIMO, following Mozambique’s independence, forced dispersed families into conglomerated villages. Shortly after, some families suffered multiple relocations due to the war (first to larger, safer villages, then often to South Africa), and then being repatriated back home after the war. In some cases, under the jurisdiction of recent versions of the same villagisation policy, people have been forced again into conglomerated villages. In some cases this forced relocation has caused increased resistance to moving again. As one resident said, ‘We have done always what the government has asked us to do. We moved here and there and we finally came back from South Africa because they told us to, and now this?’<sup>21</sup> This history of relocation is sometimes used against the residents, and questions of belonging are raised. As an LNP project coordinator expressed it in an article on the PPF-website, ‘many villagers only moved into the area after Mozambique’s civil war ended, and they are not used to living with wild animals’.<sup>22</sup> In fact, there has been documented evidence of long-term occupation of the area (Harries 1994).

Other people, especially young men who engage in migrant labour, refer to moving to South Africa and getting used to living in a different place when asked about their expectations for the resettlement outside of the park. One young man explained, '[Resettlement] will be like going to South Africa because you arrive there and you don't know anyone but then you get used to it. But it won't be so difficult this time because I will be with my whole family.'<sup>23</sup> Yet, many people remember feeling like second-rate citizens in South Africa. Another point of reference is the return of refugees from South Africa after the war: 'We decided to accept to leave the park because we remember when the government offered to help to bring people back here after the war – those who didn't take the help at that moment later got nothing.'<sup>24</sup>

Although residents from this area have a history of moving around, and they have proven to be extremely adaptable to new circumstances, proximity to land considered ancestral, and corresponding access to natural resources, have been important driving factors. According to the Refugee Research Programme (RRP) (2002), 70% of people who chose to return to Mozambique after the war did so to be able to produce their own food because in South Africa availability and access to land for cultivation was difficult and many people worked for money to buy food.<sup>25</sup> When returning from South Africa or protected villages after the war, many people chose to disregard villagisation efforts and returned to previous homesteads to live close to their fields.<sup>26</sup> As one woman expressed it, 'It is very difficult to fit into a place where you were not born.'<sup>27</sup>

### *The 'invasion' of wild animals*

At first the declaration of the park implied very few changes in the daily lives of the residents or in their relationship with wildlife (Norman 2005). However, as increasing numbers of elephants moved into the Limpopo National Park from Kruger Park, residents began to feel the repercussions of the park project on their lives. People began to complain about being at the mercy of the elephants: 'We cannot live here with elephants. We plant our corn to feed the elephants and then we suffer.'<sup>28</sup> The years following the implementation of the LNP were drought years that allowed for little agricultural production. Droughts in this area are not uncommon but previously subsistence hunting would carry the local residents through. The residents of the LNP learned quickly that hunting, even of small game for consumption, was against the rules and regulations of the park, and hunters were seriously punished if caught (DeMotts 2005; Norman 2005). The rainy season of 2005–6 did yield maize, but this simply attracted the elephants to the villages' cultivated areas. In 2006 more than 600 elephants were counted in a third of the park, indicating a potential total population of as many as 1,000.<sup>29</sup> That year was also the first year that the residents within the LNP experienced widespread human and wildlife conflict. Complaints about lions attacking livestock began to circulate, but it was not just the loss of crops and livestock that worried people. Their greatest fear became that of attacks on themselves by wildlife when moving around the park, and fear for their children's safety. Women reported that they have stopped carrying out activities such as fruit collecting and cultivation in certain areas.<sup>30</sup>

Residents complain they have no means of protecting themselves, their cattle or their harvests against wildlife: 'Whenever we report damage to our crops and the loss of our cattle to the people from the park nothing is done, but whenever we try to defend ourselves against the wild animals they are there within a minute to arrest us.'<sup>31</sup> No compensation is paid to residents for the loss of crops or livestock.



### **Stuck between a rock and a hard place: LNP staff negotiating resettlement**

Just as the conditions and perceptions that influence residents' volition to resettle are constantly in flux, park authorities are also under changing pressure from different stakeholders. In the case of resettlement, some demand a more participatory process (the donors and project evaluators) while others push for a faster process (the Mozambican government and in some cases the residents themselves). However, government simultaneously impeded project progress:

They told us to do a study about resettlement – we wrote a resettlement framework and described options for resettlement but then, in 2004 there were elections and for six months we were not allowed to talk about resettlement. The governor of the province of Gaza at that time said 'Who said you will be resettled?' While now he is the Vice-Minister of Tourism in the ministry and he says, 'Yes, you will be resettled.' No one wanted to take responsibility for that time and the process was stopped. In 2005 there was a [meeting of the] CCR [Consultative Committee on Resettlement] again to take up the issue and everyone blamed everyone else for the process being stopped. These pauses have had huge negative impacts in the field.<sup>32</sup>

