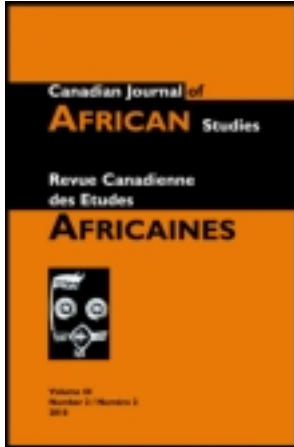


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“Go Back to the Land!” Negotiating Space, Framing Governmentality in Lambwe Valley, Kenya 1954-75

Maureen Malowany, P. Wenzel Geissler, and
Albred Lwoba

Résumé

En 1954, le Lambwe Land Trust a cherché à répondre aux préoccupations coloniales visant à contenir et contrôler la mouche tsé-tsé et la transmission de la trypanosomiase africaine (maladie du sommeil) dans vallée de Lambwe dans l'ouest du Kenya. Il fallait moins de mouches tsé-tsé et plus d'habitants, moins de brousse et plus de terres agricoles. La création du Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme (LVSS) est le reflet de la confiance qu'on avait dans les années 1950 de pouvoir maîtriser la terre, la nature et les peuples indigènes. Alors que d'autres régimes au Kenya sont nés d'une période tendue marquée soit par des litiges fonciers ou par un développe-

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ment méga économique, le LVSS est beaucoup plus modeste, veillant à ce que la bonne science et le bon gouvernement vienne à bout de la mouche. Cet article porte sur ces deux volets. Une première trame narrative examine le contexte scientifique de la trypanosomiase et du contrôle de la mouche tsé-tsé dans la région. Une seconde trame porte sur les habitants: les colons africains et les fonctionnaires coloniaux et africains, représentant les administrations locales, provinciales et nationales, travaillant à la planification quotidienne. Des disputes et des débats ont éclaté à propos des droits fonciers et de la gestion foncière entre les représentants des conseils municipaux africains et de l'État et leurs électeurs dans le cadre du LVSS. Les documents d'archives démontrent l'apparition d'une société civile dans cette région éloignée de l'ouest du Kenya, en dépit d'un pouvoir de plus en plus centralisateur basé à Nairobi. Les dossiers révèlent des voix et des visions locales alors que des gens ordinaires négocient leur vie à l'ombre de la mégascience, du "grand gouvernement" et de la grande politique.

Abstract

In 1954, the Lambwe Land Trust sought to address colonial concern to contain and control tsetse fly and thus the transmission of human trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) in Lambwe Valley, Western Kenya. The Valley needed less tsetse, more people; less bush and more farmed land. Reflecting the confidence of the 1950s to control land, nature, and people, the Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme (LVSS) was established. While other schemes in Kenya grew out of a tense period of land disputes or mega-economic development, this scheme was much more modest, ensuring that good science and good government would defeat the fly. This article elaborates on both. The first narrative examines the scientific background on trypanosomiasis and tsetse control in this region. The second focuses on the people: African settlers, colonial and African bureaucrats, representing district, provincial, and national governments, engaged in day-to-day planning. Arguments and debates ensued regarding land rights and management, involving local African council and state representatives with their constituents within the context of the

The title of the article is derived from KRC DN/2/3 Lambwe Settlement Scheme 8.12.1970-13.10.1972; Minutes of the Lambwe Advisory Committee, noted as a quotation from President Jomo Kenyatta, in a speech delivered in Nairobi, 12 December 1964. In other documents, this phrase was recalled as "take up the land." Our understanding of "governmentality," while drawing upon Foucault's (1991, 2004) ideas of individualizing and aggregating modes of classification, moves beyond the framing of this process within a state.

settlement scheme. The archival records demonstrated the evolution of a civil society in this remote section of Western Kenya, in spite of an increasingly dominating Nairobi-based government. The records exposed local voices and local visions as ordinary people negotiated their lives in the shadow of big science, big government, and big politics.

Introduction

This history of the Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme (LVSS) is set within the broader interrogations of historiographical narratives of disease control, social engineering and land settlement, and the constructions of government and civil society in Kenya during the “transition” of the 1950s through to the 1970s. This article grew out of a more anthropological enquiry into the “middle” people who worked in vector-borne disease control in Homa Bay and surrounding areas of Western Kenya – their stories, lives, training, and associations – documented through interviews. When asked about sleeping sickness (trypanosomiasis), the human disease transmitted by the tsetse fly, the Dholuo-speaking people related their sickness stories within a narrative of resettlement in Lambwe Valley. They, their parents, and relatives, many of whom had been resident in neighbouring Tanganyika, returned to Lambwe under a government-sponsored settlement scheme designed for tsetse and sleeping sickness control. We sought to understand further the opportunities presented by the LVSS and the responses of the settlers through the archival records. District, provincial, and national archival records articulated more than the institutional rationale for the scheme’s initiation and local realities of governance and management. We draw upon these records including the small but revealing deposit of settlers’ responses, grievances, and activities. Thus, the oral narratives led us to archival texts that present a land settlement scheme very different from those of the period in other parts of Kenya or East Africa as the records reveal a uniquely transforming “colonized” society engaged in a process of governance with the developing formal state and the customary local political leadership (Cooper 2005, 148). The administration of LVSS provided another level of management placed between the settlers and the formal government offices and officers

The LVSS was only one of a number of settlement and resettlement schemes of this period designed to address one or another

challenge of what we call the "land question." Land acquisition, ownership, and use have shaped the political, social, and economic terrain and the historiographical narratives of Kenya from the early days of the Protectorate to the present day (Harbeson 1971; Berman and Lonsdale 1992; Kanogo 1987; Mackenzie 2000). The land question arises from the two interrelated processes of British colonialism in East Africa. The first is the British conquest and settlement of the central highlands at the turn of the twentieth century, which not only displaced the Kikuyu, Embu, Maasai, and other groups and created land hunger but also framed subsequent Kenyan anticolonial narratives and resistance. The second is colonial developmentalism, which from the 1930s would see the Colonial Office and various colonial administrations focusing on the fully harnessing nature and increasing productivity of African colonies. Harnessing nature meant pushing back the frontiers of disease, dealing with ecological imbalances, and ensuring that African farmers could increase their production for the market. The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1940 and 1945, which had provided funding to the colonies to stimulate economic development, agriculture, and settlement, led to the 1954 Swynnerton Plan in Kenya. The Plan supported participation "in the spread of cash crops and dairy cattle in the African Reserves: and consolidated private ownership among Kikuyu peasants (Berman and Lonsdale 1992, 459; see also Harbeson 1971). Colonial developmentalism layered the complexity of the land question and affected the trajectory of colonial economic development in Kenya (Mackenzie 2000; Tilley 2007).¹

The two interrelated processes – of dealing with the land displacement cause by white settlement and furthering colonial developmentalism – would spawn a number of settlement and resettlement schemes in East Africa between 1930s and 1960s. The Mau Mau conflict and the ensuing State of Emergency of the 1950s would add urgency to the expansion of these schemes to provide land for landless and displaced Africans, as well for population and political control. The Mwea-Tebere Scheme, later called the Mwea Irrigation Settlement Scheme, initiated in 1952, and the Million-Acre Settlement Scheme, initiated in the 1960s, were among the projects that reflected this urgency (Chambers 1969; Harbeson 1971; Kanogo 1987; Leo 1981). The postcolonial Kenyan govern-

ment which inherited these land resettlement projects did not fundamentally alter their logic or objective; in fact, it deepened them albeit with a patrimonial twist. While the fortunes of these grand settlement schemes remained debatable, the interrelated issues of access to land and development continues to occupy the center stage in Kenya, generating widespread violence as was evidenced in the 2007 elections.

Interpreted within the framework of colonial developmentalism, Lambwe could be seen as yet one more scheme, with one major geographical difference in its distance far from Nairobi, designed to push back the frontiers of disease while simultaneously providing land for the landless. However, in its establishment and management, LVSS differed significantly from other contemporary settlement schemes. The policy impetus to resettle this territory came from those scientists and technicians, the vector-borne disease parasitologists, the "fly" people, whose mission it was to control the spread of the tsetse fly and the disease of human trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness). Their concerns found a response through the combined work of the Department of Agriculture and Veterinary Services.² Working outside the economic development plans of the 1950s, providing assistance to develop African settlers as "farmers" was incidental to the need for human populations to act as blocks to the threat of extended fly areas and disease transmission. If one were to rely solely upon the scientific literature of the period, extensive as it is, the LVSS story is about interaction – human, animal, and tsetse fly – but no more than that. This aspect of the LVSS history is an important addition to the historical literature to broaden our understanding of the politics of settlement as well as the longer history of disease control and its impact on the social history of Africans (Malowany 2000). However, the tsetse / trypanosomiasis disease control context is not enough to explain why settlers came and remained as part of the LVSS or how they managed their lives within the scheme. This article develops both contexts: disease control and LVSS management by both settlers and administration.

