

## Elephant-induced Displacement and the Power of Choice: Moral Narratives about Resettlement in Mozambique's Limpopo National Park

Rebecca Witter

Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada  
Research undertaken at: Department of Anthropology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA; and  
Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada

E-mail: [rebecca.witter@ires.ubc.ca](mailto:rebecca.witter@ires.ubc.ca)

### Abstract

Despite the centrality of moral assumptions to defining environmental crises and solutions, research in discursive political ecology has paid inadequate attention to conservation's moral dimensions. Conservation-related resettlement is a problem for people working and living in protected areas across the globe, around which diverse ideas, meanings, and narratives emerge and circulate. Drawing from participant observation and interview data, I assess the interactions between two 'moral narratives' that emerged in Mozambique's Limpopo National Park (LNP) where international wildlife translocations were ongoing and resettlement is underway. LNP residents employed a 'moral narrative of protection' to achieve their objective of living free from conflict with wildlife. Conservation managers employed a 'moral narrative of choice' to advance their goal of achieving a voluntary resettlement programme. These divergent narratives reflect these actors' morally defined standards and expectations regarding people's responsibilities towards the environment, other species, and/or other people. Taken together they reveal important contradictions to the state's claim that the resettlement programme is voluntary. Instead, they indicate that resettlement processes are taking place in a displacement context wrought by conflict with wildlife, elephants in particular. My findings advance understandings of the moral dimensions of conservation discourse and the complex relationship between displacement and volition.

**Keywords:** conservation-related resettlement, moral narratives, choice, elephant-induced displacement, Limpopo National Park, Mozambique

### INTRODUCTION

#### From a wilderness vision to the vision of choice

Over a decade ago, Bryant (2000: 678) argued that although "politicized moral discourses... are inevitably at the heart of all conservation projects," research in discursive political ecology had paid inadequate attention to conservation's moral dimensions. Since then political ecologists have shown

increased interest in conservation narratives. Narratives are stories—chronicles infused with meaning—through which actors (or storytellers) communicate their expectations, garner support for particular objectives, and interpret and shape management decisions (Roe 1991; Cronon 1992). This growing body of work has made significant contributions, many of which are foundational to this analysis; nonetheless, it is implicated by Bryant's critique. In what follows, I seek to advance understandings of the moral dimensions of conservation discourse through a study of the moral meanings people attach to, and derive from, the events and relations that characterise conservation-related resettlement in Mozambique's Limpopo National Park (LNP). I focus in particular on the interactions, inconsistencies, and points of connection between what I refer to as LNP residents' "moral narrative of protection" and conservation managers' "moral narrative of choice."

Moral narratives reflect actors' moral codes or their ideas about right and wrong, as defined by the principles or standards

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accepted by some segment of society (Edel and Edel 2000). Various environmental, socio-economic, and rights narratives validate and denounce human displacement and resettlement as mechanisms for protecting nature and conserving biological diversity (e.g., Wilhusen 2002; Wolmer 2007; Dowie 2009). Such narratives can also be described as “moral narratives,” because they invariably include assumptions about people’s proper relationship with, and responsibilities towards, the environment, other species, and other people. I employ the phrase “moral narratives” here to emphasise my interests in these under-examined dimensions of conservation discourse.

Among the more enduring narratives to have influenced environmental decision-making in Africa pertains to wilderness. Colonial visions of Africa described colonial desires for open and uninhabited lands, outside of culture, where nature could persist in its eternity (Adams and McShane 1992). Visions of a “wild Eden” rather than a place that was inhabited, claimed, and managed, led to a secondary portrayal of Africans as intruders on paradise (Anderson and Grove 1987; Adams and McShane 1992). Thus, realising a wilderness vision necessitated “relocating thousands of Africans whose agency had in fact shaped the landscape for millennia” (Neumann 1995: 148). Ideas about wilderness persist in contemporary African conservation contexts with important consequences for wildlife and for the people who live and work with wildlife (Wolmer 2007; Garland 2008). Wilderness narratives, however, are not unchanged, and they are not without company. Where ideas about wilderness keep their distance from resettlement discourse and debate, other visions, ideas, and narratives emerge and coalesce.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, national and international conservation efforts have addressed species and biodiversity loss, poverty reduction, and, in some cases, human rights. Additionally, a call among conservationists for “African solutions to African problems” sought to diminish Western influence and to emphasise African agency, knowledge, and experience in achieving conservation goals (van Amerom and Büscher 2005). Nonetheless, many conservation projects still mandate, or at least result in, resettlement.

A wilderness narrative, while not entirely absent from, is also not central to, resettlement decision-making in the LNP. Where it does emerge, it has been expressed in relatively technical terms, rather than romantic ones. For example, a primary objective of park implementation is “to maintain the current ‘wilderness’ (in the sense of natural or near-natural, largely untransformed) character of LNP” (MITUR 2003: 26). This objective has been operationalised in the ostensibly practical, though no less political, efforts to replace residents with tourists, villages with lodges, footpaths with 4x4 trails, agricultural fields with wildlife vistas, and domestic animals with wild ones. Among these efforts, wildlife translocations, where species are captured from neighbouring Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa then relocated over the border and released in the LNP, the free or human-unassisted movement of wildlife over the border and resettlement have been central to advancing conservation in this region (PPF 2003a,b).

In a terrain of competing expectations and interpretations about these projects and processes, two moral narratives emerged and have persisted in the LNP. Since park implementation in 2001, resident conflict with wildlife has increased significantly, and residents have generally not been permitted to defend themselves from wildlife encounters. Residents have been particularly concerned with elephants, whose numbers have increased twenty-fold and who have severely diminished residents’ access to cultural and environmental resources. The narrative of protection draws from customarily informed expectations of those in positions of authority, and residents’ perceptions that park managers have fallen far short of these. LNP residents employed it to hold conservation managers and the state accountable for failing to defend them from encounters with wildlife who are protected in the park.

Since at least 2003, conservation managers have been attempting to implement a voluntary resettlement programme (Milgroom and Spierenburg 2008). Most residents have preferred to continue living within the LNP, though there is indication that this is now changing. The moral narrative of choice articulates with World Bank resettlement guidelines, which serve as the standard against which a variety of resettlement programmes, including the LNP, are developed and assessed (Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington 2007; Milgroom and Spierenburg 2008)<sup>1</sup>. Conservation managers employed it to argue that LNP residents were not being forced to resettle, and to build support for, and compliance with, the resettlement programme.

Together the narratives of protection and choice describe a situation where resettlement processes are taking place in a displacement context wrought by conflict with wildlife. This, as of yet, largely unexamined argument draws from a significant modification in recent years where “displacement” has been broadened beyond its conventional meaning in conservation and development policy to refer to a group’s involuntary physical movement away from their place of residence. The term now also includes restrictions in access to resources “even if the affected groups are not physically relocated” (Cerneja 2006: 8). Thus displacement can also mean, as Lubkemann (2008) described it, being “displaced in place.”