Though officially resettlement is still labelled as voluntary, it is generally recognised as being 'induced',<sup>33</sup> as an ex-park administrator described it, given that the park was established without any consultation with the villagers and now they are forced to live with the consequences. Nevertheless, the label 'voluntary resettlement' persists because of political allergies to the word 'involuntary', both in Mozambique and in donors' home countries.<sup>34</sup> 'No donor would ever agree to involuntary resettlement. It cannot be involuntary. It indeed should be called negotiated or accepted resettlement. In fact what goes on is involuntary resettlement, but people are given incentives to convince them to leave.'<sup>35</sup>

As a result of the labelling, park authorities have been put under pressure to obtain proof of consent to resettlement. A certain resignation is sometimes expressed in regards to the move: 'This land has already been sold, they told us we have to go, so we will go.'<sup>36</sup> But consent is generally not easily forthcoming, and politicians have also directly exerted pressure on the residents, as this statement from the provincial governor exemplifies: 'We are offering you development and there are people here who are making it impossible for us to help you improve your lives.'<sup>37</sup>

### ***The consequences of induced volition***

The time and effort spent on 'inducing volition' have further prolonged an already lengthy process. As a consequence, many have become weary of the whole resettlement process.

Since the park was made we were supposed to leave. Since they said that, people don't construct houses, we don't plant trees. This house was built in 2000 but it was never really finished because the park came. There were trees but we stopped planting and the old ones died [papaya]. No one is investing, not to do things for nothing. Even now that we have accepted to leave, the park does nothing.<sup>38</sup>

As the extent of residents' decision-making power in the 'voluntary' resettlement was never clearly defined, confusion, frustration and delays have built up. This became most apparent in the negotiations about compensation. Village leaders were consulted on certain details of compensation, such as the design of the resettlement houses, only to be told afterwards that their desires could not be accommodated. One resident claimed his perceived rights under voluntary resettlement: 'Not one person from the communities wrote the government to ask to leave. The government wants us out so they need to do

what we say.' This led a community leader to comment on the participatory nature of what was supposed to be a voluntary process: 'You [park staff] should have just built houses and have presented them not having asked us for our opinions.'<sup>39</sup> For the park officials the situation was equally confusing, as their mandate was both ill-defined and shifting because of political push-and-pull. The resulting lack of transparency about the resettlement process at the local level created an environment of distrust. As one LNP staff member commented:

One of the issues is that, because of all of this confusion, no one [of the park staff] is working in Massingir. Everything is stopped. And I believe that the villages have not even been informed about what is going on. The problem is that there is really no news to give them – they do not like to go home without something to say, something positive. That is why we don't organise meetings now, even though it is an important message to tell people: why things are not working.<sup>40</sup>

This statement illustrates the conclusion of Rew, Fisher and Pandey (2006, 46) that in many resettlement projects local staff are 'prisoners themselves of completely contradictory pressures', yet they shoulder almost all of the responsibility for contact with residents. Despite such periodic stalemates, government and donors are increasing the pressure on LNP staff to resettle the first village as soon as possible. Funding for the resettlement of the rest of the villages will be jeopardised if the first one is not moved soon.

This resettlement process is a matter of pride for many people here. This pilot project cannot fail. The LNP depends on it to be able to resettle other villages, KFW needs it so their project is not criticised, the Mozambican government needs it because it is a model for resettlement and for tourism development for the whole country, the GLTFCA needs LNP to be a success or else it will fail as a project too. Kruger needs it to be a success or else they will have to put back up the fences, and even Zimbabwe, in order to deal with their population inside the park there, they will look to us as a model.<sup>41</sup>

### **Conclusion: (In)voluntary resettlement and the policy process**

The incorporation of Coutada 16 into the transfrontier park resulted in the creation of Limpopo National Park, entangling both residents and park staff in the complexities of (inter)national policy discourse and private sector interests in conservation. This web of global conservationist and private sector interests as well as the lure of conservation-fuelled economic development has largely shaped subsequent events and their internal contradictions, such as the (in)voluntary resettlement process.

This study has revealed the need for a differentiated view on volition in resettlement that goes beyond the recognition that there is a continuum between voluntary and involuntary resettlement (Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington 2007). First, whether or not people want to be resettled varies considerably from person to person. It is a complex question that involves personal histories, generational differences, family wealth, trust in governmental promises and submission of rights to governmental orders, as well as perceptions of the park and of what resettlement might bring. Second, it is equally important to note that there is a fluctuation in volition over time. As the resettlement policy process unfolds, altering residents' livelihood opportunities and their relationships with authorities, the willingness to resettle shifts back and forth along this continuum.

The heterogeneity of needs and preferences among inhabitants destined to be resettled is an issue that the World Bank involuntary resettlement framework attempts to address by promoting choice at the household level, and participation at the planning and implementation stages of resettlement. However, as this case has shown, meaningful

participation is seriously hampered when the demands of (inter)national policy discourses on development conflict with practical implementation of policy. This raises an issue for future research. While Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington (2007) bank on the validity of the international standards for involuntary resettlement, it remains to be seen if World Bank standards can be enforced, or are sufficient to protect resettled people from impoverishment.

