

# A SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS OF LAND ALIENATION AND RESETTLEMENT IN GA-RANKUWA, C. 1961 TO 1977

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## *Abstract*

*This article presents a historical case-study in forced removals and its ramifications from 1961 to 1977 from the perspective of socio-environmental history. The focus area is Pretoria (South Africa) in a resettlement area called Ga-Rankuwa whose community was displaced from Lady Selborne in the 1960s. The article demonstrates that forced removals did not only result in people losing their historical land and material possessions but also their sense of being and connectedness. The focus is on the changing perceptions of people in the midst of their land loss, an area of study that is generally under-examined in academia. In Lady Selborne, blacks were displaced from an area that was agriculturally fertile, close to the city centre of Pretoria and relocated to infertile Ga-Rankuwa on the outskirts of the city. This resettlement resulted in many of those relocated being prevented from engaging in food production, which was in turn an affront to Sotho-Tswana culture and religion with its emphasis on land as lefa: a bequest that has to feed its inhabitants. This mind-set resulted in forced removals and in turn led blacks to disregard environmental issues. Ga-Rankuwa became degraded with litter, soil erosion and dongas, especially in the 1970s, as people realised that there was no hope of returning to Lady Selborne.*

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**Keywords:** Ga-Rankuwa; socio-environmental history; land alienation; forced removals; resettlement; Lady Selborne; environment; degradation.

**Slutelwoorde:** Ga-Rankuwa; sosio-omgewingsgeskiedenis; grondvervreemding; gedwonge verkuuwing; hervestiging; Lady Selborne; omgewing; agteruitgang.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to explain the socio-environmental history of Ga-Rankuwa as a resettlement area from 1961, the year of resettlement, to 1977, the year that Ga-Rankuwa became part of Bophuthatswana, an independent Bantustan area under the apartheid system. It will focus on the ramifications of forced removals on people in the context of their environment. Ga-Rankuwa has been examined by Carruthers and Baldwin, who do not discuss environmental issues and resettlement

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experiences.<sup>2</sup> The link between environmental history and forced removals has been researched by Khan and Jacobs, which offer us a comparative theoretical perspective.<sup>3</sup> Little research has been done into the effects of displacement on environmental perceptions among blacks. There are few written primary sources pertaining to Ga-Rankuwa, except some archival documents describing the infrastructure in the area. This article thus attempts to fill this historiographical lacuna by using oral history and other historical sources to relay the voices of the people of Ga-Rankuwa and to explore their personal resettlement experiences and relationship with the environment.

Interviews were combined with primary documents and secondary readings to read the oral interviews against the grain, and to produce a balanced socio-environmental history of the area.<sup>4</sup> Interviews were undertaken in Ga-Rankuwa (Pretoria) in 2004 and 2006. Interviews were semi-structured and qualitative based on phenomenological approach. Phenomenological methodology allows the researcher to produce rich information and to understand communities from within

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- 2 See Jane Carruthers, "Urban land claims in South Africa: the case of Lady Selborne township, Pretoria, Gauteng", *Kleio* XXX11, 2000; Alan Baldwin, *Uprooting a nation: The study of 3 million evictions in South Africa* (London: Africa Publications Trust, 1974).
- 3 Farieda Khan, *Contemporary South African environmental response: An historical and socio-political evaluation with particular reference to Blacks*, Masters thesis: University of Cape Town, 1990; Nancy Jacobs, *Environment, power, and injustice. A South African history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 4 Interviews conducted by the author (Pretoria, Ga-Rankuwa) with Mrs Elizabeth Mvula (24 June 2004), Mrs Ruth Kgari (25 June 2004), Ms Julia Motshetshane, Mr William Kgari, 27 June 2004, Mrs Tshidi Tshweni, Mr Lolo Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Andrew (Pseudo name used – due to ethical reasons the interviewee did not want his real name to be used), Mr Maphalare, Mrs Violet Maphalare (28 June 2004), Mrs Elsie Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila (29 June 2004), Mrs Madumo, Mrs Matilda Manamela (30 June 2004) and Mr K (1 July 2004). Central Archives, Pretoria (CA): Department of Bantu Administration and Development (BAO) T61/2/A228/ 1547/1, Paper received, History of Ga-Rankuwa, no date; CA BAO 7818G60/2/1547/1, Document received, Memo: Factual memorandum with regards to the relationship of Captain Motsepe of the Ba Makanstam to Ga-Rankuwa (Feitlike memorandum ten opsigte van verhouding van kaptein Motsepe van die Makanstam tot Ga-Rankuwa), no date; CA BAO 5077G57/4/1547/1, Letter received, Information about Ga-Rankuwa, H Martens – S Liebenberg, 27 March 1969, CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Document received, Memo: non-Tswana's in Bantutowns Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane and Temba (Nie-Tswanas in Bantoedorpe: Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane en Temba), no date; CA BAO 7900T59/1547/1/1, Letter received, Information about Ga-Rankuwa, Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 20 March 1962; CA BAO 7900T57/1547/1/1, Letter received, Church in Ga-Rankuwa, SS Mohlomane (Administrator Pro-Tem The African Orthodox Church) – Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 23 June 1962; CA BAO 7900T61/6/1547/1, Letter received, Church in Ga-Rankuwa, John C Garner (Arch Bishop of Pretoria) – The Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, 7 June 1962; CA BAO 7900N2/13/3 G.96, Letter received, Church in Ga-Rankuwa, O Papke (Missionary in charge) – Bantu Affairs Commissioner and Development, 16 July 1962 and Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana* (Johannesburg: Van Rensburg, 1977).

and not judge their beliefs or practices.<sup>5</sup> The method allows each interviewee's accounts to be examined in great detail as an entity in its own right before moving to more general claims in a narrative account that includes detailed extracts from other participants' accounts.<sup>6</sup> With the phenomenological approach "the influence of the researcher is structuring, analysis and interpreting the situation at present to a much smaller degree than would be the case with a more traditional orientated research approach".<sup>7</sup> To analyze the interviews written archival documents and other secondary sources were used to fill the gaps created by interviewees forgetting and myths created by their nostalgia.