If assessed according to the goals and purpose of other schemes generated within the settlement / resettlement, population / agricultural development framework, the possibilities for the survival and success of LVSS were constrained. LVSS was established

neither on the same rules nor developed in the same manner as other Kenya schemes. Becoming a LVSS settler did not cost the ten percent deposit paid by Kikuyu to enter the Million-Acre Scheme, nor were loans available to potential settlers. The LVSS provided too little farmland and insufficient irrigation to guarantee sustainable farming for the first settlers, let alone their progeny. Instead of encouraging the integration of LVSS settlers into the larger economy of the area, as was the case in Mwea, LVSS settlers were forbidden to hold jobs or obtain employment outside the scheme, that is, in relatively close Homa Bay and more distant Kisumu. With these constraints, it should hardly be a surprise that by 1962, the Ministry of Agriculture had tersely concluded that "the Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme, started in 1952, was a virtual failure by 1959."³

The "failure" of LVSS was not only one of colonial policy but also of being outside narrative frameworks of anti-colonial resistance, such as that of Mau Mau, and the grand resettlement schemes of the central highlands. The Lambwe Valley, situated in South Nyanza, far from the centre of state power in Nairobi, equally far from the "white highlands" and those areas reassigned and resettled by Kikuyu and other African farmers, could provide no relief to political dissent. Thus, the Lambwe story is not the high drama of the Rift Valley, of the alienated former "white highlands," as it could not involve the various ethnic groups affected or included in the larger resettlement schemes. It is rather an ordinary story, from the margins of state-building, of rights and demands, the process of governing, the attempts to manage settlers for the good of the Scheme, and the settlers' voices of complaint and negotiation (Berman and Lonsdale 1992; Kanogo 1987).

If Lambwe was so clearly a failure in terms of agricultural development, economic growth and political control through resettlement of displaced Africans, what was its purpose? And how can we explain its relative longevity? We suggest that the rationale for establishing the LVSS and the changes in rationale over time provide answers to both. While tsetse and trypanosomiasis control were responsible for the design and execution of LVSS in 1954, both the fly and the disease almost disappeared from the records from the early 1960s. And yet the LVSS continued.

We suggest a rather uncomplicated explanation. The settlers

who joined LVSS came from neighbouring districts in Tanganyika / Tanzania and Kenya Nyanza areas, when permitted. Our informants constantly reinforced their right to live in Lambwe as a return to their ancestral homelands. Lambwe Valley, scheme or no scheme, was their land. For these settlers, no matter how unhappy they were with the management and administration of the scheme, we suggest that they simply had nowhere else to go. They would not have been included in the grander land schemes of central Kenya or the highlands. LVSS settlers had thus returned home or made a new home on the land allocated to them as part of the LVSS. Their daily lives on this land become the subject of record. And what of tsetse control? How did this concern shift from the foreground in the 1950s to the background? Certain ministries believed LVSS a failure in terms of disease control. Success would demand what the state was unwilling to invest – increased funding support, a long term plan, and constant supportive political will. From the early 1960s, Lambwe Valley was no longer an area of vigilant tsetse control. Consequently, the site remains endemic for human trypanosomiasis until today. Disease control remained a national concern as was made very clear in both funding and policy in the Mwea Scheme to combat malaria. The decline in state interest for tsetse control in Western Kenya was closely related to changes in the organization and policies of a national government, including declines in funding for vector-borne disease control in areas of little economic interest.

Economic development, indeed the relationship or the spaces that existed between the state and the market, were severely constrained for LVSS settlers. Prohibited from entering a larger market economy, settlers were left to rely upon and develop their internal networks and relationships. We suggest that the case of LVSS allows us to think differently about civil society, a concept that has been invoked mainly to statist and urban-centred politics. While civil society is often defined in opposition to a state, or within the state-market relationship, we propose that the LVSS settlers displayed civil society “in the making.” Clearly not autonomous, not part of the market but visibly engaged, we suggest that this civil society, in which government, local officials and settlers participated, was remaking the settlement as it evolved into the 1970s.

Population, Disease and the History of the Lambwe Valley

In the early twentieth century, records report that Lambwe Valley⁴ had been heavily populated and yet by 1936, the Valley was nearly devoid of people (Ormerod 1961, 531-35). While debates and anxiety with regard to African population growth and decline is a trope within African history (Doyle 2006), local explanations are required for small-scale demographic change. One part of the early story was the presence of the tsetse fly – a recurring problem in many parts of the lake region. One of the most widespread human epidemics struck Uganda / Lake Victoria in the early twentieth century with devastating mortality rates and social upheaval. Fears of its recurrence creep into the historical record from that time forward. In the Lambwe Valley region, early epidemics were followed by out-migration as the area became more and more difficult to farm or to meet basic survival needs. Peoples moved to the neighbouring areas of Tanganyika, settled and farmed there. In cyclical fashion, members of these populations became the returning migrants of the 1950s (Jennings 2003, 166-67).⁵

The history of trypanosomiasis has been extensively documented in the scientific and historical literature (Ford 1971; Giblin 1990; Jordan 1986; Lyons 1991; Malowany 2000). A disease with two popular names – "*nagana*" for the disease of cattle and "sleeping sickness" for the human variation – nineteenth and twentieth centuries accounts of epidemics in sub-Saharan Africa invariably cite trypanosomiasis as a burden. In the 1890s, a severe epidemic of rinderpest wiped out herds of cattle in southern and eastern Africa. They were replaced by imported cattle, and these herds, lacking immunity to trypanosomiasis, are thought to have played a strategic role in the shift of this disease from endemic to epidemic status.

Borne by the tsetse fly, trypanosomiasis is a protozoal disease complex, which presents in two forms in sub-Saharan Africa. The Gambian variety, found in western and central Africa, presents a mild and chronic infection that can persist for years. The Rhodesian variety, present in eastern and southern Africa, causes acute illness lasting several weeks and is usually fatal without treatment. The natural hosts of tsetse are wildlife – warthog, bush pig, buffalo, and others. These animals may acquire prolonged but symptomless infections. Larger mammals, cattle, in particular,

some breeds have become trypotolerant, many more remain highly vulnerable. The tsetse fly itself is highly adaptable and can be found in forests, riverine areas, and woodland savannas. In times of animal host scarcity or animal / human proximity, the tsetse, a zoonotic vector, will bite human hosts.

From 1896 to 1906 in the British Protectorate of Uganda, whose territory in this period included part of today's Western Kenya, an estimated quarter of a million Africans died from sleeping sickness. In neighbouring Belgian Congo, reports were as high as a half million deaths in the same period. The British government mandated the British Sleeping Sickness Commission to conduct research on the trypanosome in Uganda. The Foreign Office and The Royal Society of London sent out three researchers – Aldo Castellani, George Low, and Cuthbert Christy – in 1902. They were looking for a bacterial cause of the disease and missed identifying the parasite. With the addition of David Bruce, sent to Entebbe in 1903 from his bench in Ubombo, Zululand where he was investigating “nagana,” and four years earlier had named the parasite *Trypanosoma brucei*, the researchers changed tracks. Even though named after Bruce, who first – Bruce or Castellani – actually identified the parasite is disputed (Boyd 1973, 93-110). Based on the research of the team, the Sleeping Sickness Commission reported the presence of the trypanosome in the cerebro-spinal fluid of patients diagnosed with sleeping sickness, and the tsetse fly was identified as the disease vector. Treatment for human victims was with the arsenical compound, atoxyl, a very problematic treatment. In 1906, the eminent German bacteriologist, Robert Koch (Echenberg 2001), travelled to German East Africa to conduct therapeutic research on trypanosomiasis, using this drug, atoxyl, investigating and ultimately proving its role in producing blindness as a common side effect of treatment. Identifying the vector proved the next step. In 1903, the tsetse fly, *Glossina palpalis*, was identified in Uganda with a second vector, *Glossina morsitans* identified in Southern Rhodesia in 1912 (Omerod 1961, 527). For transmission to humans, there emerged two sub-species of human trypanosomiasis – *Trypanosoma brucei gambiense* and *Tranpanosomo brucei rhodiense*. The first produced a chronic form of sleeping sickness leading to coma and death, endemic in west and central Africa. For the purposes of this article, we are concerned with the second form,

found in east Africa, not only for its location but also for its swift passage from infection to death. If left untreated, this form of sleeping sickness could result in mortality in a few weeks.