In the case discussed here, efforts to adhere to World Bank standards for involuntary resettlement were complicated by residents' false sense of decision-making power and unrealistic political demands on park staff resulting from calling the resettlement 'voluntary'. This led to conflicts and frustrations for residents, staff, donors and government that may not have emerged had the resettlement been regarded as involuntary from the beginning, and had efforts been invested in the negotiation of just compensation. The LNP, because of the context from which it emerged, could not provide conditions for a voluntary resettlement process. However, as one LNP staff remarked, 'The politicians don't realise the importance on the ground of one label or another.'<sup>42</sup>

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### Notes

1. Chimangue leader, 22 September 2007.
2. The GLTP refers to the three national parks. Another commonly used name is the GLTFCA (Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and Conservation Area) which refers to the national parks and the space between them.
3. These were carried out by the University of Witwatersrand Refugee Research Programme in 2002 and Rachel DeMotts in 2003–4, both courtesy of Rachel DeMotts.
4. Contrary to the Mozambican government's initial intentions as claimed by several anonymous respondents.
5. LNP staff member, interview, 30 April 2007.
6. KfW representative, interview, 17 April 2008.
7. The LNP is classified as a national park of IUCN category 2. Although a national policy governing conservation areas is in the process of being developed, currently the Land Law no. 19/97 and the Forestry and Wildlife Law no. 10/99 determine the rights to land and use of natural resources.
8. LNP staff member, interview, 30 April 2007.
9. KfW representative, interview, 17 April 2008.
10. LNP staff member, interview, 30 April 2007.
11. Note that this was *after* the declaration of the LNP.
12. Press statement published by the Smart News Network International, ([www.bernama.com/cgi-bin/ssn2/list\\_item.cgi?peserta/mozambique/mo2505\\_2.txt](http://www.bernama.com/cgi-bin/ssn2/list_item.cgi?peserta/mozambique/mo2505_2.txt), last accessed on 27 May 2005).
13. Interview, 26 April 2007.
14. It has been argued that small-scale agricultural production is deeply distrusted by Mozambican government officials and believed to be an insufficient basis for the development (Hughes 2006).
15. Nanguene female resident, interview, 23 May 2007.

16. Macavene male resident, interview, 3 June 2007.
17. Nanguene female resident, interview, 22 May 2007.
18. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
19. IUCN report, February 2002.
20. RRP database, digitalised by Rachel DeMotts. See also (RRP 2002). The database contains interviews with 84 heads of households and 10 local government officials.
21. Makandezulo male resident, interview, 17 November, 2006.
22. See [www.peaceparks.org](http://www.peaceparks.org), article 'Villager relocation a win-win', last accessed 27 June 2007.
23. Nanguene male resident, interview, 16 March 2007.
24. Nanguene male resident, interview, 24 April 2007.
25. Interviews in Nanguene and Macavene 2006–8.
26. Interviews with various village members of Nanguene and Macavene 2006–8; Leonardo, 2007.
27. Nanguene female resident, interview, 26 April, 2007.
28. Nanguene female resident, interview, 28 February 2007.
29. LNP wildlife manager, interview, 26 November 2006.
30. Interviews in Chimangue, Makandezulo and Machamba, October 2007.
31. Mavodze resident, interview, April 2005.
32. LNP staff member, interview, 30 April 2007.
33. Interview with former park director, March 2006, and other sources.
34. Various sources, anonymous.
35. Anonymous donor representative, 17 August 2007.
36. Interviews in Macavene May and June 2007.
37. Governor's speech in Mavodze (a village along the Shingwedzi River), 23 May 2007.
38. Macavene male resident, interview 16 May 2007.
39. Community meeting, Massingir 14 March 2007.
40. LNP staff member, interview, 31 July 2007.
41. LNP staff member, 19 September 2007.
42. LNP staff member, interview, 30 April 2007.

### Notes on contributors

Jessica Milgroom is an interdisciplinary PhD candidate at the University of Wageningen, The Netherlands. Her PhD research focuses on conservation-induced resettlement and post-resettlement livelihood in the Limpopo National Park, Mozambique. She has worked in Brazil, Mexico, Côte d'Ivoire and Spain on diverse topics in agricultural development including agro-forestry and soil erosion. Previous publications have focused on tools for on-farm participatory monitoring and evaluation, and environmental impacts of organic olive farming. Other research interests include natural resource conflict management, policy in practice, and the role of action research in development. Her email address is [jessica.milgroom@wur.nl](mailto:jessica.milgroom@wur.nl).

Marja Spierenburg is Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in the Department of Culture, Organisation and Management. Her research in southern Africa over many years has been engaged in various dimensions of land reform and natural resources management. She is currently involved in several research projects focusing on the role of the private (for-profit and non-profit) sector in nature conservation and development, as well as in land reforms in the region. Her publications include, among others, *Strangers, spirits and land reforms: Conflicts about land in Dande, northern Zimbabwe* (Brill 2004) and, together with Sandra Evers and Harry Wels, *Competing jurisdictions: Settling land claims in Africa* (Brill 2005). Her email address is [mj.spierenburg@fsw.vu.nl](mailto:mj.spierenburg@fsw.vu.nl).

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