Following a discussion of narratives in conservation, I introduce the research site and methodology. I then provide a brief overview of elephant populations, elephant translocations, and human-elephant conflict in the region. Thereafter, I examine how the narratives of choice and protection emerged and interacted. I focus on the ways in which actors employed their respective narratives to advance and stabilise their objectives in the face of the competing storyline. I draw from my findings to highlight the need for more serious consideration in scholarship and policy of how being displaced limits the choices people have with respect to resettlement. I also highlight some directions for future research geared towards advancing understandings of conservation’s moral dimensions.

## Conservation narratives

In recent decades, and in an effort to elucidate the complex relationships between conservation and political-economic developments, scholars have tracked the discursive origins and travel routes of widespread ideas that influence environmental decision-making (Adams and Hulme 2001). They have identified important inconsistencies between policy narratives and the events they seek to describe (Roe 1991). They have assessed how conservation-related actors take up globally and regionally circulating ideas and assumptions to mobilise support for conservation objectives (Adams and Hulme 2001; Campbell 2002; van Amorem and Büscher 2005). As a related point, they have also illustrated the propensity for 'global narratives' to also be 'globalising', to enlist diverse ideas into a wider discourse that is promoted transnationally (Jeanrenaud 2002; Büscher and Whande 2007). These scholars have addressed global and globalising narratives carefully, attuned, perhaps especially in African contexts, to issues of power and agency (Adams and Hulme 2001; Büscher and Whande 2007). They have been less finely attuned to the narratives' moral dimensions.

That is, scholarship on conservation narratives seems to recognise as a given that moral assumptions are central to defining environmental crises and solutions, prioritising conservation over other social projects, and interpreting the social consequences of conservation (Bryant 2000). Scholars readily acknowledge that changing trends in conservation feature an enduring struggle to reconcile the moral imperative of protecting species and landscapes with the moral dilemma of implementing projects that, in one way or another, undermine human rights (Wilhusen et al. 2002; Redford and Sanderson 2006). Some have noted that narratives enable their storytellers to take the moral high ground (Jeanrenaud 2002; Büscher 2010) or to feel morally entitled (Bücher and Whande 2007). With little more than passing reference, however, the moral dimensions of conservation discourse remain largely unexamined. I further elucidate this point with respect to scholarship on "landed moral economies" which was also implicated in Bryant's critique.

Drawing from Thomson (1971) and Scott (1976), among others, moral economy studies tracked the emergence and re-emergence of people's articulations against colonial, state, and capitalistic structures. In the early 1990s, political ecologists applied landed moral economy thinking, which foregrounds "struggles over norms, values, and expectations" about livelihood (Neumann 1998: 37) to conservation contexts (Peluso 1992; Moore 1993). These scholars pointed out that if conflicts over conservation are both material and symbolic, then it is important to recognise that "peasants had their own notions of morality, rights, criminality and subversion" (Peluso 1992: 12; also cited in Moore 1993: 382). An important critique of this approach is that it tends to universalise the objectives and expectations of disempowered people and, therefore, what it means to be disempowered (Neumann 1998). In the words of Bryant, "the ways in which complex and contrasting moral

discourses surrounding... what the protagonists believe to be 'good' and 'proper' is not systematically or fully explored." Instead, "moral discourse tends to be reduced to a landed moral economy view" (Bryant 2000: 676, note 5).

Thus, in the same way that studies of peasant moral economies risked simply documenting the "subordinate value systems" of marginalised people (Evans 1987: 211; cited in Neumann 1998: 37), the global narrative approach risks merely documenting (and arguably further universalising) the dominant ones. While this comparison is instructive, it is also noteworthy that more recent work on moral economies (e.g., Edelman 2005; Chernela and Zanotti Forthcoming), "virutal moralities" (e.g., Dolan 2010), and "instrumental ethics" (e.g., MacDonald 2013) places the critique on increasingly fragile ground. Nonetheless, much more can be done to link scholars' concerns about power and malfeasance to what it is that those participating in, or affected by, conservation take to be good and right.

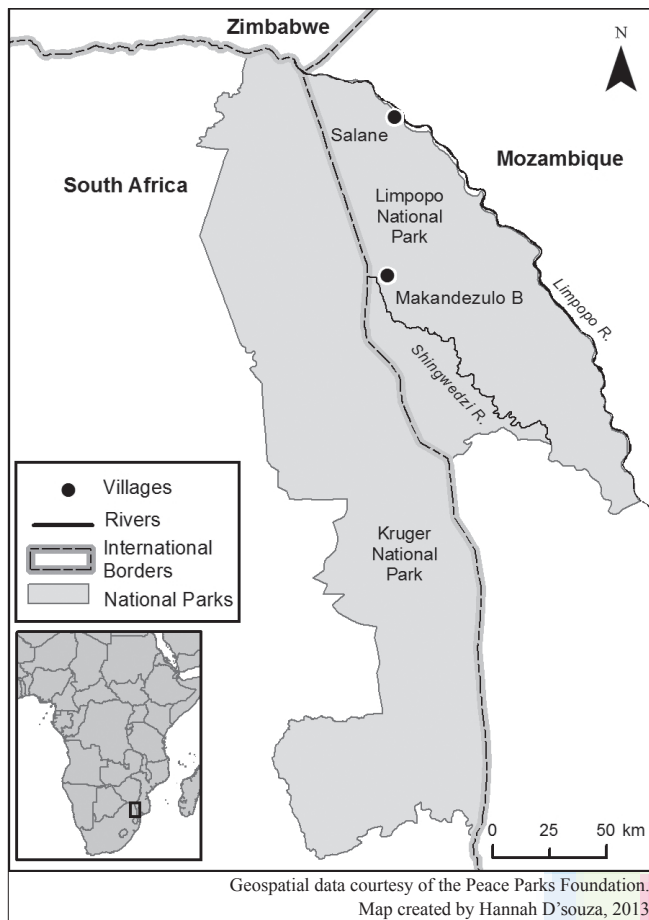
In light of this need, in what follows, I assess the moral codes that the narratives of protection and choice reflect and reaffirm. I also identify important inconsistencies between these narratives and the events and relations they seek to describe. In addition, and drawing on scholarship in anthropology and environmental history, I view narratives as stories that forge (dis)connections between: groups with divergent opinions, society and the state, and individuals and their respective moral communities. Moral communities provide "a sense of integration, order and shared values" and remind us that an "individual's understanding of morality is embedded and sustained by the communities with which he or she identifies" (Steinberg and Wanner 2008:9).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### The park(s), the state, and the people

At the turn of the century, international funding and NGO support increased the Mozambican government's capacity to pursue economic development through transfrontier conservation (Dear and McCool 2010). The 2001 designation of the 10,000 sq. km LNP was an important step towards achieving this goal. The LNP now forms the Mozambican side of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP); the latter came into being in 2002 with the signing of a memorandum of understanding by the heads of state from Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. The GLTP is a massive area that also includes the KNP, the Makuleke Region in South Africa, and four designated conservation zones in Zimbabwe. Conservationists are working to expand the GLTP from the existing 35,000 sq. km area to an even larger area, the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTCA), which would span 100,000 sq. km, making it "the world's greatest animal kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