This article attempts to analyse resettlement from the Sotho-Tswana of Ga-Rankuwa's perspective and to eschew Eurocentric analytical models because they may obscure indigenous beliefs. For example, the early missionaries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, like Mackenzie, lament that "the Tswana gardens and arable land were laid out in a manner which offends the eye of a European".<sup>8</sup> European culture saw beauty as vital in planning gardens, but the Sotho-Tswana saw beauty as important but defined it from their own social setting.<sup>9</sup> The stereotypical view driven by the perception of blacks as the "other", savage and uncivilised,<sup>10</sup> led missionaries to reject Sotho-Tswanan culture and attempt to impose European systems of cultivation characterised by geometric symmetry.<sup>11</sup> The drawback of analysing indigenous African themes from a Eurocentric perspective can also be detected in studies of forced removals. Such stereotypical analyses are embedded in the western milieu<sup>12</sup> and the National Party government's ideals that fail to

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5 Husserl in L Cohen *et al.*, *Research methodology in education* (7th ed.) (New York, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p. 18.

6 J Tosh, *The pursuit of history: Aims, methods & new directions in the study of modern history* (London and New York: Longman, 1991).

7 Cohen *et al.*, *Research methodology*, p. 20.

8 Cited in John and Jean Comaroff, "Cultivation, christianity and colonialism: Towards a new African genesis" in John De Gruchy (ed.), *The London Missionary Society in Southern Africa: Historical essays in celebration of the bicentenary of the LMS in South Africa 1799-1999* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999), p. 59.

9 Cited in Comaroffs, "Cultivation, christianity and colonialism", p. 59.

10 David Chidester, *Savage systems* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 2.

11 Comaroffs, "Cultivation, christianity and colonialism", p. 59.

12 According to Thomas Kuhn cited in Donald Worster, "Theories of environmental history" in WG Robbins (ed.), *Environmental Review* 11/ 4, 1987, p. 267, "nature according to the west is passive and manipulable" and this implies that to some scholars who adhere to such a theory to nature they tend not to understand the fact that the traditional African approach to nature is that of "oneness with nature". That is, such academics thus fall in to a trap of ignoring the significance of land as a religion, a haven for the ancestors and the living who, according to the Sotho-Tswana, are active actors with environmental issues.

understand that many sub-Saharan black people revered their land, environment and ancestors.<sup>13</sup>

Jacobs skilfully describes the forced removals of black Africans from Kuruman, but in some instances fails to do so from their perspective. She claims that she “found little evidence of spiritual significance to the landscape in Kuruman”,<sup>14</sup> but there is sufficient evidence that illustrates the landscape’s spiritual significance to them.<sup>15</sup> According to John Philip of the London Missionary Society, “the Batswana revered their ancestors and did not want any deviation from their culture and religion and saw any innovation as an insult to the memories of their ancestors”.<sup>16</sup> Changes occurred among the Batswana in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as after the mineral revolution, distinct classes emerged: the upper peasantry, the middle peasants and the poor. If anyone noted modernist ideals they “did not adopt them but adapted to them”, and made it a point to not disown or contradict the culture and religion of the Batswana.<sup>17</sup> The Batswana of Kuruman performed collective rites to maintain annual agricultural cycles, including rain-making rituals.<sup>18</sup>

The case study of Ga-Rankuwa, in terms of the ramifications of forced removals, and the negative impact thereof on the environment of the resettlement areas is similar to many of other relocation incidences that occurred due to forced removals by the National Party government. To illustrate this point, in the forced removals from Sophiatown to Meadowlands<sup>19</sup>, Boschhoek to Limehill<sup>20</sup>, District Six to Gugulethu<sup>21</sup> and Cato Manor to KwaMashu<sup>22</sup> land degradation is written on the landscape of the townships. A variety of literature exists that maintains that black areas were degraded environmentally.<sup>23</sup> Blame for such degradation varies: some people argue that it was due to black Africans themselves and refer to them as

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13 Jacob S Mohlamme, *Forced removals in the peoples memory* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989), p. 15.

14 Jacobs, *Environment, power and injustice*, p. 20.

15 Chidester, *Savage systems*, pp. 183-192.

16 Cited in Comaroffs, “Cultivation, christianity and colonization”, p. 60.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

19 Bloke Modisane, *Blame me on history: An angry, provocative insight into the torment of a man caught between two worlds* (Great Britain: Panther, 1965).

20 Cosmas Desmond, *The discarded people: An account of Africa resettlement in South Africa* (London: Penguin African Library, 1971).

21 T Mhlanga, “Tearful walk through District 6 to remember forced removals: Mass removal in District Six”, *Cape Argus*, 25 September 2009.

22 A Manson, “From Cato Manor to KwaMashu – Class formation and political opposition in KwaMashu Township, 1958-1980”, at <<http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpage/DC/remar81.8/pdf>>.

23 See Khan, “Contemporary South African environmental response”, Lloyd Timberlake, *Africa in crisis: The causes, the curses of environmental bankruptcy* (London: Earthscan Publications,

“destructive” to the environment,<sup>24</sup> while others say that the space was just too small and degradation was inevitable.<sup>25</sup> Others claim that it was a cultural development as blacks became passive or even destructive towards the environment by either passive resistance or defiance and hopelessness.<sup>26</sup> From the fieldwork undertaken for the purpose of this research, it appears that the last reason is arguably the strongest. This article discusses the process of resettlement and the area’s infrastructure and environment. This will then explain why the residents, especially former landlords of Lady Selborne, changed their perception of themselves from a positive identity as *batho* (human) to a negative perception as *ga re batho* (not human).<sup>27</sup> It will also explore the joy that many former tenants felt in private land-ownership that was available to them in their former township. Former tenants rented rooms in landlords’ yards and they were overcrowded with no privacy. But Ga-Rankuwa provided them freestanding homes. This article will focus first on the resettlement process before examining the landscape of Ga-Rankuwa. The focus will then shift to the area’s infrastructure. Recreational activities and health services will also be discussed and contrasted with those of Lady Selborne. Lastly, and most importantly, attention will be paid to the environmental history of the area with emphasis on people’s changing relationship to the environment.

## 2. THE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS IN GA-RANKUWA FROM 1961

Ga-Rankuwa was established in late 1961 to accommodate people from Lady Selborne, Bantule, Newclare, Marabastad, Rama, Eastwood and other neighbouring farms. Ga-Rankuwa is situated about 32 kilometres from the city centre of Pretoria and about 22 kilometres from Lady Selborne. The area was named after the Bakgatla headman, Rankuwa Boikhutso. “Rankuwa” means “we are accepted”. Then the word “Ga” was inserted by the community to imply “we are not accepted”. There were about 435 people in 1962 with 1948 sites cleared for settlement.<sup>28</sup> The area was proclaimed a township by Proclamation 448 of 1965 and

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1985); James C McCann, *Green land, brown land, black land: An environmental history of Africa 1800-1990* (Oxford: Heinemann Portsmouth, 1999).