Epidemics recorded through the 1930s report approximately one thousand cases of sleeping sickness per year. Mortality was high but, if treated early, the disease could be managed. By 1935 *T rhodesiense* had moved from southern and south-central Africa to the Lake Victoria region. Control measures included bush clearing to create "fly-free" settlements, closing of infected areas, campaigns for diagnosis, and case treatment. The fly and the disease moved north to the Busoga region near Kampala, Uganda with a peak in 1942 of one hundred cases per week (Omerod, 1961). The infected tsetse flies, now with *T rhodesiense* rather than the earlier epidemic of *T gambiense*, evoked local memories of deaths, resettlement, and panic among African populations and some colonial officials. The *T rhodesiense* variation of trypanosomiasis became endemic in this larger location including Kenya as far as Narok near the Tanganyikan border (Omerod 1961; Heisch 1948) Although there is epidemiological debate as to which species co-exist, are potentially virulent, or can convert from one to another, in the reality of daily life of African fishermen, cattle owners and farmers, where tsetse rested, cattle grazed and wildlife coexisted with human populations, sleeping sickness and *nagana* were both threats to African livelihood and lives.

Interest in repopulating Lambwe is recorded as early as 1939. Buying into the vision of wealth through agricultural development, the Senior Agricultural Officer, writing to the DC Central Kavirondo, under the heading "Reconditioning" stated: "Your money will not only be well spent, but will be the means of creating greater wealth by better and more crops and grass to the acre, and give your coming generation of people some hope of inheriting land which will be a credit to the present generation."⁶

In the 1940s, with the independence of India lurking in the background, Britain woke up to this new phase of the colonial project. What had been a somewhat reluctant venture became an active focus on development for decolonization. Colonial officials in Kenya were well aware of this new level of engagement. The Colonial Development and Welfare Fund renewed local interests in economic growth and, post-World War II, the climate was right for

these programs to be activated.

By the late 1940s, the tsetse fly had taken over – reclaiming the bush and leaving marginal areas for human settlement or farming. With early diagnosis and treatment, even in epidemic situations, mortality rates could be kept low. In 1953, failures of treatment with trypanamide and increases in acute infections with resultant increases in mortality alarmed the medical community. Until 1960, Rhodesian sleeping sickness cases remained localized in neighbouring Central Nyanza. Reports of cases emerged in South Nyanza in 1960. In spite of vector eradication attempts in adjoining regions, the tsetse and trypanosome proved adaptable, flexible, and migratory.

From the mid-1930s, we understood the relationship between the tsetse fly, the animal reservoir, and human interaction. Was human settlement the best control measure? The Busoga scheme for tsetse control, just across the Uganda border, was about to close. Why would Lambwe Valley be seen as a potential success? Perhaps the optimism of the national project in Kenya, the new tools of residual insecticides (DDT, Dieldrin, and Malathion) coupled with some regional successes with tsetse control shored the Scheme's development. The dynamism of the new agricultural policies created under the Swynnerton Plan should not be underestimated as drivers from Nairobi. Initiated in 1954, the same year as the Scheme was framed legally, the Swynnerton Plan addressed African land "problems" by reforming land tenure, consolidating fragmented holdings, issuing freehold title, intensifying and developing African agriculture, providing access to credit, and removing restrictions on growing crops for export (Bradshaw 1990). It consisted of a three-phase programme: (1) land adjudication to "phase out" customary tenure; (2) land consolidation into one block per household to eliminate small, dispersed parcels, to allow greater specialization, and to realize economies of scale in cash crop production; and (3) land registration to provide for security of ownership and to establish a land market. Overall, the aim was to facilitate increased investment and employment in agriculture and to increase rural incomes and the "productivity" of land (Okoth-Ogendo 1976, 1981, 1991; Wangari 1991). The Swynnerton Plan was predicated on an assumption that explicitly "successful" or wealthy African farmers would "be able to acquire more land and bad or poor farmers less, creating a landed and a landless class" (quoted in Wangari 1991).

Politics and the Implementation of the Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme

While the official strategies for land reforms and economic production provide a framework for understanding the commitment to the Lambwe Valley Scheme, they do not sufficiently address the potential challenges of its implementation. The Valley was a tsetse infested area. It is somewhat isolated, namely not on the path of any major migration or agri-business venture. There were no gold mines, few game animals, too many bushes, and so a seemingly unlikely target for economic development. Identifying the nature of development to be encouraged in this inhospitable Valley would generate intense debates among different groups with stakes in the scheme. The intense negotiations taking place in other parts of Kenya in the 1950s were between settlers, who owned land ranging in scale from small dairy farm to enormous, lucrative tea and coffee plantations located mostly in Highland Kenya and the African politicians soon to be in government over meeting the need for post-independence Africans to have productive land. In the colonial period, settlement for "squatters" as in the Olenguruone scheme established in the late 1930s, had become, by the late 1940s, sites of African resistance and government anxiety (Kanogo 1987).

On the economic front, no less than Creech-Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies had called for an "agricultural revolution" (Cooper 1996, 538 note 136). The colonial governors stated that Africans had to increase their efficiency, overcome their inertia. Leading Kenya politicians of the period – Kenyatta and Odinga – argued and debated over land for the Kikuyu and Akamba. Participation in the wage economy did not offer an alternative to owning land. When one revisits the notorious "Three-Fifths Rule" that African employees – those who worked on the railways, and civil servants – were to be paid 3/5 of salaries paid to non-Africans, thrown out by the Lidbury Commission in 1954, wages for Africans did not become equal to non-Africans. While Tom Mboya organized courses for trade union leaders in preparation for the transition to independence, the economic future for labourers looked dim.

If land was the issue, of what value was the Lambwe Valley to a new Kenya? Kenya land on or near Lake Victoria was simply the end of the railway line – the passageway into Uganda, a transit area for goods traded north-south, east-west. Lambwe does lie close to

the ancestral home of the late Tom Mboya – perhaps some were planning ahead to reinstate this area to Dholuo-speaking populations in the way that Akamba and Kikuyu were negotiating theirs.⁷ If the land itself was seen to be of little economic value to the grand development schemes of a new Kenya, then we are left with the presence of the tsetse fly, the disease it could transmit, trypanosomiasis, and the long term effects of allowing Lambwe to remain an endemic site for trypanosomiasis.

The Scheme opened in 1950 with a 42 000 acre allotment: 8 000 acres already inhabited, 6 000 acres of hills and mountain that could not be inhabited and farmed, thereby leaving 28 000 acres available for settlement, over five times the original estimate of productive land. While questions remained as to the number of settlers that could be managed within the scheme, while keeping the ranching agenda open, the Agricultural Department realized they had underestimated the numbers. District Commissioner Duffy, looking at neighbouring locations, reported they were “overpopulated and overstocked” with the implication that the surplus population would “be only too glad to spill into Lambwe Valley once the area had been cleared of tsetse.”⁸ Upon further investigation, the Agricultural Department agreed with this “overpopulation scenario” and reduced the land allocation per household to twenty-six acres. Ranching had given way to crop development. Questions of governance and authority were not worked out until after settlement began.

The first settler, unnamed in the record, arrived in February-March 1951. However, a few months later, the Chiefs of surrounding locations held their first meeting with colonial officials in Lambwe Valley on 28 June as an “information meeting to display the limits of the area to be covered in the scheme,” colonial bureaucratic parlance for letting the Chiefs know how and where land boundaries would be set. Until the appointment of a Settlement Officer, a Works Supervisor (paid by the East African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Research and Reclamation Organisation, heretofore EATTRO) and the Assistant Agricultural Officer, Mr. Gulf, were made jointly responsible to the District Team. It is important to note the East African component of policy-making in this period. Stimulated by established East African research institutes, borders for research, for tsetse fly, and for policies of disease control crossed national lines.⁹

From the Scheme's inception, there was "considerable disagreement" between EATTRO and the Agricultural Department over managing the scheme. The local EATTRO people thought they should have a major say in the control of the scheme – as it was a Tsetse Land Reclamation Scheme while Agriculture wanted to control because the reclamation was done by agricultural settlement. The official Report confirms EATTRO's position as it states the original conception was proposed by EATTRO. Settlers were to be introduced to keep the bush from regenerating and to be a source of communal labour. The introduction of the idea that settlement should be used for improved agriculture was the later proposal from the Agricultural Department.

