



Accumulation by securitization: Commercial poaching, neoliberal conservation, and the creation of new wildlife frontiers [☆]



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ABSTRACT

Part of a broader interest in the escalating securitization of conservation practice, scholars are beginning to take note of an emerging relationship between conservation–securitization, capital accumulation, and dispossession. We develop the concept of *accumulation by securitization* to better grasp this trend, positioning it in the critical literatures on neoliberal conservation, green grabbing, and conservation–security. The concept captures the ways in which capital accumulation, often tied to land and resource enclosure, is enabled by practices and logics of security. Security logics, moreover, increasingly provoke the dispossession of vulnerable communities, thereby enabling accumulation. We ground the concept by turning to the Greater Lebombo Conservancy (GLC) in the Mozambican borderlands. This is a new privately-held conservancy built as a securitized buffer zone to obstruct the movement of commercial rhino poachers into South Africa's adjacent Kruger National Park. We show how wildlife tourism-related accumulation here is enabled by, and in some ways contingent upon, the GLC's success in curbing poaching incursions, and, relatedly, how security concerns become the grounds upon which resident communities are displaced. In terms of the latter, we suggest security provides a troubling, depoliticized alibi for dispossession. Like broader neoliberal conservation and green grabbing, we illustrate how accumulation by securitization plays out within complex new networks of state and private actors. Yet these significantly expand to include including security actors and others motivated by security concerns.

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Introduction

These have been sobering times for rhino conservation. South Africa has been hit particularly hard, having lost over 1200 animals in 2014, up from only 13 in 2007. The majority of these losses have occurred in the country's flagship Kruger National Park, the world's most concentrated rhino habitat (SANParks, 2014; TRAFFIC, 2014).

[☆] Research for this paper consisted of 55 key informant and semi-structured interviews with GLC investors, GLC project implementers/consultants, GLTP/Kruger/LNP officials, Kruger rangers, community leaders/members, and Mozambican and South African conservation officials. Conducted between 2012 and 2014, with 4 research trips lasting between 3 and 8 weeks, we held interviews in Shangaan with the assistance of a translator, Portuguese and English. In addition, Francis engaged in several days of participant observation of the work of GLC implementers between 2012 and 2014, which offered possibilities for both sustained informal discussion and a view into some of the concrete practices through which the GLC is being built. We supplemented interviews and participant observation with analysis of primary and secondary documents, including GLC planning documents, maps, and newspaper articles, which were gathered online and generously provided by interviewees.

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This has led to extraordinary security measures both within and beyond Kruger. Reflecting the fact that the park shares a long border with neighboring Mozambique and that the majority of those entering Kruger to poach rhinos are Mozambicans, the Mozambican borderlands have become the site of security interventions. The most ambitious of these amounts to the 220,000-hectare Greater Lebombo Conservancy (GLC) located adjacent to Kruger's southern half where rhino poaching is most intensive (Fig. 1). As a collection of private land concessions, the GLC emerges as a new wildlife frontier, one in which massive tracts of land have been enclosed and consolidated for the purposes of wildlife conservation, the expansion of tourism-related investment capital, and especially wildlife security. In terms of the latter, the primary rationale behind the GLC is that it act as a securitized buffer zone to protect Kruger, its eastern boundary, and most importantly its rhinos by halting the cross-border movement of poachers from Mozambique.

As the Mozambican state grants new concessions and works with private landholders to consolidate existing private lands into a unified conservancy, local communities are experiencing various forms of displacement. On the surface, the GLC hence stands as a familiar example of neoliberal conservation as accumulation by