24 Pole Evans cited in Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns, “Environmental change & policy: Challenging received wisdom in Africa” in Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns (eds), *The lie of the land: Challenging received wisdom on the African environment* (United States: Heinemann, 1996), p. 36.

25 Timberlake, *Africa in crisis*.

26 See Khan, “Contemporary South African environmental response”.

27 See Maserole Christina Kgari-Masondo, “A home makes one *motho* – the idea of humanness, home and history in Lady Selborne’s forced removals, circa 1905 to 1977”, *Historia* 53/2, November 2008, pp. 70-97.

28 CA BAO 7818G60/2/1547/1, Memo: Factual memorandum with regards to the relationship of Captain Motsepe.

was initially established to accommodate people from all ethnic groups<sup>29</sup> who were displaced mainly from Lady Selborne.<sup>30</sup> The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development officially opened the township on 12 March 1966 and stated that Ga-Rankuwa was regarded as a Tswana settlement.<sup>31</sup> This affected the community that had lived as an inter-ethnic and mixed race group in their former township. The proposed division of ethnic groups and their further displacement led to more grief and dissatisfaction.

Some interviewees claim that they were informed of the date of removals and whence they had to relocate.<sup>32</sup> This was also supported by the letter dated 12 June 1959 from the Secretary of Bantu Affairs and Administration to the Town Clerk of Pretoria, which stated that the government must take steps in informing people by asking them to fill in the form to facilitate their removals from Lady Selborne.<sup>33</sup> The letter explained that these forms had to be completed by residents to place them in their respective areas.<sup>34</sup> The questionnaire presented a problem in that the original was in Afrikaans, which would have presented an obstacle to illiterate residents or to those ignorant of Afrikaans.

Fieldwork analysis suggests that the state used different strategies to encourage people to move. The state enticed tenants to move by promising them freestanding houses for renting with the possibility of buying if they had money. This was not possible for some in Lady Selborne, since they only rented rooms in landlords' yards with lack of privacy for families.<sup>35</sup> Former landlords faced direct and indirect intimidation.<sup>36</sup> Some informants, like Mrs Manamela, claimed that the threat of force was used to quell resistance.<sup>37</sup> Both secondary analysis offered by Carruthers and primary data offered by informants describe that the government sent trucks to move them.<sup>38</sup>

29 See CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Document received, Memorandum drawn by the Tswana Vigilance Committee representing Tswana interest, opinions and aspirations, Presented to the Commissioner General, Tswana Territorial Authority for sympathetic consideration/information (No date). The memo mentions that there were AmaZulu and amaTsonga in Ga-Rankuwa.

30 CA BAO 7818G60/2/1547/1, Factual memorandum with regards to the relationship of Captain Motsepe.

31 CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Memorandum drawn by the Tswana Vigilance Committee.

32 Interviews with Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Miss Motshetshane and Mr Kgari.

33 CA, Native Affairs Department (NTS) 928/313, Letter received, Removals from Lady Selborne, Secretary of Bantu Affairs and Administration (Sekretaris van Bantoe Administrasie en Ontwikkeling) – the Town Clerk, 12 June 1959.

34 CA NTS 928/313. Secretary of Bantu Affairs and Administration (Sekretaris van Bantoe Administrasie en Ontwikkeling) – the Town Clerk.

35 Interviews with Mrs Kgari, Mr Matlaila and Mrs Matlaila.

36 Interviews with Mrs Sekhu and Mrs Manamela.

37 Interview with Mrs Manamela.

38 Carruthers, "Urban land claims in South Africa", p. 10 and interviews with Miss Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mrs Maphalare, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mrs Madumo, Mrs

The difficult process of resettlement affected people differently, and the theoretical model offered by Cernea is relevant.<sup>39</sup> Cernea maintains that displacement leads to poverty, underpinned by eight processes: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation and loss of economic power, increased mobility and mortality, food insecurity, loss of access to common property and social disintegration.<sup>40</sup> Many people in Ga-Rankuwa underwent these processes but experienced them differently. For example, those residents who were landlords in Lady Selborne, especially those who were working class, had no money to purchase properties in Ga-Rankuwa.<sup>41</sup> They felt marginalised because they were reduced to the “class of tenants” and were equal to their former tenants, resulting in perceived humiliation.<sup>42</sup> Many former tenants found resettlement in Ga-Rankuwa beneficial, since it provided them with secure accommodation,<sup>43</sup> but they also felt marginalised when they experienced poverty. Most families were unemployed and unable to use their land for cultivation.<sup>44</sup> Wealthy professionals like Dr Nkomo were able to purchase houses and tried to make a life for themselves in Ga-Rankuwa.<sup>45</sup> All classes felt marginalised because of their displacement from Lady Selborne, a fertile and habitable area with a developed infrastructure. Dankelman and Davidson argue that: “Land, particularly healthy soil, is the foundation on which life depends. If the land is healthy, then agriculture and pasturage will yield food in plenty. If it is not, the ecosystem will show signs of strain and food production will become more difficult.”<sup>46</sup>

Some of those relocated tried to improve the soil by purchasing manures and topsoil, but those without finances could not do so.<sup>47</sup> This illustrates that food insecurity, homelessness and unemployment were major problems since many residents became working-class tenants as they could not buy houses. Only Mrs Sekhu and Mr Andrew’s father, among the interviewees, could buy houses, which illustrates the poverty that existed in the area.<sup>48</sup> Such poverty caused many to feel

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Manamela and Mr K.