Five months later, in November 1951, the first Settlement Officer, Mr Rinacher, was appointed. At this early stage of LVSS, reports had been received in the DC's office of thirty unofficial settlers and complaints that little clearing had been done by the official settlers. Labour was extremely short. The following month, December 1951, without consulting the new Settlement Officer, a new strategy became policy. The DC, in concert with the Chiefs, said that if Lambwe was not settled by South Nyanza people, the neighbouring Maragoli and settlers from Central Nyanza would be invited. If a labour or settler shortage was the problem, local authorities would simply extend the invitation outside the initial borders. The response, a year later, was to establish an African Land Utilization and Settlement Department within the DC's jurisdiction. As DC, GM Bebb, wrote to the PC Nyanza in Kisumu, in a secret and confidential memorandum: "Political problems have arisen in Lambwe Valley." He summarized the problems as follows:

- (a) Fear in the bordering locations that extra District Africans will be brought into the valley in large numbers.
- (b) Dislike of the proposed boundaries particularly in Kasingunga and Kaksingiri locations and to a lesser extent East Konyango and West Nyokal locations.
- (c) A general feeling that the Settlement Scheme is being used to Government's and not South Nyanza's interests and that the valley may well be regarded to (sic) a solution to overcrowding in some other district.¹⁰

DC Bebb's memorandum is instructive. He explained that the people of the district – Luo and Suba – understood the importance of

immediate settlement upon bush clearing and the provision of water supplies:

It is doubtful if land hunger in the Luo areas of the district is anywhere at present of such intensity as to provide a ready surplus population.... Settlement areas have much to commend them and the Lambwe Valley is extremely fertile but the African is not unaware that as he has got to live in the Valley there will be a social change in his life of importance. He will be allowed only a restricted number of cattle and probably for some years no cattle at all.... It is quite clear that the Veterinary authorities are concerned about the dangers of Tsetse even if fly free barriers are cut and until population pressure on the surrounding country causes substantial elimination of the bush referred to, this concern is likely to continue.¹¹

Bebb gave voice to the questions and concerns on the minds of the chiefs: namely, did the government intend to introduce settlement from District Africans outside the designated areas? More pertinently, again, in Bebb's words, "if so, do they not understand how this will provoke opposition?"¹²

Bebb clearly understood local demands and local politics. He asked the PC if the Scheme could not continue in its present form. With over £20,000 already spent, he suggested the government should concentrate on providing water supplies on the North East side where the population pressure was strongest and thus encourage clearing by local effort. In a later memo, the Council definitely opposed bringing in settlers from the outside. One year later, on 25 October 1954, the PC gave in to the Chiefs' pressure and the DC recommendations: "no settlers from other Districts would be brought in at present." "External" settlers would only be brought in from areas of land erosion, which, in effect, expanded the south end of the project.¹³

By the end of 1954, the legal document outlining rules for the settlement scheme had been drafted and approved. Although the records contain this document in English and Jalu, it is not at all clear how the document was produced at that time – consultation, collaboration, inter-jurisdictional input or central government, Ministry-level pronouncement.

The Native Lands Trusts (Lambwe Valley Settlement Area) Rules, 1954

Implementing the settlement scheme only exacerbated the tensions between the inherent political and epidemiological challenges of managing the settlers, their families and livestock and tsetse control. The directives for the LVSS were drafted in 1954¹⁴ and, given their clarity and stringency, are quoted *verbatim* from the record. Direct authority rested with the District Commissioner whose task it was to appoint African Advisory Councils as necessary. The DC kept the register of names and was responsible for ensuring that no person other than those registered would occupy land, own cattle, or depasture stock. From the records, occupation or settlement on LVSS was subject to the following conditions:

1. the applicant was to be given a copy of the rules and the applicant has to understand them;
2. demarcate and cultivate only land or stock entered in the register – any excess may be sold;
3. comply, individually and communally, with all such instructions (given) by the DC in regard to sound farming practice, including land management, and crop and stock husbandry;
4. no subdivision of land – without permission from the Chief Native Commissioner;
5. no one other than the registered applicant and his registered family allowed to reside on or cultivate any land;
6. directions from DC re crops or grass to be complied with;
7. "(f) The registered personall(sic) shall occupy and reside upon such area as may be allocation (sic) to him and shall not engage in occupations outside the Settlement area except with the permission of the District Commissioner";
8. if crops have to be uprooted – no compensation;
9. if no compliance – DC will serve written notice – as a warning – and if still guilty the settler's name will be expunged from the register – the guilty person plus all of those authorized to occupy with him the land, etc and required to leave.¹⁵

In addition to the above rules which were to be shown to applicants, further administrative directives were kept from the applicants; for example, the plots were never properly surveyed. Thus, plot size was not disclosed to avoid possible later claims. Cattle, important to settlers, were not deemed essential to the scheme.

Only when the Veterinary Department stated the area to be free of tsetse fly would cattle be allowed – ten per plot. The offer of free tractor ploughing was time limited to two years post initial settlement. After that time, the compulsion remained but the costs were to be paid by the settler.¹⁶

The non-disclosure of plot size would prove to result in problems over land ownership for LVSS administration, as seen below. The Agricultural Department's initial ranching agenda was clearly replaced by those of the Veterinary Department.

How did one become a registered, official LVSS settler? Following a personal visit to Lambwe, meeting with the Settlement Officer, a tour of the area, and a selection of the plot, formal registration was made with the District Officer, in neighbouring Homa Bay. The applicant was allowed six months to build a house, fence his land with sisal, and start cultivation. If he failed to complete these obligations within six months, the plot would be forfeited and assigned to another settler. The plot would also be forfeited if, at any time, the plot holder ceased to live on his plot. Unlike other settlement schemes in the country for which settlers borrowed funds from the state to buy into the scheme:

There are no fees of any sort attached to this scheme. All we want are hard working farmers to keep the Valley free from Tsetse bush by continuously expanding cultivation.¹⁷

In spite of the allotment rules institutionalized by the LVSS, clearing for tsetse fly was far from under control. "Most of the settlers, legal or illegal in Block III are in open country and so the settlers are not helping in any way to combat fly."¹⁸ More effective strategies were required to allocate only

... where tsetse bush has been cleared for settlers to control the regeneration. In cases where no clearing is done by settlers, paid labour plots should be arranged so that each settler gets a share of the bush to control.... It is not necessary to allocate plots in open country until all bush and cleared bush plots are taken up.¹⁹

The LVSS, as a tsetse-control program, appeared to be failing.

Government response, at the settlement and District levels, was to increase control and direction. If LVSS was failing from its inception, for what reasons was the scheme continued? Nyanza Province is a great distance from Central Province and central

government. Clearly, Central Government was focused on building a national policy for land reclamation, allocation, settlement, and productivity. Kenya was a settler colony and competing interests in economic development were entrenched in more than the minds of those living in Kenya in the 1950s. What would stay – what would change – how would the power base be negotiated – were questions at the heart of discussions in Nairobi. Nyanza, in particular South Nyanza, was a peripheral area which came to the forefront of development discussions when its leaders sought to make their political support visible. South Nyanza, then, was left on its own, and perhaps it is this opening that accounts for the highly responsive correspondence undertaken by African settlers in the LVSS. We must stress that more Africans ignored this scheme than applied. But of the numbers who did take up the call to settle, their complaints form a sizeable set of documents in the archives. While the records also show intense correspondence between the DC and the Settlement Officer on best farming practice, these were strategies for the long-term and divorced from the settlers' concerns.

The scheme prohibited settler engagement in a cash economy outside of self-produced cash crops. Economic success depended upon the land. What the archives demonstrate with certainty is that Africans in and around South Nyanza had their own ideas of what constituted land holding and reclamation. Reports of "unauthorised settlers" moving into Lambwe meant that they were bypassing the registration procedure and the contractual relationship with its multiple terms for land use and, perhaps of equal importance, land inheritance. At no point in the discussion of the settlement scheme, do government officials anticipate demographic growth and needs over time nor do they incorporate the complex system of marriage – bridewealth – land and cattle exchanges that were part of everyday life for Africans in this area.

Instead of negotiating with the settlers, officers employed technological strategies to address the "land problem." They prepared contour maps of the area based on an aerial survey drawing up plans for drainage and roads. Although administrators admitted this survey would not assist proper Farm Planning, it was considered enough to begin drainage plans, to prepare the land.²⁰ Unable to employ the settlers, given the LVSS restrictions, the African Land Development Unit (ALDEV) Engineer was forced to seek labour

elsewhere. While he asked for Africans with a Cambridge School Certificate (CSE) to be employed as surveyors-in-training, the District Agricultural Officer, John Gurr, responded:

... it is almost impossible in this Province to get hold of men with Cambridge School Certificates, and that the best we are likely to do is KASSE [Kenya African Secondary Schools Examination] ... I have succeeded in getting one man with a good KASSE pass, with a credit in arithmetic, and algebra.²¹

Finding no one with a CSE, they lowered the annual salary from £180 to £132 plus "safari allowance."²² Smyth (Settlement Officer) placed an advertisement in the local paper, *Souti Ya Bamani* [sic],²³ and hired "under-educated" locals. The irony of hiring local labour for work that could have been performed by local settlers, who were cash-poor, must have been seen as illogical by the settlers. While the survey was undertaken, settlers were reported to be shifting the boundaries set by "beacons," causing a number of acrimonious letters to be written between the engineer and local colonial authorities.

Responses to the Scheme and Settler Complaints: 1956-60

Two years into the scheme, its very viability was questioned.²⁴ In a typical understatement, and speaking for administrators from many sectors, the Agricultural Officer stated: "I am not happy with the state of the Lambwe Valley."²⁵ Although he had sufficient administrative and management staff – a Settlement Officer, an Agricultural Instructor, four Assistant Agricultural Instructors and an African Surveyor as well as a fairly adequate settler numbers (seven hundred families – acceptably below the target of two thousand families), overall planning was weak and government support inadequate. First, the surveying system was unsatisfactory in design, in that the layout was on the square, "irrespective of topography which will result in the greatest difficulties in Farm Planning when this comes about, as well as access to water and access to roads."²⁶ A new aerial survey was required for proper planning but funds were not available. Secondly, he reported the Lambwe Valley, as part of the larger agricultural Gulf Division, did not get the attention required for its development.