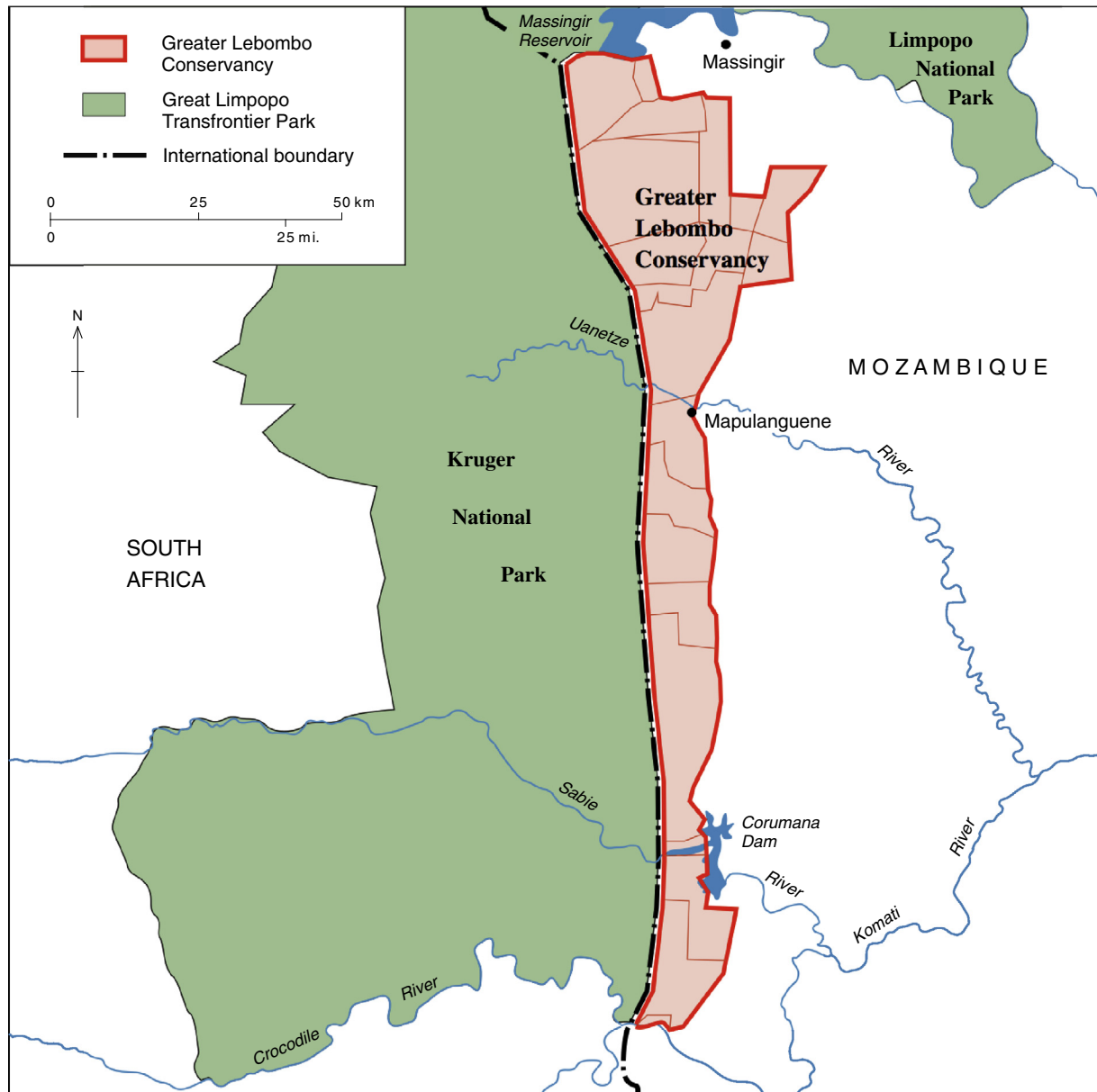


Fig. 1. Greater Lebombo Conservancy (GLC) in its relation to Kruger National Park (Cartography by Carolyn King, York University).

dispossession or green grabbing. On closer look, however, these practices of green grabbing and dispossession are based not primarily on a logic of capital accumulation but rather securitization. We argue that the GLC ushers in processes of what we label *accumulation by securitization*. This is a dynamic in which capital accumulation is enabled by practices and related logics of security in ways that often provoke dispossession, with such dispossession itself further enabling accumulation. Security rationales, we show, help provide the emptied land for the development of wildlife tourism and in turn the accumulation of capital. Within the GLC, security rationales equally enable the restocking of wildlife, which had been wiped out during the Mozambican war. More specifically, as an incentive for the concession holders to protect Kruger's rhinos, the Kruger administration will drop the international border fence to enable access to its wildlife, further enabling profitable wildlife tourism. At the heart of accumulation by securitization in the GLC is hence the enclosure of both land and wildlife, which enable a securitized green spatial fix for the overaccumulation of capital. Unfolding within a larger context of neoliberal conservation, we also chart how accumulation by securitization is

enabled by complex networks of state and private actors, including state security providers and those coming to the table with explicit security concerns. With the GLC, this includes not only the security forces of private reserves but also security-motivated actors from both Mozambique and, arguably more significant, South Africa, given that the conservancy is designed to protect Kruger's rhinos. While we develop our observations in the GLC, we see accumulation by securitization as a concerning new trend in a broader escalating relation between conservation and security.

We begin by laying the study's theoretical groundwork by engaging with the emerging literature on conservation and security, paying attention to its treatment of issues of accumulation and dispossession, and then segue into the literature on accumulation by dispossession. We build from these to develop the concept of accumulation by securitization and then ground it in the case of the GLC. After briefly detailing the GLC's background, we illustrate how accumulation in the conservancy is enabled by security logics and practices. We then examine how a wide array of actors motivated by security as well as economic interests are working in tandem to create the GLC as a security-oriented wildlife frontier. We

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