An additional important step towards achieving national and transfrontier goals was the nation's development of a resettlement programme for approximately 6,500 of the 27,000 people residing in the LNP. While all land belongs to



**Figure 1**  
**Map of the Limpopo National Park, Mozambique**

the state in Mozambique, in the late 1990s significant changes to national land and wildlife laws sought to emphasise and secure the rights of local communities to manage resources (Anstey 2001; Tanner 2002; Lunstrum 2008). Mozambican law does not allow economic activity, resource use, or occupation within total protection zones like the LNP (Tanner 2002). As a result, and as is well-recognised by some project authorities, the resettlement programme has progressed in a context of legal ambiguity regarding the tenure rights of the people living in areas that are subsequently declared total protection zones (MITUR 2007: 24). Nonetheless, the first village resettlement, involving the residents of Nanguene, occurred in 2008.<sup>3</sup>

A wide gamut of actors with diverse viewpoints, experiences, and institutional mandates influence protected area conservation. These include local residents, local governmental officials, conservation and development practitioners, researchers, private game ranchers, tourism operators, and members of civil society. By focusing on LNP “managers” and “residents”—a dichotomy that is notably coarse—my intention is neither to diminish nor to over-emphasise the role of these actors in contributing to the resettlement context. Furthermore, I do not wish to imply that either group is homogeneous (see Brosius et al. 1998). However, I do wish to make very clear that there are significant

differences in each group’s objectives and the meanings they attach to achieving these.

In this study, “managers” include those people working in conjunction with national and transfrontier conservation, especially those who work with the resettlement programme. The development and implementation of conservation projects in Mozambique is distributed throughout several organisations that attempt to link village, district, provincial, and national levels of governance with the international and multilateral organisations that also shape the national conservation agenda. At regional and international levels, park implementation was, at the time this research took place, overseen by the Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) based in South Africa and funded by the German government-owned development bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) (MITUR 2007)<sup>4</sup>. The Mozambican state, however, was and is ultimately responsible for all decisions and programmes related to protected area conservation in its territory including conservation-related resettlement. Within Mozambique, protected area conservation falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism’s (MITUR) National Directorate of Conservation Areas.

“Residents” refers, generally, to those people living in the Shingwedzi Watershed region of the LNP who are targeted by resettlement efforts, and, more specifically, to the residents of Makandezulo B. According the Chief’s registry, in 2005, the village was comprised of approximately 400 residents, though this number varies seasonally and annually. Makandezulo B is located approximately 10 km from the fence that, though down in some sections and damaged in others, still separates much of the LNP from South Africa’s KNP.

The entirety of Mozambique is subject to cyclical drought, and the land comprising the LNP is reported to receive the country’s lowest levels of rainfall (Holden 2001). Nonetheless, residents engage in subsistence-based, rain-fed agriculture focused primarily on maize production. Residents also keep cattle, goats, and chickens and depend on wild plant and tree products. For well over a century, Makandezulo residents, men in particular, have engaged in migrant labour to the South African mines and the KNP. In the KNP and in the hunting concession that preceded the LNP, they worked as game rangers, poaching guards, cooks, and mechanics, among other jobs. More recently, some Makandezulo residents have been employed by the LNP.

## Methods and approach

My research findings draw from participant observation and interview data, which describe a history of 1) human movement and displacement, and 2) corresponding shifts in customary resource access and control (Witter 2010). The research focused on the Makandezulo region where I intermittently resided: in July 2003, from July 2006 to July 2007, and in October 2011. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 Makandezulo B residents and 12 conservation managers. I sampled interview participants through judgement sampling, in which I selected individuals opportunistically, and using the referrals of one expert to identify other experts. I also reviewed World Bank



standards on involuntary resettlement, LNP resettlement policy documents, and online news releases about wildlife translocations provided primarily by the PPF.

I analysed data thematically, i.e., I organised, processed, and coded it according to themes or categories (Ryan and Bernard 2003). I identified themes like ‘conservation-related resettlement’ and ‘choice’ deductively, drawing from preliminary research findings, and related literature. Other themes like ‘human-wildlife conflict’ (especially with elephants) emerged inductively from grounded theory or the data itself (see Glaser and Straus 1967).

Wildlife in the LNP, namely elephants, lions, and leopards, fascinated and intimidated me. However, I rarely initiated the topic due to the highly sensitive nature of human-wildlife relations there. Hunting—not to mention agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry—is illegal. While enforcements on these latter practices have not been undertaken, residents are regularly suspected of poaching, and some have been beaten and/or arrested. Seeking to avoid involving myself in yet another explicitly contentious topic (my research already featured a focus on human displacement) and collecting data that could potentially harm residents, I resisted initiating discussion about human-wildlife relations except in explicitly historical contexts. Nonetheless, resident discourse in a variety of research contexts drew, even demanded, attention to the role that conflict—particularly with elephants—played in resettlement negotiations.

## RESULTS

### Wildlife translocations as moral practice

Elephant-induced displacement in the LNP results, first, from a significant increase in elephant populations since the implementation of the LNP in 2001. While there is a history of human-wildlife conflict in the region, such interactions have skyrocketed since park implementation. Second, residents are not permitted to defend themselves, their family, and their resources against protected animals. Third, in most but not all instances, residents have found the LNP’s response to their complaints about wildlife highly unsatisfactory. Before elucidating these and other moral dilemmas related to wildlife translocations, I will first introduce their moral imperatives.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, diverse groups of people, including colonial sport hunters and settlers, members of several African polities, and the ancestors of current Makandezulu residents, coalesced in the Great Limpopo region to hunt elephants for ivory, among other activities (Wagner 1980; Carruthers 1995; Murray 1995; Witter 2010). Although elephants remained in the Great Limpopo region at the turn of the century, their populations were severely diminished (Wagner 1980; Murray 1995).

In the early twentieth century, and in reaction to what they perceived to be eminent wildlife extinctions, the Transvaal government established game reserves on the South African side of the Great Limpopo region. These preceded the 1926 designation of the KNP. In the Shingwedzi and Sabi reserves

hunting was prohibited and local people were economically displaced and/or obliged to relocate (Carruthers 1995). Elephants continued to migrate to present-day Mozambique, particularly during the dry season, where some were hunted (Whyte et al. 2003; Mavhunga and Spierenburg 2009). In reaction, the South African government requested that its territorial neighbours protect what it considered to be “union elephants” on lands adjacent to the KNP (Mavhunga and Spierenburg 2009).

Portuguese colonial leaders in Mozambique eschewed a wilderness vision of this region for other priorities, namely that of a labour reserve and, less importantly, a hunting ground. However, they soon realised the potential value of game migrating over the border and, perhaps, yielded to pressure from South Africa (Mavhunga and Spierenburg 2009). In the 1930s, the Portuguese colonial government began to manage the area currently comprising the LNP as a hunting reserve or *coutada* (Duffy 1997). In the *coutada* “hunting was controlled, but not prohibited” (Mavhunga and Spierenburg 2009: 15), and enforcement appears to have been negligible. Though migrant labour formed their primary source of income, local residents continued to hunt in the region, and they served as game scouts for colonial hunters (Mavhunga and Spierenburg 2009; Witter 2010).