Seemingly ignoring these concerns, the DC and PC approved

opening one hundred plots for settlers from Central Nyanza, outside the initial recruiting the area and thus enlarging the scheme. From their perspective, the numbers were far from adequate. Only three new settlers had joined in the previous year (1956) and instead of increasing overall numbers, the figures report a drop to 620 from 677 recorded in 1955. While recognizing the support of the African District Council to meet settler targets, he expressed overall pessimism for the future of the LVSS:

I have always felt that the pressure on the land in South Nyanza is relatively so slight that the launching of the Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme was 15/20 years premature. The land lies within the South Nyanza Native Land Unit and therefore is presumably not available for settlement from other Districts except with the agreement of the people of South Nyanza as expressed by the African District Council...

I think the time has now come when a decision should be taken as to whether the Scheme is really worth carrying on even if settlers from Central Nyanza are introduced. A lot of good money has been thrown after bad, and it is my considered opinion that the introduction of 100 settlers from Central Nyanza will not provide the necessary stimulus to persuade further South Nyanza tribesmen to go in, and that therefore there is little point in introducing 100 Central Nyanza settlers unless it is expected that further immigrants from Central Nyanza will be allowed later on.²⁷

Settlement Officer Massey was unwilling to close the scheme and instead suggested a controlled migration with Central Nyanza settlers brought in a dozen at a time – and forcibly integrated into existing communities. What was meant by forced integration was left unexplained.

One year later, July 1956, settler numbers were still below targets: 677 families occupied plots but this figure included families domiciled on the land prior to the settlement scheme. The pre-settlers were problematic as they could not be relied upon to stay and conform to the settlement regulations, "as the present policy of Block settlement approaches their plots." Although the SO reasoned in pejorative terms that "the thought of work involved makes them a little apprehensive," there is no record that these inhabitants were ever brought into the early consultations at the time the scheme was

devised.²⁸ Pre-settlers were not willing to work the land or clear the bush according to LVSS regulations for what they already possessed – their land. The labour that they refused to provide was the conscripted, contracted labour of the LVSS.

How then to increase settler numbers to meet LVSS targets? While the suggestion of settlers from Central Nyanza was acceptable, the SO thought he could handle only four per month.²⁹ The discussion was taken to the African District Council (ADC), which vetoed entry of non-Luo from Marigoli but approved prospective settlers from Central Nyanza. The ADC, in addition to consultation with the District Officers, was also becoming increasingly involved in mediation between settlers and the SO.

In a letter of appeal to Chief Damianus Ajuang of Kasigunga Location, Smyth, who had replaced Massey as the new Settlement Officer, reported settler complaints to the Chief:

They object to being registered, as Settlers of Lambwe Valley Scheme, i.e., signing for the rules, and giving information required for registration to the Sub-Headman Grado Ogwel.... Settlers originally under your Location refuse to attend Barazas held by the Sub-Headman Grado Ogwel, but attend Barazas held at your Office.... One Settler, KILION ALIWA, is employed by you as a Locational Council member, for Kasigunga, if he has been selected as Locational Council Member, by your people in the LVS, he is required as a Locational member, for the LV Location.³⁰

Smyth, while acknowledging the authority of the Chief and of the ADC, at the same time realized that conflict resolution was not in his hands. This did not stop him from issuing a somewhat thinly veiled threat to go to higher authorities if the Chief was unable to perform his duties: "I (Smyth) am sure you (sic) help in these matters and explain to these Settlers, their position, without my having to request action from the District Commissioner, South Nyanza."³¹ In what could be read as affirmative protest, Chief Ajuang, who had written other letters in this file in English, replied to Smyth in Kiswahili that he would speak with his constituents.³²

As we have shown, through the 1950s, Lambwe Valley became the site of competing interests and jurisdictions. African populations, while subject to the formal administrations, actively engaged with their own representatives who, as advisors or African

administrators, formed a parallel governing structure. As the letters and reports demonstrate, local chiefs responded independently to multiple constituent layers from their own location to councils and wider network. While the LVSS records present these layers in relief, as a colonial state backdrop, the intense discussion, activity, and debate taking place on the ground among Africans speaks to a self-consciously politically astute population.

In this decade, the competing interests of the Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Departments form one layer of correspondence between Western Province and Nairobi. The central government debate centred on whether the Reserve should be "protective" or "productive."³³ A large part of the Valley was designated as a Forest Reserve, but experimental work to discover better suited trees proved to be too expensive to continue and the Lambwe Forest Station closed down.³⁴ Not to be excluded from debates, tsetse control did resurface as an issue from the DC's office. DC de Warrenne Waller, writing to the PC, sought to retain "*the existing Fly Barrier*" (his emphasis) in order to discourage tsetse breeding.

For the District and Provincial administrators, there needed to be discussion as to Lambwe Valley's future. The DC saw "no further point in continuing this expensive experiment." Referring to the Forest Department's protective versus productive debate, he wrote:

This to my mind is utter nonsense.... By allowing bush to generate on the slopes of these hills, which are to the West of the Fly Barrier, we shall bring the fly into areas to which it has never been before.³⁵

While agreeing with the challenge of viability, he suggested "[to] develop the Scheme gradually over the years on a non-cost basis until such time as, (if ever) a really genuine need for a Settlement area arises." With scarce funds available, the need for development was not present. He suggested a new Administrative Location be created out of the LVSS with the boundaries of the Settlement Scheme as the boundaries of the new location. "The creation of this new location would go hand in hand with the guaranteeing (*in perpetua*) of the land rights of the settlers outside the district whom we have settled in the Lambwe."³⁶ A new location would place administrative responsibility on local chiefs and the LVSS regulations could be abandoned.

The Settlement Officer was also frustrated. There had been

many upsets in the previous years with numerous letters and memos from the SO to his colleagues stating he received little support from Chiefs and Headmen. Following a baraza in September 1956, led by Paul Mboya, then Secretary to the ADC South Nyanza, the settlers expressed their fears due to "mischievous interpretation of the Settlement Rules by malicious minded persons."³⁷ Smyth attributed these complaints to residual conflict from those hostile from the beginning of the scheme. According to Smyth, "there is ample power of eviction for the ring leaders under the Settlement Rules." Although he said he had not been informed personally of criticisms, those on the borders were "definitely hostile, possibly hoping the Scheme will be a failure ... lip service paid at Barazas but there it ends."³⁸

Very early in 1958 an inquiry was launched into the LVSS with a full Report published in February. With 75 000 acres in the Valley, estimated to hold 2 000 settler families, the 530 registered settler families were far from the target. Because of this inquiry, during which investigators talked with the settlers, we have a very interesting record of their complaints. Handwritten letters were sent to the ADC and to the various administrative authorities.³⁹ Two letters in particular pointed to problems with terms of registration and settlement and to internal corruption within the local African administration.

Mr Boaz Owino, writing from the Nyanza Provincial General Hospital, Kisumu, applying for land, stated: "I am landless and I have two brothers and my cousin who are married and landless too." But the DO, M.D. Jackson, responded with the legal position stating:

25 acre plots at Lambwe are only given to people who are willing to settle permanently, i.e. you would have to resign from your job and come and live in Lambwe if you were allocated a plot. Alternatively you would have to send your wife and children to live here permanently.

Jackson then restated in full the procedure for prospective settlers to register, establish themselves on an allocated plot – and those conditions which could lead to forfeiture. Jackson concludes almost *verbatim* from previous administrators' correspondence: "There are no fees of any sort attached to this scheme. All we want are hard working farmers to keep the Valley free from Tsetse bush

by continuously expanding cultivation."⁴⁰ The settlers' letters, on the other hand, were personal and explicit. Mr Oreng wrote directly to a number of officials inquiring astutely about taxes.⁴¹ He tells his story that, in 1958, he was told by his Headman to pay a personal tax of 52/- and yet the proper personal tax should have been 50/-. He asks: "Where has [sic] these two shillings gone to? And if at all they were paid in government Personal Tax, Why did we not get any tickets?" (receipts). Two years later, the Headman announced that those who had not paid their personal tax were now fined 67/50.

And we paid it and there was *NO* any ticket as we paid in 1958.... The reason why we are now telling you all these words. These arrangements has [sic] been going on for Four years. In every year in June our Headman do say that. Those people who has [sic] not paid their personal Tax, They should be fined s7/50 shs. But the reason why we are afraid not paid it ... We are paying it. We know very well the...people who are late with thy [sic] Personal Tax.