- 39 Cited in C de Wet, “Resettlement in the Border Ciskei region of South Africa”, Rhodes University, Institute of Social and Economic Research: Working paper 67, 1996, p. 63.
- 40 De Wet, “Resettlement in the Border Ciskei region”, p. 63.
- 41 Carruthers, “Urban land claims in South Africa”, p. 10.
- 42 The term marginalization is defined by Simkins as a “process of reducing a groups’ life chances to a level significantly below those in another comparable group” in CEW Simkins, “The economic implications of African resettlement” in D Thomas (ed.), *Resettlement: Papers given at the 51<sup>st</sup> annual council meeting 24-26 June 1981* (South African Institute of Race Relations, 1981), p. 38.
- 43 Interviews with Mrs Kgari, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila and Mrs Matlaila.
- 44 Interviews with Mrs Kgari and Mrs Mohlahledi.
- 45 Interview with Miss Motshetshane.
- 46 Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson, *Women and environment in the third world: Alliance for the future* (London: Earthscan, 1988), p. 7.
- 47 Interviews with Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Mr Kgari and Mrs Mohlahledi.
- 48 Interviews with Mrs Sekhu and Mr Andrew.

less human and they blamed forced removals,<sup>49</sup> while others, mainly former tenants, felt their humanness affirmed by having their own homes in Ga-Rankuwa.<sup>50</sup>

The idealised theory of resettlement is provided by Scudder and Colson. It initially started as the voluntary displacement theory in the 1980s and later applied to some cases of involuntary displacement, which contrasts with the Cernea model and the informants' experiences.<sup>51</sup> Their model of relocation focuses on successful resettlement analysing different behavioural tendencies common to each series or stage through which the relocated passed. It has four stages whereby the resettled people re-achieve economic viability, social readjustment and administrative autonomy.<sup>52</sup> The first stage is that of planning and recruitment, whereby people are informed of their removals. The second stage involves the transition whereby people try to acclimatise to their situation. During this period "people tend to cling to the familiar in terms of subsistence production, and kinship relationships and leadership, both at households and community level, is compromised".<sup>53</sup> The third stage is about economic and social community development. People during this stage have re-established themselves and are able to be innovative. The last stage involves handing over and incorporation: people are given responsibility of managing their affairs and household production activities are handed over to the next generation. This stage implies that the resettled have accepted their removal and are organised in a viable community. This model addresses the impact of resettlement in that kinship relationships and leadership, both at households and community level, is compromised. Community leaders were virtually non-existent in Ga-Rankuwa in the early 1960s due to the fracturing of social cohesion. But, as demonstrated by the memorandum drawn by the Tswana Vigilance Committee, some community leaders emerged in the 1970s.<sup>54</sup> This model focuses on aspects of success in the resettled community<sup>55</sup> and ignores most of the failures of

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49 Interviews with Mrs Tshweni and Mrs Manamela.

50 Interviews with Mrs Kgari, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila and Mrs Matlaila.

51 Cited in De Wet, "Resettlement in the Border Ciskei", pp. 63–64.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

54 CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Memorandum drawn by the Tswana Vigilance Committee.

55 The drawback of Scudder and Colson's model is that their theory of resettlement does not cater much for unsuccessful resettlement and for most people in Ga-Rankuwa they did not attain economic development, but managed to achieve community formation because they forged new relationships with other residents drawn from their resettlement experiences and participated in voluntary associations like burial societies, savings clubs, church clubs and some in the political organizations. These were working structures that assisted the community in times of crisis. The stages and ramifications that Cernea and Scudder and Colson mention were relevant in Ga-Rankuwa, but the stages were in some instances developing more or less at the same level or sometimes independently.



resettlement. But this model, though not neatly applicable to Ga-Rankuwa, raises the difficulty of social adjustment to the new area.

The fact that the resettled community was scattered all over Pretoria in places like Ga-Rankuwa, Atteridgeville, Eersterus and Laudium made leadership scarce. Unfamiliarity and fractured families affected civic and family leadership. The Sotho-Tswana (like the amaZulu) normally use older male family-heads for rituals and such people tend to perform clerical roles in conducting sacrificial rituals - and relocation meant disturbance of this homestead organisation.<sup>56</sup> Community leadership was similarly compromised. Though forced removals ruptured community coherence, the residents managed to re-establish some degree of unity.<sup>57</sup>

Economic development was limited in 1961, but some people managed to rise above poverty and opened shops – though most were not from Lady Selborne. They settled in the area because they saw economic opportunities.<sup>58</sup> There was a shop in Zone 1 on Motsatsi Street called Ko-Cecilia. The owner, Mrs Cecilia, was not from Lady Selborne but opened the shop because Pretoria was far from Ga-Rankuwa and residents would buy groceries from her shop.<sup>59</sup> Some other professional residents, like Doctor DC Marevathe, were not from Lady Selborne but became crucial to an area that had no hospital or clinic<sup>60</sup> by providing otherwise unavailable services.<sup>61</sup>

The last stage, that of “handing over and incorporation”, was difficult because Bophuthatswana became a self-governing territory in 1972 and became “independent” in 1977. This caused problems for the residents of Ga-Rankuwa because the consolidation process of Bophuthatswana involved ethnic segregation and meant the removal of non-Tswanas from the area.<sup>62</sup> The embryonic kinship relationships and neighbourliness were thus severed once more. The handover was not satisfactory as it failed to alleviate poverty.

Some of the ideas posed by these resettlement models are relevant because resettlement brought changes in the spatial, environmental, economic and social aspects of the community which impacted on the eight processes of impoverishment

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56 WD Hammond-Tooke, “Kinship authority and political authority in pre-colonial South Africa”, Workshop on pre-colonial History, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 14-15 July 1986, p. 11.

57 See CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547, Memorandum drawn by the Tswana Vigilance Committee.

58 Interview with Miss Motshetshane.

59 *Ibid.*

60 CA BAO 7449P122/1547/2, Letter received, Plans to install a hospital and clinic in Ga-Rankuwa, Mr Potgieter (The Secretary of Bantu Administration) – Director of the Hospital Services, 13 May 1968. It shows that by 1968 there was no hospital or clinic and that the government was planning to install them.

61 Interview with Mr Kgari.

62 CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Document received, “Memo: Minutes of discussions on non-Tswana people on Tswanas land (Notule van samesprekings oor Nie-Tswanas in Tswanaland)”, 10 March 1971.

mentioned by Cernea. The eight stages impact on the process whereby the four resettlement stages identified by Scudder and Colson unfolded. De Wet argues that “the particular stage at which a resettlement is will also affect the types of impoverishment which are applicable”.<sup>63</sup> Environmental aspects of resettlement must be inserted to refine the two models. Because most people in Ga-Rankuwa were given small plots (about 600 square metres as compared to roughly 900 square metres<sup>64</sup> in Lady Selborne) and the soil was infertile<sup>65</sup>, cultivation was inhibited. Some, like Mr E Poo, were lucky enough to occupy about 910 square metres of land.<sup>66</sup> Plots were allocated to residents according to availability and their prompt response to agreeing to be relocated in Ga-Rankuwa.

