



Articulated sovereignty: Extending Mozambican state power through the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park^{☆,1}



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Since its inception in 2001 and subsequent integration into the tri-national Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), Mozambique's Limpopo National Park (LNP) has been progressively transformed into a functioning wildlife park. Standing behind this transformation has been a profound expansion of Mozambican state power over and through the park. While this reinforces predictions in the early transfrontier conservation literature, it stands in tension with observations that these projects threaten state power. I address this tension by developing the concept of articulated sovereignty, which understands sovereignty as a heterogenous set of powers that are produced through often unequal interactions with other actors, including foreign or extra-territorial actors. In short, sovereignty is articulated through these interactions. I draw from this to show that the same partnerships that seem to threaten sovereignty in some respects in fact shore up the power of the Mozambican state in other respects. I focus in particular on the foreign-assistance-enabled extension of state power through the development of legal and technical capacity, park administration and infrastructure, a ranger force, and the relocation of communities beyond park borders. I additionally draw on articulated sovereignty to show that the state and territory, like sovereignty, are built through various articulations with extra-territorial partners, thus drawing into question the sovereignty-state-territory triad. I close by reflecting on the utility of articulated sovereignty beyond the realm of conservation. In short, articulated sovereignty sheds light on both the sovereignty complexities of transfrontier conservation projects like the LNP/GLTP and how sovereignty actually plays out in the world.

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In 2008, seven years after the opening of Mozambique's Limpopo National Park (LNP), Vicente sat down to describe how the park had been impacting his village of Massingir Velho, now encompassed within park borders. He began by describing the damage caused to the community's farms by elephants, which had only recently been reintroduced into the area. Translocated from South Africa's Kruger National Park, elephants and other large game were brought in to restock the LNP given the ecological destruction of the country's "civil" war. The combined effect of the weakness and policies of the postcolonial state, Apartheid South Africa's project of regional destabilization, and the larger geopolitical context of the Cold War, from 1977 until 1992 Mozambique was embroiled in a brutal conflict. It had left over a million people dead,

destroyed state capacity at a harrowing level, and devastated much of the country's wildlife (Hatton, Couto, & Oglethorpe, 2001; Lunstrum, 2009; Minter, 1994). In addition to helping rehabilitate wildlife in the LNP, this reintroduction of elephants was a much-celebrated event tied to the creation of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), which built in 2002, unites the LNP with Kruger and Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park into a 35,000 km² mega-park (Fig. 1). After expressing his concerns over the elephants, Vicente redirected his critique to the Mozambican state. He strongly objected to the fact that killing wildlife, including invading elephants, translated into fines or jail time and even beatings by park police. And he should know. Vicente, himself, had been beaten and arrested for killing an animal and for suspicion of harboring an illegal firearm. Furthermore, the park administration was planning on relocating villages like Massingir Velho beyond park borders. Vicente uttered with more than a hint of resignation, "[the park administration] said we should leave the park... We are not going to stay here because this place has been sold." His experience made clear, especially set against the lack of national state power in the aftermath of the war, that the state by means of

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the park had consolidated its power over this area and had done so at an unprecedented level. It had not only sold the land from Vicente's perspective, forcing the village to relocate. It had fundamentally rewritten the purpose of this space as it becomes a functioning national park: more precisely, a protected home to wildlife, a site of tourist consumption and economic development, a key piece of the larger transfrontier park, and no longer a site of village life.

In many ways, this extension of state power fits into a well-established pattern of state institutions securing control over a space in the name of conservation and development. It also reflects early predictions that transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) like the GLTP would indeed consolidate state sovereignty over these spaces. It nonetheless stands in tension with suggestions that foreign or extra-territorial actors backing these projects have the potential to threaten if not erode state sovereignty. In light of such suggestions, how do we explain this apparent firming up of state power? Put differently, how do we explain the tension in which these initiatives seem to both strengthen and threaten state power? More concretely, set against both the evisceration of the state during the war and the undeniable influence of powerful extra-territorial actors, how has the Mozambican state been able to consolidate its power at such an unprecedented scale? More broadly, what insight does such a case awash in sovereignty

complexities shed on the very concept of sovereignty and how it actually plays out in the world?