At the opening of this letter, Oreng uses his financial leverage and threatens to pay elsewhere: "We people in Lambwe Valley we should pay our Personal Tax in Kaguinga Location.... If you cannot arrange these things properly which are going wrong in Lambwe."⁴² Mr Oreng's letter then lists the names and amounts paid of seven settlers – those who paid directly to the Headman. Oreng wanted to be seen as a man of knowledge and political action. In his last paragraph: "Please ask Headman and his clerk where this money has gone to? Because these people who paid all these amount they are really complaining." Oreng thus claims to be speaking not only for himself – but for others in the community who perhaps do not have the language skills to write to the authorities.

The SO, not in a reply to Oreng, but in a memo to the file, acknowledged the above "allegations." Smith recorded:

On enquiry it was found that all these allegations were true. Grado was taking money (allegedly in part payment) from these men on pay days.

Told to return all money and not to collect any more. Either a man pays the full amount and gets a tax or Rate receipt or he is prosecuted.

This is a very serious offence on the part of Grado and I am deeply insipidous [sic] of his motives.

To be watched closely in future.⁴³

What these letters and records reveal are the internal anxieties, challenges and ultimately the confidence of the African "body politic" to challenge the system for a fair deal.

There were also problems with regard to work or control over outside labour activities. It would have been almost impossible for a new settler to wait for a year to develop a cash crop and live without any form of income. In the 1958 inquiry, of the ten registration forms included as part of the Report, fifty percent of the applicants list that they are employed – in a variety of occupations – none of them farming – three butchery, one duka (shops), one seremala (unclear in the document). Wage employment was in clear violation of the terms of settlement.⁴⁴ Were these butchers and shop owners established on the Scheme? Were they working in Homa Bay? How did the children of the first settlers support themselves as they grew older? Did those who self-define as farmers not see this as an occupation? There are no answers to these questions in the archival records of the 1960s, but the increasing number of complaint letters into the 1970s reflects an increasingly complex, politicized, and engaged settler population.

From Settlement to Tourism: 1960s-1970s

The complaints registered through the 1958 inquiry might have led to better administrative government. Perhaps they did on site, but, if so, the records are silent. What surfaces is a Nairobi-based vision for Lambwe Valley constructed by the new, post-independence Members of Parliament.⁴⁵ Earlier plans for tsetse control and agricultural development disappeared from the agenda and were replaced with discussions over the economic opportunities of tourism and game parks:

Reference the above (re: game sanctuary near Lambwe Valley [sic] about which I have held verbal talks with the Ministry of Information as well as with yours along with the South Nyanza district authorities – I wish to urge the Government to develop this area effectively so as to attract the tourists from abroad to this part of the country.⁴⁶

Mr Agar, MP, continues in his letter to discuss the attractions of the

region and the problems of poaching and destruction of the crops by game. Is this not the area that only ten years earlier was to be "game controlled," to effect control of the tsetse animal reservoir? Given the frequent complaints about crop destruction by wild pigs, the two decades of game control were clearly ineffective.

Mr. C.Z.O Athieno, in his letter to the DO and DC of 14 November 1961, complained about the devastation of crops due to wild pigs and his fear of famine for the following year. Speaking for his neighbours as well, Mr Athieno said they were not sleeping at night as more than one person had to stay up to guard the four-acre cultivation. The "women do guarding work early in the night and the men take over later in the night." He continued:

If it becomes the burden of a woman to guard the crops during the night leaving children alone in the house it becomes a regratable [sic] state of affairs.

I understand that the Government is now spending thousands of pounds and time in combating famine in the other areas of Kenya. Surely something must be done immediately about this matter?

I do not know the policy of the Government regarding Lambwe Valley whether it is to be both a settled area as well as a game park. To me it would appear that the games [sic] or the settlers must give way.⁴⁷

Lambwe settlers thus demonstrated their knowledge of national politics and policies. Interestingly, DO Jackson ignored any reference to the larger picture and responded saying they had organized pig hunts and "I myself am going out to shoot pigs this evening." He continued that they wanted to see the wild pigs wiped out but did not want settlers to organize pig hunts outside their shambas without a game scout being present to protect other game animals.⁴⁸ Jackson ignored the central question as to government intent – settlement versus game park. Debates were taking place – but not in the public view – and, interestingly, not only in Nairobi.

In August 1963, two years later, the County Council of South Nyanza "unanimously resolved to declare Lambwe Valley a game reserve as was originally suggested in the meeting of the South Nyanza Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee on 15 October 1962." In this meeting it was also decided that the removal or killing of game would not be allowed without prior approval by

the County Council of South Nyanza.⁴⁹ Mr Agar, with significant local support, brought the game park issue to the attention of the Minister.

Although in most instances local authorities had managed to stay outside the watch of central government, these decisions, which had national ramifications, raised alarms. For Nairobi and Central Government, the concern was not with the shift itself from settlement to game park, but one of proper governance and authority. If this transition took place, who would assume authority to direct the change and, one must assume, the economic benefits?

In a letter written on 24 September 1963, two weeks after Mr Agar's letter to the Minister, the Chief Game Warden N.S. Sandeman stepped in. He informed the South Nyanza Council they had no legal authority to pass a resolution regarding wildlife, because the wildlife belonged to the state. Sandeman wrote:

In regard to the formation of a Game Reserve in the Lambwe Valley, you may rely on the Game Department assisting you in this project in any way it can provided that the appalling incidence of poaching from which the wildlife of the Lambwe Valley has suffered for so long is firmly and permanently suppressed and it is realised that it is most unlikely that owing to its situation, a Lambwe Valley Game Reserve can ever be "revenue earner" for your County Council.⁵⁰

The game park proposal dominated discussion among local and provincial authorities for the next six to seven years. To assist in planning, Council members visited tourist sites and game parks in central Kenya, and met with other game park advisory boards, but nothing really developed on the Lambwe Valley site. The Game Reserve was declared, the Game Park proposal passed but there were no funds from central government to develop the scheme.

Over this same period, LVSS settlers continued to write about their internal problems and we enter the 1970s with attempts to consolidate decision-making and thus, power. In 1971, the Lambwe Advisory Council (LAC) was established whose members included the District Officer and assistant, one chief, two sub-chiefs (west and east Lambwe), nine members from Lambwe (including in 1971 one woman, Mrs Esther Asino). As this Committee had power to allocate and withdraw land allotments, they were also the major recipients of settler complaint letters.⁵¹

Reimagining and Reconceptualizing the Lambwe Valley in the Postcolonial Era

As the number of settlers increased over time, from fifty in 1950 to over five thousand by 1970, so also did complaint letters in both number and breadth of issues. While most letters addressed land boundaries and disputes, the community was becoming increasingly politically active, involved and vocal. It is not clear from the record how much authority the Settlement Officer held in this decade as the responses to complaints came primarily from the office of the District Commissioner. The settlers' letters bypassed the Settlement Officer, with the settlers writing directly to the DC for a hearing. They realized that some of the problems they faced were as a result of the LVSS contract which the Settlement Officer was obliged to uphold and they would have to appeal to a higher government level to be heard.

While the LVSS settlement terms had forbidden entry into a cash economy, the administrators had not planned for the inter-community trading and business that became the basis of an informal economy. In many instances, settlers purchased labour with payment in cattle or with a portion of the land allotment or with the promise of land use. These problems could never have been brought before the Settlement Officer, but those on the LAC understood the problems of their neighbours and were willing to entertain their protests. For example, "Having paid compensation of sh.450.00 for labour on the part of Bolo Waringa, the said recipient refused to hand over the piece of land compensated for to the giver, Hazron Anyango."⁵² If there was a need for further evidence, the Committee called the complainant and witnesses to appear before the Committee.

DO Makokah wrote to the DC on 13 September 1971 to report that the card system used for registration had been stopped. He noted, "This has led to much confusion and unnecessary arguments by antagonists before the Advisory Council." Without the registration cards, the Advisory Council made decisions at one meeting only to revise them at the next. Of perhaps personal political importance was DO Makokah's concern that the "antagonists" had taken their complaints "up to the PC's office." Are these internal anxieties over local versus provincial government authority, power, and economic control?

Settlers clearly understood the terms of settlement. They wrote to the Committee with very detailed information on how inherited land had been registered, for example. Why, then, with representatives on the Committee, and a clear structure of how to proceed within the terms of settlement was there such dissatisfaction with the process? By 1971, adding both expense and another layer of legal involvement, complainants began to engage lawyers to act on their behalf.

Engaging lawyers required cash. How then did settlers engaged in a cash economy?

Although not permitted to work outside Lambwe, the records clearly show not all settlers submitted to these terms. The zoologist, C.S. Rodrigues, complained that while “several plots in the Roo Valley ... have been claimed and marked out ... no effort has been made to cultivate them, the owners being away most of the time.”⁵³ Thus, some of these men would have had to work outside. Mr Asino had registered plots for each of his sons but not all were acquired through the Settlement Officer. Once this was discovered, Mr Asino had to formally register the plot and also then provide the labour required under the terms of settlement. As more plots were required, the push to extend the boundaries of the Settlement area became a problem. Planning in the 1950s had also not taken into account demographic growth and familial obligations.