To illustrate that the resettlement process was a failure, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 1971 between government representatives, administrators and leaders reveal widespread complaints about displacement.<sup>67</sup> The minutes indicate that, even after nine years in Ga-Rankuwa, there were people who were still angry about their removal and wanted to return to their former homes. The anger that people felt affected their behaviour, social attitudes and their perceptions of their environment, as can be seen from the degradation of Ga-Rankuwa by 1977.<sup>68</sup>

### 3. LANDSCAPING IN GA-RANKUWA FROM 1961 TO 1977

In 1961, Ga-Rankuwa consisted of a settlement in a bush landscape. In Setswana “bush” is called *sekgwa*, literary meaning to “spit out”. The spitting out refers to the distinction between human settlement and the non-human settlement, referring to the bush as an area that has been separated from the human settlement. An interviewee, Mr Andrew, described the area as bush.<sup>69</sup> Another informant, Mrs Tshweni, describes how the houses were hidden in the bush and mentions that the plots were not fenced.<sup>70</sup> She says that “the place was full of trees and it was difficult to know one’s house, we used to put drums and paint them in order to

63 De Wet, “Resettlement in the Border Ciskei”, p. 64.

64 Interview with Miss Motshetshane.

65 Interviews with Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Miss Motshetshane, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Andrew, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila, Mrs Madumo, Mrs Manamela and Mr K.

66 CA BAO 12257T61/G139/1547/1, Document received, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Deed of Grant Puni E Poo, 9 June 1977.

67 CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Minutes of mutual discussions on non-Tswana people on Tswanaland.

68 See Khan, “Contemporary South African environmental response”.

69 Interview with Mr Andrew and CA BAO 7818G60/2/1547/1, Memo: Factual memorandum with regard to the relationship of Captain Motsepe.

70 Interview with Mrs Tshweni.

mark our homes”.<sup>71</sup> As the area was being developed and its population growing, deforestation occurred. By 1970 the population amounted to 45 631.<sup>72</sup> Between 1971 and 1974 there is silence in the literature consulted on the population numbers, while by 1975 it had increased to 73 926 and to 83 922 by 1976. Overcrowding resulted in the further reduction of the bush.<sup>73</sup> The surging population<sup>74</sup> created a need for housing which resulted in more land alienation and environmental injustice towards the resettled due to forced removals and resettlement in Ga-Rankuwa.<sup>75</sup>

### POPULATION GROWTH, GA-RANKUWA, 1970-1976

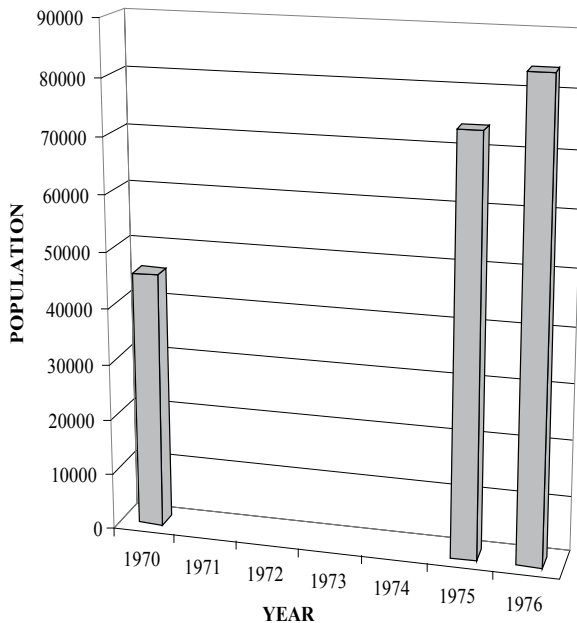


Figure 1. Population growth in Ga-Rankuwa, 1970 – 1976.<sup>76</sup>

71 Interview with Mrs Manamela.

72 Republic of South Africa. Department of Statistics, *Population Census 1970* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1976), p. 50.

73 Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 133.

74 The population growth graph is illustrated in figure 1.

75 CA BAO T60/8/1547/1, Letter received, Proposals for housing in Ga-Rankuwa, PJ Redelingshuys (City Director) – Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 25 May 1970.

76 See Republic of South Africa. Department of Statistics, *Population Census 1970*, p. 50 and Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 133.

Obstacles to accurate recording of population, like migrancy, mean that the population of Ga-Rankuwa was probably larger than that shown in Figure 1. Either way, such population density damaged the landscape. According to The Economic Development re Bantu Development (BENBO), new job seekers increased the population in Bophuthatswana, as did a declining mortality rate and a climbing birth rate.<sup>77</sup> The declining mortality rate implies that living standards were improving, and that state-provided health services like clinics and a hospital introduced in the 1970s were having some effect.<sup>78</sup>

The area's population increased rapidly in 1976 and this led to changes in the landscape and the distinction between the settlement and the bush. The bush was thinned by the need for fuel against a backdrop of poverty and the concomitant absence of electricity. There were mixed woodlands: thorny on clay and sandy soil, and tall granite-based grasslands.<sup>79</sup> The bushes were also sources of traditional herbs for *dingaka* (traditional healers). By 1976 the settlement had many houses and some people planted trees.<sup>80</sup> Most plots were small while some were bigger and could support cultivation. Many residents erected shacks in their yards for accommodation of large families and had too little land for cultivation. The settlement was by now mostly fenced and accommodated many domestic animals.<sup>81</sup> Some people kept livestock like goats and sheep, though the state restricted such possession of animals. Mrs Maphalare's parents, for example, had to relocate to rural areas after their displacement from Lady Selborne as they owned goats and horses.<sup>82</sup> Over-crowding had by 1976 left definite traces of damage on the landscape, including soil erosion and waste pollution.<sup>83</sup> The State of Environment Report Overview of the North West Province argues that "the larger the settlement the greater the variety of pressures that are associated with it. Human settlement impact on boundaries far beyond settlement" – and this was the case in Ga-Rankuwa.<sup>84</sup>

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77 Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 134.

78 See Document CA BAO 2/1977T60/15/1547/1, Document received, Facilities in Ga-Rankuwa, 1976.

79 Pretoria Metro, "State of Environment Report Pretoria", 2001, at <org/reports/Pretoria/issues/qual-env/state/htm-14k>.