The transfrontier movement of elephants and other wildlife decreased following Mozambican Independence in 1975. That same year, the South African government built a fence on the eastern edge of the KNP to discourage poaching and other forms of illegal human movement through the KNP. The fence contributed to securing—materially and symbolically—South African borders in a period when white minority rule was falling all around them. Over the following two decades, military forces associated with Mozambique’s Civil War severely reduced elephant populations throughout the country (Hatton et al. 2001). By 2001, only an estimated 30–50 elephants were living in the newly formed LNP (Anderson and Pariela 2005).

The overall decline in elephant populations suffered during war coupled with a reported elephant over-population in the KNP—not to mention the draw elephants have for tourists—contributed to making the translocation of elephants, among other types of wildlife, a central component of transfrontier conservation. Cross-border wildlife translocations from the KNP into the LNP and the removal of some sections of South Africa’s “dreaded” fence (Moosa 2001) between these two national parks infused transfrontier conservation with important senses of momentum and morality. Elephant translocations in particular, were timed to coincide with events organised to build public and international support for the LNP (PPF 2003c).

Providing the most salient example, government officials organised the first in a series of translocations in conjunction with a ground-breaking ceremony for the GLTP (Spierenburg et al. 2006). Rather than expressing the moral imperative of wildlife translocations through visions of wilderness, political leaders described the need to renew and restore connections

between nations—what, for example, South African Minister of Environment, Mohammed Valli Moosa, referred to as an “African Renaissance” (Moosa 2001; van Amoren and Büscher 2005). For his part, former South African president and global moral icon, Nelson Mandela, who also presided over the event, treated the translocation of elephants and the removal of fencing between the two nations as powerful gestures towards renewal in the wake of southern Africa’s colonial and apartheid past (Mandela 2001).

Moosa (2001) further characterised the wildlife translocations as “the biggest animal relocation anywhere in the world” and “second only to the moving of Noah’s Ark.” Moosa (2001) envisioned that this initial translocation of 25 elephants would be the first in a series of instalments planned to accomplish conservation managers’ goal of translocating 1,000 elephants in three years. Although early translocatees often returned back to the KNP against planners’ wishes, between 2001 and 2003, 111 elephants in total were moved from the KNP to the LNP (PPF 2003a). By 2005, there were at least 150 elephants in the LNP (Anderson and Pariela 2005: 16), and conservationists began to celebrate independent crossings. Estimates in 2006 and 2007 pushed the number up to over 600. By 2011, conservation managers estimated that over 1,000 elephants had crossed into the LNP.

In the LNP, elephants have become proxies for wilderness, post-apartheid reconstruction, and for decisions made in the name of conservation. But elephants are more than proxies. They are active participants in the processes that shape and determine resettlement decision-making, and their growing numbers indicate a shift in control over resource management from local to national authority. For LNP residents, increased elephant populations, even if reminiscent of historic times, also took on new meanings, not of renewal and reconnection, but of disempowerment and displacement.

### **The elephant is the centre of conversation—and not conservation—everyday**

During a meeting of LNP residents and managers (that I discuss in detail below), an exasperated LNP manager exclaimed, “The elephant cannot be the centre of conversation everyday!” My own observations certainly suggested otherwise. In 2006–2007, the topic of elephants was an emergent and strikingly unavoidable research theme, which often assumed a central position in everyday conversation. As their numbers have increased, since the launch of wildlife translocations, elephants have destroyed trees, fields, and water sources, incited fear and frustration, and disrupted ceremonies, and even prompted one family to abandon their homestead. Thus, in interviews, general discussion, and in ceremony, residents named elephants as one phenomena—along with death, drought, witchcraft, and the park—that made life, and particularly life since the implementation of the LNP, exceptionally bad.

In the dry season, relatively indirect evidence spurred on the oratory; elephant tracks, elephant dung, and elephant damage to trees were ubiquitous throughout the LNP. As the seasons changed, so did the actual elephants. They were drawn into

Makandezulu B by the growth of fresh corn in fields, the relatively persistent water sources provided by hand dug wells in dry river beds, and *nkanu* or *marula* (*Sclerocarya birrea*) fruit harvests. In the village, elephants damaged fields, raided fruit stores, and interfered with forestry practices. These were the most common instances of elephant-induced displacement; the most offensive involved damage to ancestral gravesites.

Such places, often marked by salient trees, have particular cultural and historical significance, not only because they contain remains of the deceased, but also because they symbolise the residents’ connections with their ancestors. Each village in the LNP has a particular lineage of ancestors that legitimises residents’ rights to resources in the region. Living (and predominantly male) lineage authorities act as the ancestors’ intercessors, and the ancestors bestow on these leaders (both traditional leaders and contemporary chiefs) the authority to make decisions on behalf of the village. At ancestral gravesites, traditional leaders consult with ancestors on behalf of the village both through story-telling and, as in the example below, more ritualised forms of communication like chanting.

The *nknau* tree is well known throughout southern Africa due to its versatility and use in a number of products. In urban centres, *nkanu* fruit is sold in the form of the popular Amarula cream liqueur. In rural locales, *nkanu* trees have several subsistence, medicinal, and functional purposes, the most important of which is beer. Throughout February and early March, women in Makandezulu B collected massive quantities of *nkanu* fruit to make beer for village-wide ceremonies in honour of the ancestors. Elephants, however, share residents’ affinity for *nkanu* fruit, and the 2007 *nkanu* season marked the beginning of a prolonged increase in elephant activity within the village. By day, fear of meeting elephants in the bush and along roads reduced women’s harvest time, and many women gathered fruit only from trees located closer to home. To add insult to injury, by night, elephants entered homesteads and kraals to eat stored fruit. The fear evoked by elephants also diminished travel between villages, and many families were not able to reunite for ancestral celebrations.

The saliency of the elephant issue was further symbolised by the attention elephants received during the actual *nkanu* ceremony in Makandezulu B, which took place at an ancestral gravesite. During this annual affair, residents seek fortune for the coming year by affirming their relationships with the ancestors and with one another. They give thanks to the ancestors for that which has gone well and ask for help for that which has not. As in the example below, traditional leaders sometimes achieve this by asking the deceased to speak to the ancestors on behalf of the village. These appeals provide a moral framework for interpreting and responding to conservation, among other types of challenges, in ways that are meaningful and unifying. The following is an excerpt from a call and response chant directed at the ancestors:

*Traditional leader:* Where(ever) we go, there are elephants, what is happening?

*Group of residents:* I-A. [Indicating enthusiastic support]

*Traditional leader:* The animals don't eat in the forest; they are eating here at our homes

*Group:* I-A. *Traditional leader:* Send away the elephants... Send away the elephants.