In a report to the DC from the District Veterinary Officer sent to hold a baraza in the Roo Valley in August 1971, in order to convince the inhabitants of the importance of extending settlement into the valley, there was clear and stated opposition. Mr Johnson Onyulo, described as “an accepted spokesman for the audience” stated to the assembled peoples:

We are the descendants of the original occupants of this valley who lived here before they were driven out by tsetse flies. We have agreed on the existing demarcation of the land amongst ourselves and we would not agree to any further settlement in the valley. We want the Land to be adjudicated and registered according to the present demarcation so that we may obtain title deeds.

With title deeds we shall take loans individually and develop our shambas individually.... We will choose our own line of development ... and this only after land registration.

... Most importantly we want water in Makende....We propose to begin our own harambee water project but request that rather the water should be provided first and contributions be made afterwards as loan repayments.

Then will we be able to obey the Mzee's call to "go back to the land."⁵⁴

The Roo Valley dweller did not stop with this meeting. In a handwritten letter to the District Agricultural Committee, Benedict J. Oloo wrote on behalf of a group of "about 200 villagers" requesting water and surveyors to demarcate and register the land. With land title, these farmers could borrow from a bank or directly from the government, options not available twenty years earlier:

The suggestion is that we remain firm as we had talked to the Veterinary Officer in August. That we need no ranching at all but settlement area. As there is no land left where such projects would be done, unless the above villagers are all removed. And if removed where will they go?⁵⁵

As of March 1972, no further land allocation was allowed as part of the Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme.⁵⁶ While land transfers or sales were permitted, undefined plot boundaries continued to be a problem. Four months later, approximately 1 217 plots were demarcated, but the two Assistant Chiefs stated they had no idea exactly how many plots there were. According to the register, 1 037 plots were legally allocated and approximately 180 illegally occupied.⁵⁷

Many letters were filed under the term, *Ingonga*, the name given to the earlier colonial government policy which stated that each plot would comprise fifty acres. People complained that fifty acres were too big to be cleared and developed by a single man. Then the acreages were reduced to twenty-five each and maps made on this basis. In 1962, Tom Mboya advocated the idea of a person being allowed to acquire as much land as he was able to develop. Then, people started obtaining more land by acquiring several plots each. This system has caused chaos in the numbering of plots. The sizes of some plots have been "unduly increased and some plots have been sub-divided."⁵⁸ Further problems came from adjoining locations whose Chiefs supported the expansion of land holding into the settlement area:

It is extremely imprudent for an administrator to brew trouble in a settlement Area next to his reserve sublocation as you are

prone to doing. Do not be surprised if I, the DO, Mbita, prosecute you individually or you and your henchmen collectively under Lambwe Rules. You better concentrate on the development of your home and of your land.

In spite of the land pressure, the Game Reserve remained protected, under the new Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, overseen at the local level by the Game Warden-Nyanza. As the Assistant Game Warden of Lambwe, informed a potential settler, "anybody found practising any human activity within the Game Reserve will be dealt with accordingly. Please comply."⁵⁹

What was to be done for settlers whose land was appropriated as part of the newly-established Game Reserve? In May 1972, one such person, Mr Owino, applied for land in Lambwe, stating he had a piece of twenty-five acres taken by the Game Reserve.⁶⁰

Added to multiple land problems were the ongoing issues of tsetse control, under the administration of the Veterinary Service Division, Tsetse Survey and Control. In spite of central government's waning interest, tsetse control came back on the agenda in 1974. Labourers had managed to continue bush clearing, but the farmers were not cultivating the land nor were they removing the bush stumps and roots to prevent bush regeneration. Lack of sufficient land cultivation posed two threats for farmers: first, with the return of tsetse flies would come a resurgence of sleeping sickness and second, wild pigs that could live in the regenerated bush would damage crops. The Roo Valley, focus of a new set of complaint letters, was one of the most fertile areas of the entire Lambwe Valley area. According to administrators, the potential for farming was high. The Roo and Gwasssi Valleys bordered the Game Reserve and in both areas settlement was patchy. Questions arose with regard to absentee owners – connecting, perhaps the challenge of demographic growth, increasing pressures to be part of a cash economy and diminishing land holdings and production. While the files hold numerous letters to the DO to address these concerns, there was no response. The DO was more directly involved in land allocations and payments.⁶¹

As of 1974 there were fourteen dams in Lambwe Valley; ten had been constructed by individual farmers. Only four of the fourteen held water for the year – some dams existed only as shallow depressions where proper dams used to exist. At this point, the Ministry

of Agriculture proposed that £13 000 be spent on dam construction. The money would be spent to renovate ten of the dams and construct six new dams – equally positioned in the Lambwe Valley settlement area and three in the Game Reserve. There were fears expressed that these dams may have had to have been built on land where there were farms, so requiring further expense in compensation. But the problem not mentioned was that no more land was available in Lambwe Valley. This problem became of vital importance when the Magistrate awarded compensation in 1975 to settlers whose land had been taken in the 1960s (some in 1966 and others in 1969) by the Game Reserve. The Magistrate ruled that the people should be given land to replace what was taken from them. But there was no more land.

The archives record letter after letter from settlers in the LV over land holding rights. In addition, the District Officer was charged with malpractice in that he collected taxes from residents and did not provide government receipts. He took payments from "Tanzanian Ujamaa runaways"⁶² for land to settle next to the Game Reserve and the settlers were told by the Game Department they were illegal. These settlers were then tried at the Homa Bay Law Courts. Settlers from the first group in 1959 complained that the DO Mbita and an Asst Chief Sikri were selling parts of plots secretly. "My appeal to you and the Government is that the atmosphere at this place (Sikri) is explosive and unless it is rested [sic], in time, more serious consequences are bound to develop in the very near future," indicated a typed letter from a very politically astute Mr Zadock Odanga, which was sent directly to the PC and copied to the DC, the Division Police and their MP.⁶³

By May 1975, the local MP, A.J.L Okuku Ndiege, was brought into the negotiations. In a letter from Ndiege to the DC he stated: "I am getting rather concerned at the increasing number of boundary disputes in the scheme." He asked for a meeting to review the "whole Lambwe situation."⁶⁴ In his second letter of that date, he warned the DC that the government grant of K25 000 for the development of Lambwe Valley, from the Ministry of Agriculture, included K13 000 for dams, K10 000 for insecticides and K2 000 for "maintenance of stations" would be returned to the Treasury five weeks later – June 1975 – unless construction began immediately.⁶⁵ Political criticism had turned into economic leverage from the local to the central state.

Conclusion

Correspondence among all levels of government, between settlers and their advisory committees, interspersed with increasingly obfuscating letters from lawyers representing one side or another, attest to the multiplicities of roles, identities, frameworks, governances, and voices of all participants. No one language could guide or dominate the narrative as the political participation shifted from the administrative and scientific silos of the 1950s to a Tower of Babel in the 1970s. Although we end this part of the story in 1975, Lambwe Valley remains of political and economic interest, according to the shifts in national concerns. Ruma Park, Kenya, would be the next imagined vision for Lambwe Valley taking this very provincial outlier to the status of a proposed National Park. As an endemic site, Lambwe Valley continues to be an epidemiological curiosity in terms of tsetse control. Most importantly, it remains home to the descendants of settlers and their families who remember tsetse and sleeping sickness and those involved in its control. While tsetse control and sleeping sickness provided the overarching umbrella under which the Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme was constructed, the activities of the communities involved over the time of the scheme demonstrate the wealth of investigations of everyday life, politics and negotiations that often remain hidden under the shadows and narratives of "big" government, particularly in this period of transition from colony to nation. With thanks to those settlers who voiced their many complaints in interviews and records, we have been able to explore the complex textures of their lives, their active agency and creative, if not subversive, engagement in the process of governance.

Notes

¹ An exception to schemes developed in response to soil conservation concerns, the 1934-37 deportations of the Talai clan and others to the Gwassi location in South Nyanza, contiguous with Lambwe Valley, to demonstrate political control over Kipsigi dissidents, speaks to a longer relationship between the Lambwe Valley and settlement. The historiography is extensive. See Anderson (1993) and Hughes (2005) for contextualized accounts within the long history of squatters, political resistance and links to contemporary struggles.

² From 1946-1960, ALDEV, the African Land Development Program, administered the funding and development of settlement schemes.

Lambwe Valley was scheduled to begin in 1950.

³ Chambers (1969, 7), citing as reference: African Land Development in Kenya, 1946-62, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Water Resources, Nairobi, 1962, 178-81.

⁴ KRC DN 2/20 "History of Lambwe Valley. Extracts from Agricultural [sic] Department Files."

⁵ Jennings' research on development and crisis in Tanzania in the 1960s and the "extension of central government control" in the adjoining North Mara District should be further investigated as a rationale for the return of former "Kenyan" African farmers to Lambwe Valley.