80 Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 203.

81 Interviews with Mrs Maphalare and Mrs Manamela.

82 Interview with Mrs Maphalare.

83 Interview with Miss Motshetshane.

84 "State of Environment report overview North West Province, South Africa", 2002, at <www.environment.gov.za/soer/reports/northwest/10%20pressure>. The impact of human settlement on the environment is illustrated in the interviews with Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mr Andrew and Mrs Manamela.

The bush and settlement showed significant evidence of human abuse by 1977. The bush was depleted<sup>85</sup> and monkeys were slaughtered as pests.<sup>86</sup> Negative human impact on biodiversity was evident in both settlement and bush landscapes. Some residents planted grass, food and trees - and this resulted in soil erosion and decreased soil fertility. The weather of the area also degraded soil fertility as rainfall was erratic and scarce.<sup>87</sup> Climate and overpopulation contributed to the landscape degradation, as did the lack of infrastructure. Despite environmental degradation, the settlement retained spiritual significance for the residents of the area.<sup>88</sup> People still used the land as a sacred place. They would allocate a portion of the area in the home, whether under a tree or the corner of the house, to perform rituals to the ancestors.<sup>89</sup> This made the home sacrosanct.

#### 4. INFRASTRUCTURE IN GA-RANKUWA FROM 1961 TO 1977

Infrastructure, as basic physical and governmental structures, are required for the function of a society – it assists in ensuring the sense of belonging for a community in a particular locale or place. The infrastructure in Ga-Rankuwa was slightly improved by 1977. There was only one zone (area section) in 1961 and more than seven by 1977.<sup>90</sup> The area was lacking in basic facilities like clinics, a reliable water supply<sup>91</sup>, transport<sup>92</sup> and hospitals.<sup>93</sup> Incomplete and inadequate housing contributed to this situation.<sup>94</sup> The sewerage system, at least, was better in Ga-Rankuwa than in Lady Selborne, though they used running water instead of a flush system.<sup>95</sup> The only facilities that were speedily provided were schools, and they were insufficient

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85 Interview with Miss Motshetshane.

86 Interview with Mrs Manamela.

87 Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 108.

88 Interviews with Mrs Kgari, Miss Motshetshane and Mrs Tshweni.

89 Interview with Mrs Kgari.

90 Interview with Mrs Manamela.

91 CA BAO 5077G57/4/1547/1, Martens – Liebenberg and CA BAO 5168G58/41547/1, Document received, Complex: Water provision (Ga-Rankuwa Kompleks: Watervoorsiening), 1971.

92 Registrar of the Supreme Court of South Africa (TPD) O1039/196, Document received, Supreme Court of South Africa, Transvaal Provision, Lessan Engineering (Proprietary) Limited versus Ga-Rankuwa Bus Service, 1969. The document states that there was a bus company in 1969 called Ga-Rankuwa Bus Service

93 Interviews with Miss Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Matlaila, Mrs Madumo and Mr K.

94 Interviews with Miss Motshetshane and Mrs Tshweni.

95 CA BAO OA6/1547/3/22 and CA BAO 8637A6/1547/3. The year 1968 have information about projects for the installation of water supply, sewerage systems, tarred roads and drains in Ga-Rankuwa.

to meet the demand for education.<sup>96</sup> An informant claimed that there were few shops, but that they sold expired food and constituted a health hazard.<sup>97</sup>

Transport was also a problem in the resettlement area and informants claim that they had one train to use to get to work to Pretoria in the 1960s.<sup>98</sup> There were also no platforms and informants complain that it was dangerous to jump onto the train. Local residents called their rail transport *masula* (bad taste) because it was unpleasant to use. Harvey Campion states that by 1974 there were three main-rails, which indicates the state's attempts to improve rail transport in the area.<sup>99</sup> The buses were unreliable and suffered from mechanical problems and the absence of lights. The streets were not electrified and people had to carry candles to see, a situation worsened by the widespread lack of tarred roads.<sup>100</sup>

The state in 1963 indicated that there were plans to establish a road connecting Ga-Rankuwa to Pretoria.<sup>101</sup> This shows that the state realised the need to improve the area's roads. Ga-Rankuwa was linked to the larger urban centres by tarred roads by 1974.<sup>102</sup> But the roads within Ga-Rankuwa did not improve and were eaten away by soil erosion.<sup>103</sup> The state did little to improve such roads.

Health services were also lacking in 1961. From 1961 to early 1973 Ga-Rankuwa operated without a clinic or hospital<sup>104</sup> and local residents went to the HF Verwoerd Hospital in Pretoria.<sup>105</sup> This posed a major problem to the community because it was expensive to travel to town. Ga-Rankuwa Hospital took four years to build and opened on 9 April 1973.<sup>106</sup> The hospital also provided local job opportunities. It became a source of pride in the area as Medunsa (Medical University of South Africa) was established there in 1976 and became one of

96 Interview with Miss Motshetshane and CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Memo: non-Tswanas in Black towns. See also CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, The Memorandum drawn up by the Tswana Vigilance Committee.

97 Interview with Mrs Tshweni.

98 Interviews with Miss Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni and Mrs Manamela.

99 Harvey Campion, *Bophuthatswana - Where the Tswanas meet* (Sandton: Valiant, 1977).

100 Interview with Mrs Tshweni.

101 CA BAO A6/1548/3/2, Letter received, Construction of a new road, WHJ Breytenbach – the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 23 April 1963.

102 Campion, *Bophuthatswana*, p. 21.

103 Interviews with Mrs Tshweni, Mr Andrew and Mrs Manamela.

104 See CA BAO 7449P122/1547/2, Document received, Building of hospitals, "Memo: Bantoe-hospitale vir Ga-Rankuwa en Atteridgeville (Bantu hospitals for Ga-Rankuwa and Atteridgeville)", 6 August 1968; CA BAO 7449P122/1547/2, Letter received, Building of a hospital, Potgieter – Director of Hospital Services (Direkteur van Hospitaaldienste), 13 May 1968; CA BAO 7449P122/1547/2, Document received, Addendum to building contract No. R.T.587P, 11 August 1969 and CA BAO 7449P122/1547/2, Letter received, Building a hospital I, Van Onselen – Secretary of Health, 25 July 1973.