This excerpt provides an example of the way in which Makandezulu B residents worked as a moral community to interpret elephant-induced displacement as a moral issue.

In this and other contexts, the moral narrative of protection was a symbolic resource that promoted "compliance with standards for acceptable behaviour and the moral values that support them" (Basso 1984: 24). Significantly, residents directed it both at ancestors and, as I will show next, conservation managers. Residents understand that conservation authorities (in addition to their own leaders and ancestors) are now responsible for managing human-elephant interactions in the LNP. Thus, residents' moral expectations of those in positions of authority now also extend to conservation managers.

For centuries, overlapping and competing layers of authority have governed wildlife management in the Great Limpopo region. The South African state, in various forms, has controlled access to wildlife for nearly a century. In Mozambique, the distance between Portuguese colonial authorities and resource management was substantially greater (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983), and the issue of wildlife governance remained subject to chiefs and other leaders. Under customary authority, a leader's constituents were entitled to land, resources, and security. Makandezulu B residents were permitted to hunt and to protect themselves during wildlife encounters.

Following independence, customary systems of leadership lost power, but in rural locales like the region of the LNP, wildlife management remained subject to local authority. Concurrently, rural Mozambicans also began to hold the state responsible for the economic, social, and political security of its citizenry in exchange for their allegiance. For Makandezulu B residents, this particular moral imperative peaked during the height of civil war, when residents gathered in new village sites seeking protection from ensuing violence in the region. It re-emerged when those who took refuge in South Africa returned home to help rebuild the new nation. Instead of finding increased access to jobs and infrastructure, within a matter of years, residents faced state sanctioned wildlife translocations and stricter laws against hunting. As a result, local residents began to perceive that elephants, and not the citizenry, were being protected by the state (see Anderson and Pariela 2005: 24); they perceived (and positioned) themselves as the ones in danger, even 'endangered'. In the face of great instability, therefore, the moral narrative of protection serves as an enduring "moral compass" (Cronon 1992), a means of orienting and, where necessary, measuring the accountability of resource authorities—be they ancestral or governmental.

In the next section, I provide two particularly poignant,

though not particularly unique, illustrations of how human-wildlife conflict and conservation-related resettlement emerged in interactions between LNP residents and managers. I continue to highlight how residents interpreted, communicated, and negotiated elephant-induced displacement through a moral narrative of needing protection. For their part, conservation managers translated resident willingness to discuss the details of resettlement into a "moral narrative of choice." Thereafter, I provide a detailed discussion of conservation-related resettlement in the LNP.

### The development-turned-resettlement meeting

On March 6, 2007, conservation managers, government officials, and individuals representing non-governmental agencies and organisations, local villages, and district businesses came together to discuss, using limited English-Shangaan translation, the potential for transfrontier conservation to boost economic development in the region. With respect to the items on the meeting agenda—development, tourism, infrastructure, security, and health—conservation managers and LNP residents expressed similar aspirations. Their aspirations differed significantly, however, with respect to the means through which development objectives might be obtained.

At least implicitly, members of the conservation group focused on things that they envisioned occurring in conjunction with or, better yet, *following resident resettlement*. For example, throughout the meeting, conservation managers focused substantive discussion and debate on readying the LNP infrastructure for tourists, including the development of gates and entrance points, access to these, and the creation of business opportunities outside of the park but near the gates. In apparent concurrence with these priorities, village representatives pointed out the need for improved roads, transportation, and electricity. They also expressed interest in owning businesses, opening fields to grow food for tourism ventures, and even supplying automatic teller machines for tourists. LNP residents focused on those development opportunities that they envisioned they would benefit from, not following resettlement, but *as residents continuing to live within the park*.

Neither LNP managers nor residents addressed the incommensurability between these approaches until later in the meeting when a village representative turned the discussion to human-wildlife conflict. "About development and this idea of business inside the park, we understand that these can happen within the park... there are people inside the park that want to create their own businesses, but there is the problem of animals destroying our fields." Thereafter resident commentary was consumed by concern over the lack of protection from wildlife. In agreement with the preceding comment, another representative asserted:

The park, (for) about 5 years has been with us, but we have not seen anything helpful... we are not happy, because of the animals. The first thing the park can do



is give protection, protection against the animals... And regarding future ideas about opening and creating our own businesses, we have ideas, but we are stopping now because the park says that we must move, so we are only waiting... The animal problem makes us suffer; we are asking for protection against the animals.

Yet another community representative implored meeting participants with: "Help us fight against these animals that are killing our domestic animals!" One final testimony began: "We must be allowed to use the land; we are working, using our own force in our fields, but there are wild animals destroying our crops..." When no other meeting participants responded to the residents' complaints, a member of the conservation group implored a representative from a community-based tourism lodge located just outside the park to speak about some of the benefits the park has brought to residents there. He declined to do so.

Just after lunch, resettlement managers invited village representatives to tour a pilot resettlement site. The tour focused on two structures that were under construction and designed to serve as model houses for the soon to be resettled residents of Nanguene. Managers' interactions with resident leaders provided more explicit indication that providing resettlement and not protection is key to achieving conservation objectives.

During the excursion, village leaders vocalised numerous observations and complaints regarding the size, orientation, organisation, and construction of the structures. Among these:

*Village Leader 1:* If I knew [we would be moved], I would not have built my house there [in the village]. I built my house there in vain.

*Village Leader 2:* If I want to increase [the size of] the house, how do I do this? If I do not have conditions to improve and increase the house, I will suffer here.

*Village Leader 3:* The big room is very small; I can't put my table in there.

*Village Leader 4:* The plan of the house is very beautiful but the living room is too small; I have many things.

*Resettlement Manager (response):* What if we cancel the veranda to extend the living room?

*Village Leader 4 (response):* No, the veranda is good; you can't cancel it, just open it over there [instead].

*Village Leader 5:* The paint is not dry yet.

The conservation managers in attendance actively and eagerly engaged community leaders' critical, if well-humoured, commentary, itemising and clarifying complaints with visible

interest. At the end of the tour, they asked the leaders to bring descriptions of the houses back to their constituencies and to encourage residents to approve comparable structures for their own resettlement sites.

Managers' enthusiastic engagement of residents' complaints about the houses stood in contrast to the silence they maintained, hours earlier, in reaction to residents' concerns about wildlife. Recall that during the previous meeting, the talk of LNP residents was not the talk of a group of people seeking to resettle. On the contrary, community representatives were notably excited about the infrastructure that was finally coming to their area, and they wanted to tap into the benefits and services such infrastructure could provide. To achieve these objectives, residents needed, not only access to such opportunities, but also protection from wildlife. Under other circumstances, many conservation managers would prefer to talk about wildlife. In interactions with residents, however, they avoided it and focused instead on resettlement. Both problems—wildlife conflict and resettlement details—provide momentum to the resettlement programme. However, where detailed talk about ongoing conflict with wildlife destabilises the notion that residents are moving of their own volition, talk about the resettlement plans and the benefits to be accrued through resettlement (re)stabilises it.