⁶ KNA DC/KSM/1/3/91: Development Scheme, 1951-64.

⁷ Interview, John Obande Apot, 15/07/05, "Mbuya Tom emane olande," Tom Mboya announced that he required people to come and settle in Lambwe; DC/KSM.1.3.91: Development Scheme, 1951-64.

⁸ KNA DC/KSM/1/3/91: Development Scheme, 1951-64.

⁹ The various research institutes based in Entebbe, Uganda and Amani, Tanganyika/Tanzania for tropical disease control – tryps, onchocerciasis, malaria – recognized porous borders, remapped regions to ignore national frontiers. Their intersections and scientific imaginings are being explored in Geissler and Malowany's current research.

¹⁰ KRC DN/2/20 1953. Secret and confidential, DC Office South Nyanza, 1 Sept 1953 to PC Nyanza.

¹¹ KRC DN/2/20 1953. Secret and confidential, DC Office South Nyanza, 1 Sept 1953 to PC Nyanza.

¹² KRC DN/2/20 1953. Secret and confidential, DC Office South Nyanza, 1 Sept 1953 to PC Nyanza.

¹³ KRC DN/2/20 1953. Secret and confidential, DC Office South Nyanza, 1 Sept 1953 to PC Nyanza.

¹⁴ KRC DN/2/20 1953. Settlement Area – South Nyanza District; in English and Dhaluo.

¹⁵ KRC DN/2/20, 194.

¹⁶ Correspondence P.D. McEntee, DC Central Nyanza to the Settlement Officer, 1954

¹⁷ KRC DC/HB/2/6/39- filed as 23.11.60 AGR.11/2/123.

¹⁸ B.J. Duffy, Field Officer EATTRO, Lambwe Valley, Report, "The Lambwe Valley Settlement Scheme and the Tsetse Fly (*G.pallidipes*)." February 1955, 5.

¹⁹ KRC BV/3/575 filed also as A/DEV/1/3/37 13 May 1955, Ag Asst Director of Agriculture, Nyanza Province to PC, Nyanza Province, Kisumu.

²⁰ KRC BV/575. 8 July 1955, Ag Asst Director of Agric, NP to DC South Nyanza, Kisii, Lambwe Valley Survey, Filed as A/SURV/1/303 DC records Kisii.

- ²¹ KRC BV/159/2 filed as LAND.4.3.11.31, 14 September 1955.
- ²² KRC BV/159/2 filed as LAND.4.3.11.31, Notes p1, 25 August 1955.
- ²³ Incorrectly cited in the records and should read, *Sauti ye Bomani*.
- ²⁴ Letters to be found in the following files: KNA DC/HB/2/2/58 Lambwe Valley General Correspondence; KNA DC/HB/2/6/39 General Correspondence Lambwe Locational Advisory Council, 1958-61; KNA DC/HB/3/1 District Settlement Schemes, 1958-59.
- ²⁵ KRC BV/159/2 filed as LAND/4/3/II/75, District Ag Officer, SN, Kisii to Asst Director of Agric, NP, Kisumu, 30 August 1956, "Lambwe Valley," 168.
- ²⁶ KRC BV/159/2 filed as LAND/4/3/II/75, District Ag Officer, SN, Kisii to Asst Director of Agric, NP, Kisumu, 30 August 1956, "Lambwe Valley," 168.
- ²⁷ KRC DC/HB/2/2/58 Letter from DC to PC, 10 January 1957.
- ²⁸ KRC DC/HB/2/2/58 Letter from SO to DC, 5 April 1957, 1.
- ²⁹ KRC DC/HB/2/2/58 Letter from SO to DC, 5 April 1957.
- ³⁰ KRC DC/HB 2/2/31/95 Letter marked LV 36/2/2Settlement Officer to Chief Kasigunga, 21 July 1956.
- ³¹ KRC DC/HB/2/31/95 Letter marked LV 36/2/2Settlement Officer to Chief Kasigunga, 21 July 1956.
- ³² KRC DC/HB/31/95 Letter marked LV36/2/2 Chief Kasigunga to Settlement Officer, 30 July 1956.
- ³³ KRC DC/HB/31/95 Letter marked LV36/2/2 Chief Kasigunga to Settlement Officer, 30 July 1956. KNA DC/KSM/1/3/91 Letter AgPC Nyanza to PS, Ministry of Forest Devt, Nbi, 27 Nov 1958.
- ³⁴ KNA DC/KSM/1/3/91 Letter Division Forest Officer to Chief Conservator of Forests, Nbi- 8 Jan 1959.
- ³⁵ KNA DC/KSM/1/3/91 Letter Division Forest Officer to Chief Conservator of Forests, Nbi- 4 November 1958.
- ³⁶ KNA DC/KSM/1/3/91 Letter Division Forest Officer to Chief Conservator of Forests, Nbi- 4 November 1958.
- ³⁷ KNA DC/HB/2/2/58 Settlement Officer to DC, South Nyanza, 15 September 1956 and 16 December 1957.
- ³⁸ KNA DC/HB/2/2/58 Settlement Officer to DC, South Nyanza, 15 September 1956 and 16 December 1957.
- ³⁹ KNA DC/HB/2/2/58 filed as AGR 11/2/233; Admin Lambwe Valley General Correspondence, LAC Minutes.
- ⁴⁰ KNA DC/HB/2/2/58 Filed as 23.11.60 AGR.11/2/123, 123.
- ⁴¹ KNA DC/HB/2/31/95. Letter Mr Oreng to the DO, LV, SN, Western Division, 21 November 1960.
- ⁴² KNA DC/HB/2/31/95. Letter Mr Oreng to the DO, LV, SN, Western Division, 21 November 1960.

- ⁴³ KNA DC/HB/2/31/95. Letter Mr Orenge to the DO, LV, SN, Western Division, 21 November 1960, 125 – handwritten and typed copy.
- ⁴⁴ KRC DN/2/20 filed as ADMIN FILE- AGR.11/2/233 – 30.8.61. Copy of DC South Nyanza to PC, 17 March 1955, Confidential. This file suggests a Prison Camp be opened in the valley which would be self-supporting – growing its own food supplies and cash crops – cotton and ground nuts. A second suggestion was a Farmers' Training Centre. Seen more as a labour recruiting centre, this suggestion was dropped. Letter from M.D. Jackson, DO, Western, Lambwe to the DC Homa Bay copied in this file.
- ⁴⁵ KNA KW/12/3 11 September 1963. Correspondence to the Minister for National Resources, Game and Fisheries from E Omolo Agar, Member for Karachunyo. Re: Game Sanctuary near Lambwe Valley.
- ⁴⁶ KNA KW/12/3 11 September 1963. Correspondence to the Minister for National Resources, Game and Fisheries from E Omolo Agar, Member for Karachunyo. Re: Game Sanctuary near Lambwe Valley.
- ⁴⁷ KNA DC/HB/2/2/58. Lambwe Valley General Correspondence.
- ⁴⁸ KNA DC/HB/2/2/58. Lambwe Valley General Correspondence, 20 November 1961.
- ⁴⁹ KNA DC/HB/2/2/58. Lambwe Valley General Correspondence, Admin. County Council of South Nyanza meeting notes on the 13-15 August 1963.
- ⁵⁰ KNA DC/HB/2/58. Correspondence to the Clerk of the Council.
- ⁵¹ KRC DN2/3 Lambwe Settlement Scheme, 8.12.1970-13.10.1972. All complaint letters are in this file.
- ⁵² KNA DC/HB/2/6/39, LAC Minutes, 2.
- ⁵³ KNA KW/13/15 Filed as AGR 2/1, copied in this file, 224. This renaming reflects the interest in creating a game park out of one section of Lambwe Valley, where the roan antelopes were prominent.
- ⁵⁴ KNA DC/HB/2/6/39 LAC Minutes.
- ⁵⁵ KNA DC/HB/2/6/39 LAC Minutes, 18.10.71.
- ⁵⁶ KRC DN/2/3 Letter DO to Mr Elisha Akech Chieng [sic], 13 March 1972.
- ⁵⁷ KRC DN/2/3 /LVSS 17/7/72, typed, outlines problems from *Ingonga*.
- ⁵⁸ KRC DN/2/3 /LVSS 17/7/72, 1.
- ⁵⁹ KRC DN/2/3 /LVSS 17/7/72, LVSS, 192.
- ⁶⁰ KRC DN/2/3 /LVSS 17/7/72, LVSS, 192.
- ⁶¹ KRC DN/2/4 LSS 1974-76.
- ⁶² KRC DN/2/3 LVSS 1974-76.
- ⁶³ KNA KW/13/29 filed as AGR.2/19, May 1975.
- ⁶⁴ KNA KW/13/29 filed as AGR.2/19, May 1975.
- ⁶⁵ KNA KW/13/29 filed as AGR.2/19, May 1975.

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