I address these questions by developing the concept of *articulated sovereignty*. It shows that sovereignty, rather than an abstract concept that a state clearly possesses or lacks, is better understood as a set of attributes, competencies, and powers that are actively and routinely produced through a series of unequal interactions and negotiations with other actors, including other state and extra-state actors. In other words, sovereignty is articulated through these connections. What we see in practice is that the competencies or powers that do get articulated via these interactions are multiple, contingent, have different targets and spatialities, can potentially threaten one another, and may be gained by compromising other powers. Such an understanding of sovereignty helps us make sense of the complexity of the extension of Mozambican power through the LNP/GLTP and particularly the tension in which state power is seemingly both threatened and strengthened through such projects. More specifically, articulated sovereignty helps us grasp that the extra-territorial partnerships through which the park is created may simultaneously threaten sovereignty on some registers, especially the ability to exclude foreign influence, and shore up the power of the Mozambican state on other registers, including the power over territory, as well as populations, and ultimately the ability to (re)invent territory. By delving into these

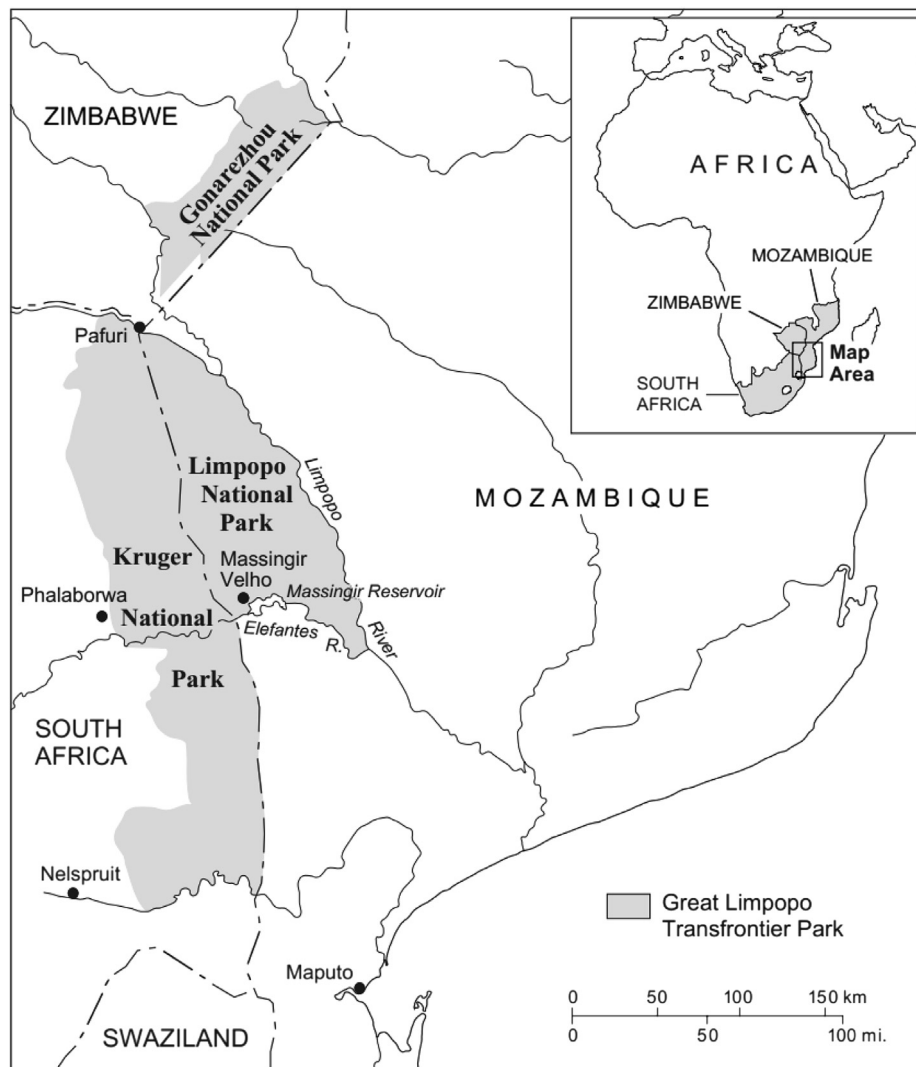


Fig. 1. Southern Africa's Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP).

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