In what follows, I provide another example of the way in which managers eschewed the problem of human-wildlife conflict while offering resettlement as an attractive choice for avoiding it. For their part, and through appeals for protection, residents strategically disengaged from the topic of resettlement while demystifying decisions made under the guise of their own volition.

### **The community-turned-resettlement meeting**

Three months later, on June 10, 2007, I joined Makandezulu B residents under a large shade tree that serves as a site for community meetings. The Chief called the meeting to discuss, among other topics, recent travels wherein he attended a talk by President Guebuza and delivered residents' donations to recent flood victims; upcoming provincial elections; unpaid taxes; the system for borrowing bicycles in the village; and ongoing problems regarding an upcoming youth dance recital. Two topics not intended for formal discussion that morning were conservation-related resettlement and elephants. However, the agenda was abruptly amended to address these issues when, halfway through the meeting, two resettlement coordinators, a resettlement consultant, and a KfW funding representative pulled into the village in a white pickup truck, well-known to be an official park vehicle.

The resettlement team had intended to meet privately with the village leadership to gauge the potential for Makandezulu B to be the next village to be resettled from the park, following Macavane. However, the Chief invited the visitors to join the community meeting already in progress. The following is an excerpt from the conversation that ensued:



*Resettlement manager 1:* We greet you, mothers and fathers. We came to visit you, because we have not seen you. We have seen the leaders but not you. We come with a visitor here from Germany... The objective of our visit is to hear your ideas about the resettlement.

*Resettlement manager 2:* We were not planning to speak with the villages [residents] but we have luck here today. We were passing here to visit the fathers [leaders] but I am happy to see you gathered. We speak with all of you... You have chosen the place [the resettlement destination] and some of your leaders saw... the [model resettlement] houses. Next month, we will build houses for the Macavane people. Next year, we hope to see some other village offering itself to move. If you are to be after Macavane, you must say so... Your places are already chosen. What we are waiting for is for you to choose [when to move]. This is one point I am to talk to you about... It is good to have the place ready for next year. We want to know who is to leave first after Macavane.

*Chief:* Whoever has something to say, must say.

*Resident 1:* Our resettlement is not a desire; it is an obligation. And you are saying we must choose, that is an obligation.

*Resident 2:* ...we are suffering with the animals here. We are telling you the animals drink our water and eat our maize. We are suffering!

*Resident 3:* I want to repeat. It doesn't mean we accept to leave!... You came here and speak about resettlement only but you don't come to solve our problems. Only the resettlement.

*Resident 4:* My heart pains. I am a [park] ranger. My daughter was sick here, and I transported her to the hospital. And when a [park] car passed here, I asked [for help] to take my daughter to the hospital. We agreed to have a relationship with you, and you do not help us. I walked to the hospital and had to stop in Makandezulu A, because there was an elephant on the way, and my baby died that night. One of the park drivers refused to come. I am very angry!

*Resident 5:* I want to support what they say. I thank the leaders and the visitors. There is nothing we can say that is new here, only the same things. The elephant ate the maize there and our squash. We don't want to leave here. Our ancestors are buried here. We need help from you, help us stop the suffering!

*Chief:* You brought some good questions here but there is something I do not understand. I will speak as someone from the village, not the chief. At the beginning [with] the first big elephant, we asked you to help us... Now you are

here not to solve the problem but to do something else. You want to work with us for the future and not solve our problems now. When we came to your offices, we told you [about the elephants] and you did not come. Our maize is gone... and you are sitting there quiet.

*Traditional Leader:* I thank you for the information you are bringing... We have been in your office... Can you accept to go with me to see where we get water? We drink elephant urine, because they drink our water and they pee there. I want to show you! Sometimes we do not believe that our chief actually spoke with you, because you do not come! The elephant does not sleep and you do not come...

*Resettlement manager 2:* First, I am saying sorry about the bad things that we do. The problem of the elephant—you have a reason to talk, I heard about this last year. I was told it was solved, and I am sorry that I did not come to confirm that. Last month, most of the rangers were not here in the villages, they were in Mapai. Now that they are in the villages, it should be solved. The elephant cannot be the centre of conversation every-day!

Shortly thereafter, the meeting ended. Before leaving Makandezulu B, the resettlement team accompanied residents to the hand-dug wells, where they were shown the extensive damage and the elephant excrement.

Resettlement managers began the dialogue by highlighting resident choice. From their perspective, residents had already chosen a resettlement destination, and now they had the opportunity to choose to be the next to resettle. However, residents' formidable indications that they did not want to leave the LNP, but instead were being forced to leave, were incongruous with conservation managers' perceptions that Makandezulu B had chosen a resettlement site. Just before the close of the meeting, therefore, the KfW representative questioned residents about that choice.

In December 2006, the Chief and four village leaders accompanied managers on a visit to a cluster of villages located along the Limpopo River. Their mission was to choose a resettlement location, and Makandezulu B leadership picked Salane. Following the meeting detailed above, residents justified their preference for Salane relative to other potential resettlement sites. One resident explained, "In Chicumbane, we don't have enough land and many people are robbers." Another offered, "We did not choose Panyame because they drink beer with us while waiting to rob our cattle." Additionally, in Salane, "the ground is good for grazing and there is land for fields."

These responses failed to clarify the issue of why Makandezulu B leadership chose a destination location if residents did not want to resettle. So the KfW representative took another approach: "How did you get there to choose the place?" One resident's matter of fact response, "the park brought the car to take us there" brought the meeting to a close. Intentionally or not, this explicative emphasised residents' collective passivity rather than what the World

Bank defines as their “power of choice” in resettlement decision-making.

During the meetings I described above, conservation managers conflated resident willingness to discuss the details of the resettlement with their desire to move. However, in a displacement context wrought with human-wildlife conflict, choosing the most preferable type of resettlement house and most suitable destination location does not indicate a desire to resettle. Instead it illustrates the desire among village leaders to position themselves and their constituents strategically in a situation where enforced moving seems inevitable.

### **The power of (a moral vision of) choice**

In what follows, I highlight important contradictions to the claim that conservation-related resettlement in the LNP is voluntary, by comparing World Bank guidelines with additional data on resident choice. The World Bank’s first resettlement safeguards policy emerged in 1980 in response to widespread concern that World Bank-funded, large-scale infrastructure projects were displacing and further impoverishing people around the world (Dear and McCool 2010). After several revisions, World Bank guidelines now provide, in many cases, the benchmarks against which funders decide whether or not to support conservation projects (Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington 2007; Milgroom and Spierenburg 2008).

As pointed out by Milgroom and Spierenburg (2008: 436), there is an “inherent contradiction” in the Mozambican government’s position that conservation-related resettlement in the LNP is a ‘voluntary’ programme, and its adoption of ‘involuntary’ resettlement guidelines to direct the resettlement programme. The government adopted World Bank involuntary guidelines, because they provide “an internationally recognised standard” and because comparable standards for voluntary resettlement do not exist (Milgroom and Spierenburg 2008: 437). However, the use of involuntary guidelines is also apropos to the reality that the LNP resettlement programme does not appear to meet World Bank standards for voluntary resettlement, power of choice, and informed consent.