105 Interview with Miss Motshetshane.

106 Medunsa, "Ga-Rankuwa Academic health complex", at <atnsph.medunsa.ac.za/nsph\_about\_medunsa/htm\_15k>.

the Republic's best medical schools.<sup>107</sup> No effective refuse removal system was established and this presented a health hazard. Archival evidence suggest that the situation in Ga-Rankuwa improved by 1976 and that the area's infrastructure was developed, though there were still missing facilities like a library, social welfare offices, a police station, an old age home, parks, sports and recreational grounds.<sup>108</sup>

## 5. RECREATION IN GA-RANKUWA 1961 TO 1977

There was lack of recreational facilities between 1961 and 1969 while the new community was trying to settle itself. The area had no parks or developed playgrounds, but sport like football continued to be as important as it had been in Lady Selborne.<sup>109</sup> In the 1970s the community became creative and established recreational associations. Churches and political organisations played an important role. The area housed a Methodist Church<sup>110</sup>, an African Orthodox Church<sup>111</sup>, a Lutheran Berlin Mission Church<sup>112</sup>, a Roman Catholic Church<sup>113</sup>, a Dutch Reformed Church and others. Such churches provided recreational activities. Social clubs were established to assist people with savings, funerals, weddings and other celebrations.<sup>114</sup> Unemployment and a lack of recreational facilities prompted many people to frequent taverns and drunkenness represented a major social problem.

Lack of facilities and rampant poverty in Ga-Rankuwa show that the government did not take the resettlement process of the people and the development of the areas seriously.<sup>115</sup> Despite the National Party government's attempts to make the policy and forced removals politically acceptable, Ga-Rankuwa became a tragic and costly failure that wasted humans.<sup>116</sup>

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107 "Dr. George Mukhari Hospital", at <<http://www.dgmh.co.za/Index.htm>>.

108 See CA BAO 2/1977T60/15/1547/1. It states that in Ga-Rankuwa in 1976 there were facilities like: three crèches, one community hall, one hospital, one maintenance depot, one institution for the blind, four clinics, four surgeries, one place of safety and security, one post office and a magistrate court which was under construction at the time.

109 Interview with Mr Andrew.

110 CA BAO 7900T59/1547/1/1, Letter received, Methodist Church in Ga-Rankuwa, Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development – Bantu Commissioner, 20 March 1962.

111 CA BAO 7900T57/1547/1/1, Mohlomane – Bantu Affairs Commissioner.

112 CA BAO 7900N2/13/3 G.96, Papketo – Bantu Affairs Commissioner.

113 CA BAO 7900T61/6/1547/1, Garner – Secretary for Bantu Administration.

114 Interview with Mrs Mohlahledi.

115 PPT Pilots Project in South Africa, "Poverty in the North West Province", 2004, at <[www.pptpilot.org.za/poverty\\_North West Provin](http://www.pptpilot.org.za/poverty_North West Provin)>, p. 5.

116 Essy M Letsoalo, *Land reform in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1987); Laurine Platzky and Cheryl Walker, *The surplus people: forced removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985).

## 6. COMMUNITY AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Many community and family relationships formed in Lady Selborne had to be rekindled in Ga-Rankuwa. Most former residents were scattered all over Pretoria and had to restart relationships. New friendships constituted some degree of continuity between their old and new lives as kinship relationships were important to them.<sup>117</sup> Families, like that of Mrs Kgari, would sometimes only see their relatives and former neighbours at funerals, weddings or other celebrations.<sup>118</sup> Distance presented a social obstacle and while some managed to maintain their old inter-personal relations, albeit changed by their new context,<sup>119</sup> most people felt alienated and alone.<sup>120</sup>

The situation was worsened by the 1972 consolidation process and the removal of non-Tswanas.<sup>121</sup> Ga-Rankuwa constituted of mainly non-Tswana informal settlers by 1974, attracted to the area because of its proximity to employment areas like Pretoria, Rustenburg, Johannesburg and Potchefstroom. It was decided at a meeting held on 10 March 1971 between government representatives, administrators and leaders that such informal settlers who were non-Tswana were to be repatriated to their respective areas, or if employed in Pretoria, had to accept local citizenship and be accommodated in Mabopane<sup>122</sup>, and those who resisted such displacement were denied pensions. Lucas Mangope, the President of Bophuthatswana, declared that he would expropriate their land in Ga-Rankuwa.<sup>123</sup> Many people tried to avoid the trauma of another displacement by faking their ethnicity and declaring themselves Tswanas.<sup>124</sup> Many Tswanas supported consolidation and wanted non-Tswanas removed or assimilated. This xenophobia stemmed from the fact that the Batswana felt that other ethnic groups had their own areas and by living in Ga-Rankuwa they were going to take their

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117 In interviews with Miss Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni and Mrs Sekhu they stated that their concerns about forced removals from Lady Selborne were mainly about losing their land, but they were also in pain losing their families who were scattered all over Pretoria. See also Carruthers, "Urban land claims in South Africa".

118 Interview with Mrs Kgari.

119 Interviews with Mrs Kgari and Mrs Tshweni.

120 Interviews with Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mr Andrew and Mrs Mohlahledi.

121 Cited in CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Minutes of the mutual discussions on non-Tswana people.

122 CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Minutes of Mutual Discussions on non-Tswana people.

123 De Clercq, "Transforming Mangope's Bophuthatswana: Towards democracy in the North West Province," *Daily Mail and Guardian*, 4 July and 13 August 1990, at <[www.chico.mweb.co.za/mg/projects/bop/ch\\_one.html-91k](http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/mg/projects/bop/ch_one.html-91k)>.

124 CA BAO 12261T61/2/A228/1547/1, Document received, Deed of Grant, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 3 December 1970 has information about Mr SG Mgomazulu, a Zulu man who said he was Tswana for the purpose of acquiring a permanent residential permit in Ga-Rankuwa.



jobs and their children would overcrowd the Batswana schools.<sup>125</sup> Some formed the Tswana Vigilance Committee that dealt with the social problems faced by the Batswana and they had a representation from the Batswana chiefs in the surrounding areas.<sup>126</sup>

The community and family cohesion of Lady Selborne was destroyed by forced removals. People had to establish new systems of communal co-operation in Ga-Rankuwa. Maré argues that “relocation leads to disorganisation and fragmentation of the oppressed people and their organisations or potential organised strength”.<sup>127</sup> Cheryl Walker also depicts the same ramifications normally experienced by the forcibly removed whereby the displaced lose pivotal relationships and had to restart anew in the resettlement areas.<sup>128</sup> In relocation areas community disintegration was traumatic as it hampered the communal spirit whereby a community helps an individual to be able to identify him or herself as a complete human being. It also disturbed the process of human identity as the successes of a person in African culture depend on the community.<sup>129</sup> This fragmentation impacted negatively on the environment of the relocation area. Since identity for the Sotho-Tswana is constructed through communion with other people, resettlement resulted in the negative impact of people because people who knew each other from Lady Selborne were resettled far apart from each other. People could not easily assist each other socio-economically and emotionally.<sup>130</sup> This led to frustration and difficulty to adapt in the relocation area and that contributed to environmental apathy.