“Power of choice” means that the people involved have the option to agree or disagree with the land acquisition, without adverse consequences imposed formally or informally by the state. By definition, power of choice—and thus voluntary resettlement—is only possible if project location is not fixed (World Bank 2004: 21).

The LNP resettlement project does not meet the standards for power of choice, first, because the LNP is a fixed project. Conservationists have targeted this particular site since the first half of the twentieth century due to its strategic location adjacent to the KNP, its history as a hunting concession, and its relatively low human population densities (Duffy 1997; Mavhunga and Spierenburg 2009). Second, there are negative consequences for remaining inside the park, among these, conflict with wildlife.

“Informed consent” means that the people involved in a resettlement project are fully knowledgeable about the project and its consequences, and yet freely agree to participate in

the project (World Bank 2004: 21). In the initial and latter stages of the implementation of the LNP, there was a lack of participation among community members, tied to issues of capacity and power (see DeMotts 2005; Spierenburg et al. 2008). Among other factors, the creation of a participation structure for community engagement “lagged behind wildlife translocation and conservation planning to the detriment of those still resident in the park” (DeMotts 2005: 173).

Questions undermining the claim that resettlement is voluntary also emerge from research findings, which indicate that while residents are certainly struggling to maintain their livelihoods, many residents did not, of their own accord, desire to move from the LNP. Makandezulu B was described as particularly argumentative against the LNP and suspicious of unconfirmed reports that someone was “designing a resettlement plan for them without their knowledge” (Nhalidade 2002: 5). Further Maluleke (2005: 47) found that while Makandezulu B residents “appreciate [the] ecological and economic reasons” for transfrontier conservation “they do not want to be evicted from their ancestral land, and hence [do want to be] active participants in the development and management of the park.” Drawing from my own data, while many residents wonder about life outside the LNP, in 2007 the majority of Makandezulu residents (79%) indicated they do not want to leave. One-third of these respondents felt, however, that they had little choice but to do so, a perception that has since intensified.

Despite these important contradictions, and perhaps because of them, when pressed on the issue of whether or not residents can choose to remain in the LNP, some conservation managers held a hard line on the state’s policy that no residents are being, or will be, forced to leave. Others emphasised that residents lost their right to remain in the area when the LNP was established, and yet they maintained the position that resettlement is voluntary. For example, one interviewee conceded that the creation and implementation of the LNP had been involuntary processes. He further explained that LNP residents had been “displaced”, by which he meant “effectively lost all their rights... on the day the park was officially proclaimed.” He maintained, however, that any physical relocation would be voluntary.

This approach, which highlights residents’ choice in the relocation but not the displacement aspects of resettlement, exemplifies how managers navigated the resettlement programme’s moral terrain. When conservation managers described the need for resettlement as a legal imperative, they eschewed their own sense of moral responsibility. However, when they framed the relocation aspect of resettlement as voluntary, they reinstated a sense of moral duty all the while maintaining the state’s official position that no involuntary resettlement would take place.

### **Resettlement as moral practice**

Conservation-related resettlement has been a slow, arduous process in which managers have faced numerous challenges. First, there have been important shifts in Mozambique’s national approach to conservation since the 1990s. Among

other examples (see Antsey 2001; Dear and McCool 2010), in the late 1990s, conservation and development organisations undertook a community-based project aimed at strengthening the capacity and securing the rights of those people who would be included in transfrontier conservation (GEF 1996: 6-7). Makandezulu B was a pilot village in the project. However, by the early 2000s, poachers-turned-participants were soon targeted as potential resettlers<sup>5</sup> (see also Anstey 2001).

Such transformations presumably contributed to a second major challenge—that of high turnover rates. There have been at least five directors (or wardens) in the LNP since 2003. Third, conservation managers have received wavering support from provincial and state levels of government, particularly during election time. Fourth, there are competing claims to land (and competing visions pertaining to its use) in the proposed resettlement sites. Finally, funding for the resettlement programme is also at stake and dependent, at least in part, on funders' perceptions of whether or not it is a voluntary programme (Ramutsindela 2007). In this stream of competing interests, the narrative of choice keeps resettlement afloat as a moral practice.

Indeed the complex and politicised moral considerations that conservation managers face in implementing resettlement were prominent in interviews. For example, drawing on an important World Bank standard of avoiding and minimising resettlement, several stressed that the resettlement programme targets only a fraction of LNP residents. In addition to claiming that the programme is voluntary, they also emphasised the need to alleviate poverty and marginalisation among LNP residents. Since the implementation of the LNP, many residents have experienced diminished access to basic services like health, education, and water. Rather than addressing these problems directly, managers envisioned conservation-related resettlement as an opportunity for socio-economic development. They emphasised that whether residents resettle or not, they will, and, in fact, have already begun to receive 20% of LNP revenues. In addition, resettled residents will be compensated for loss of access to cultural and environmental resources, and, in their destination locations, they will have access to irrigation schemes, a community nursery, and a sustainable use programme (Witter and Satterfield In review).

Conservation managers also framed and interpreted conservation-related resettlement as an opportunity for protection. Recall that both the wildlife translocation programme and the removal of some sections of the fence to further encourage wildlife to move across the border have been key to garnering support and momentum for transfrontier conservation. However, conservation managers generally avoided attributing increased levels of human-wildlife conflict to these efforts. Instead some managers traced the conflict to the LNP's return to wilderness conditions or to its legal transformation into a national park. Where human decision-making was taken into account, managers found residents to be at fault. In other words, and providing one of the few examples where they acknowledged, at least in part, resident preferences, conservation managers characterised human-wildlife conflict as a consequence of the simple fact

that residents live in and, fatalistically, refuse to leave the park. Framing resettlement as an opportunity for sustainable development or for protection from human-wildlife conflict softens the sting of resettlement by directing attention away from issues of power, choice, and the displacement context in which resettlement is occurring.

In recent years, human-wildlife conflict has intensified and diversified—extending to lions and rhinoceros, among other species—with important implications for resettlement. Elephants have continued to raid villages, damage resources, and to change what it means for residents to be in this place. In addition, between June and September 2011, lions killed 18 cattle in Makandezulu B, and in return, residents snared and killed one lion. As of October 2011, residents were increasingly resigned to resettle, and they were extremely agitated over a lack of communication about what to expect next. However, residents were also careful to point out that conflict with wildlife is not likely to diminish in their resettlement location, though a new resource authority may be held accountable for their protection. In resettlement sites, jurisdiction for residents' complaints about wildlife may no longer fall under the authority of conservation managers.

As of December 2013, most Makandezulu B residents remain living in the LNP with resettlement still pending. Further thickening the moral entanglements of human-wildlife conflict and resettlement, in the years since this research was conducted, the problem of rhinoceros poaching has become critical both in the LNP and the neighbouring KNP. Current anti-poaching efforts are contributing to a conservation landscape that is increasingly militarised (Lunstrum Forthcoming), wherein both LNP residents and employees have been implicated in poaching activities. These circumstances appear to be expediting a programme that has experienced no shortage of stalls by justifying resettlement as a moral imperative. As concern for rhino poaching continues to mount, the resettlement programme has the potential to gain new urgency and new moral (and military) grounding as an anti-poaching strategy. If this happens, it will be crucial for conservation authorities and the public to remember that residents had neither power of choice nor informed consent with regard to resettlement, wildlife translocations or, for that matter, park implementation. Instead, these processes, and any potential involvement or moral support for rhino poaching among residents, occurred in a displacement context wrought with conflict.

## DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

### Displacement and volition

Isolating and then determining volition in a range of mobility contexts is a complex undertaking. People targeted for resettlement make exceptionally tough decisions in contexts where their decision-making power is extremely limited (e.g., Bennett and McDowell 2012). Thus, when scholars and practitioners describe people's decision to move in terms of the "bald" categorisations of voluntary and involuntary



resettlement (Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington 2007: 2184), they risk poorly characterising and misrepresenting people's experiences with resettlement.

My findings demonstrate that it is more instructive to assess people's decisions to move according to push and pull factors (Wilson 1972). Wildlife translocations were not intentional means on behalf of conservation decision-makers to push residents into complying with the resettlement programme. Nonetheless, other LNP researchers (e.g., Spierenburg et al. 2006) and as illustrated next, resettlement consultants, have also acknowledged the uneasy relationship between human-wildlife conflict and resettlement choice:

While they live in relatively isolated areas and have limited access to services there is currently little pressure on [LNP residents] to move. This may, however, change in time as the wildlife population in the area grows and poses an increased threat. (Impacto Proyectos e Estudios Ambientes 2005: 1).

As predicted, substantive increases in wildlife populations and sustained conflict between humans and wildlife have compelled many residents to comply with the resettlement programme. These processes also appear to have amplified public perception that such compliance equates to voluntary resettlement. By contrast, understanding that human-wildlife conflict and diminished access to basic resources are inducing residents to resettle demystifies the vision of choice and promotes a better understanding of resident willingness to consider the pull factors—access to improved services, the promises of sustainable development, and, potentially, protection from wildlife in the resettlement location.

In recent decades, the widespread adoption of World Bank resettlement standards corresponds to an apparent shift in conservation policy from involuntary to voluntary resettlement (Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington 2007). Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington (2007: 2183) warned, however, that this shift does not necessarily indicate “a significant step toward more equitable conservation.” Instead, this shift may reflect the proliferation of a moral narrative of choice, a narrative that remains unsupported by the fundamental changes in resettlement practice that would merit the claim ‘voluntary resettlement.’ If and when Makandezulu residents resettle, and assuming that they accept a resettlement compensation package in so doing, their choice should not be conflated with voluntary resettlement. In other words, and as specified by the World Bank, the “willingness to accept the provisions of the resettlement plan” cannot be equated with their desire to move (World Bank 2002: 4).

My findings also demonstrate the significance of an, as of yet, under-examined dimension of human volition in resettlement scholarship—how being ‘displaced in place’ (Lubkemann 2008) limits people's choices, including those pertaining to resettlement. Here, I reinforce Cernea's (2006) call to distinguish between displacement and physical resettlement, terms that are often conflated in resettlement scholarship. From a policy perspective, this distinction highlights the need to compensate displaced people even if resettlement does not take place (Cernea

2006) or, as in this case, well before it takes place and in a way that acknowledges pre-resettlement losses. Conceptually, this distinction creates space for the development of more precise understandings of what it means to be induced to move, what it means to be socially and economically disenfranchised right at home, and of the relationships between these.

### Moral persuasions and points of (dis)connection

As for contributions to scholarship on environmental narratives, my findings support the arguments put forth by other scholars, that the power to shape and interpret conservation policy and practice depends not only on the power of the narrative, but also the power of the storyteller (Campbell 2002), and the “social conditions of narrative production,” reproduction, and travel (Cruikshank 1998: 95). The power of LNP managers is unevenly distributed, and it should not be overstated, but the power of their narrative is enhanced through state authority, international funding, and the ability to mobilise public opinion in support of the claim that resettlement is voluntary (e.g., Boom 2010). However, the moral narrative of protection is also strategic and, like conservation managers, residents employed their narrative opportunistically; for example, in ways that highlighted their roles as victims to human-wildlife conflict while diminishing their potential involvement in illegal hunting practices. In future work, it will be important to examine 1) how being displaced influences people's decisions to morally support, and/or engage in, poaching activities; and 2) how a sustained poaching crisis shapes the moral meanings that actors attach to, and derive from, resettlement.

To improve understandings of the moral dimensions of conservation, there is also a need to move beyond tracking inconsistencies. Attune to Cronon's (1992: 1373–1374) reminder “We tell stories *with* each other and *against* each other in order to speak to each other;” in this analysis I sought to achieve this by viewing narratives as points of connections—“between past and future, between people and place, among people whose opinions diverge” (Cruikshank 1998: 2). Admittedly, the points of disconnection have been easier to track.

After all, LNP residents and managers often employed their narratives in ways that oriented action, interpretation, and argumentation precisely away from the morally persuasive storylines of the other group. But they also employed their narratives in ways that enabled them to connect with, and even expand, their respective moral communities. These findings underpin the need for a broader, comparative assessment of the moral dimensions of conservation discourse. To this end, future work will advance conceptual approaches for examining how moral discourses lead people with different points of view to 1) connect with, affect, and even change one another; 2) to remain disconnected and unchanged; and/or 3) to become further entrenched in their original moral orientations and communities.

Finally, both of the moral narratives I assessed here are indicative of the structural imbalance of conservation decision-making in the LNP, and the power differentials between each group and the state. While decisions about resettlement details

rest within both groups' control, the decision about whether or not and under what conditions resettlement proceeds ultimately lies with the state. Suggesting new interpretations of landed moral economies, the moral narrative of protection is not indicative of a universalising plea among disenfranchised people for more distance from the state. Instead it is a call for connection, to engage in conservation on, what LNP residents understand to be, more equitable terms.

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## NOTES

1. The LNP resettlement programme is guided by the World Bank Involuntary Resettlement Sourcebook and World Bank Operational Policies and Bank Procedures (MITUR 2007).
2. Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. <http://www.ppf.org.za/Stories>. Accessed on April 25, 2010.
3. As of December 2013, resettlement for most other villages, including Makandezulu B, was still pending.
4. Mozambique's National Institute of Disaster Management now coordinates the resettlement programme.
5. The shifting approaches and meanings that first rendered poachers, participants and then participants, resettlers are evident in at least one other conservation-related case (Dear and McCool 2010). Throughout Mozambique resettlement is commonly used in development and disaster contexts (see Dear and McCool 2010), and it is also being discussed in scenarios for climate adaptation. However, it remains to be seen if resettlement will become a national conservation strategy.

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