## 7. GA-RANKUWA'S ENVIRONMENT AND CHANGING PERCEPTIONS THEREOF

In looking at the environmental history of Ga-Rankuwa, it is vital to consider Jacobs' theory about the importance of people's relationship with their environment in terms of food production and land use. She argues that food production has been a major activity whereby the powerless have been hindered to engage in productive activities by the powerful.<sup>131</sup> In Ga-Rankuwa the state resettled the former residents

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125 See source CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Non-Tswana in Black towns and CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Memorandum drawn by Tswana Vigilance Committee.

126 CA BAO 7818T60/2/1547/1, Memorandum drawn up by Tswana Vigilance Committee.

127 Gerhard Maré, *African population relocation in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1980), p. 4.

128 Cheryl Walker, *Landmarked: Land claims and land restitution* (Jacana Media, 2008)

129 Interviews with Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Miss Motshetshane, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Andrew, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila, Mrs Madumo and Mrs Manamela.

130 Interviews with Mrs Tshweni and Mrs Mohlahledi.

131 Jacobs, *Environment, power, and injustice*, p. 21.

of Lady Selborne on the infertile soils of the township. It was the sign of patronage, whereby the whites through the National Party government's policy of apartheid were allotted a region which had fertile soils and free-hold ownership of their homes. Due to land alienation through the process of forced removals, the new residents of Ga-Rankuwa experienced problems in their relationship with their environment. This is highlighted by Khan, who states that: "The question of land is a crucial factor and its bitter, divisive legacy has to be considered when examining South Africa's environmental history, particularly since it is within the context of the land that most blacks take stance on environmental issues."<sup>132</sup>

Thus, in order to understand the history of human and environmental relations in Ga-Rankuwa between 1961 and 1977, it is vital to understand that land and the environment were crucial to residents of Lady Selborne.<sup>133</sup> Here many landlords felt fulfilled as they owned their property and got the title deed through the Minister of Native Affairs and were able to engage in cultivation. Land was given sacred status by the residents who believed in African traditional religion as it fed people and was where ancestors were believed to reside. It had to be revered and looked after, as it was considered "an inheritance".<sup>134</sup> In Ga-Rankuwa residents continued to have spiritual attachment to the land but their respect for its physical cleanliness was lost especially by the former landlords who were angry about their land losses – many became apathetic towards environmental issues. Landlords in Lady Selborne behaved like masters and enjoyed all rights linked to private property: rights of use and of reaping fruits and transformation. Some rights were extended to tenants like Mrs Kgari.<sup>135</sup> These rights brought environmental responsibilities and tenants had to clean the yards regularly.<sup>136</sup> They averted soil erosion by cultivating food and planting trees in their yards. They used their bush for fuel, herbs and grazing. Low population prevented environmental degradation until the early 1940s, whereafter damage accrued quickly. The community's relationship with the environment and the land was mostly positive of private ownership, and tenants shared these sentiments because they had chosen to lease in the area and were not displaced to Lady Selborne.

Many of the displaced people (mainly former landlords) arrived in Ga-Rankuwa with anger and frustration over their lost possessions. Forced removals meant to them being alienated from their sacred places and ancestral graves. Many interviewees changed their attitude towards the environment and thus their positive self-concept. This is explained by an interviewee, Mr Andrew, who states that

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132 Khan, "Contemporary South African environmental response", p. 15.

133 See Kgari-Masondo, "A home makes one *Motho*," pp. 70-97.

134 Interview with Miss Motshetshane.

135 Interview with Mrs Kgari.

136 Interviews with Mrs Kgari, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila and Mrs Madumo.

“forced removals and environmental degradation are related”. In addition, he says: “Losing land indeed makes people to feel less human, hence they do not care about the environment.”<sup>137</sup> The resettled were absorbed by western modernisation, were reduced to dependency and eventually lost almost all sense of self-determination. This state of feeling less human is called *sefifi*, which is “the state of non-being like zombies”.<sup>138</sup>

The Sotho-Tswana became “zombies” as they were passive in the political running of their affairs and felt polluted by being detached from their environment through land dispossession. Thus, as “zombies”, they distanced themselves from environmental issues. This illustrates the importance of land ownership to the Sotho-Tswana. Land alienation forced people to seek survival strategies beyond cultivation – a source of further alienation. The case study is surprising as naturally the relocated would have found land use sustainable, realising that Ga-Rankuwa was going to be a permanent home for them as shown in the theoretical work by Deininger (2003) and Toulmin and Quan (2000).<sup>139</sup> But, on the contrary, for the residents of Ga-Rankuwa land use became less sustainable because of poor quality soils and disinterest in environmental issues. Poverty complicated involvement in environmental issues, as most family’s income allowed them to buy food but not the means to improve their soil or environment. For example, the wage scale of an average black African in Ga-Rankuwa was R10 per week, while those workers employed in the Republic of South Africa earned roughly R56,40 a month in 1974/75, meaning that most families lived in poverty as their wages could not sustain their families. From the same salary they also had to pay rent for their homes.<sup>140</sup> Mrs Sekhu explains that many families in Ga-Rankuwa relied on *modende* (pension funds) because of the paucity of employment.<sup>141</sup> Pension funds are called *modende* because they are like a “shelter” or “haven” and provide financial security. Some families, like the Kgari’s, Maphalare’s and Mohlahledi’s, also depended on the “Chinaman–fafee” gambling.<sup>142</sup> Other gambling, like *madice* (dice), was used to supplement salaries.<sup>143</sup> Income was also gained by the sale of liquor, knitted

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137 Interview with Mr Andrew. See also Kgari-Masondo, “A home makes one *Motho*,” pp. 70-97.

138 Jean and John Comaroff, “On personhood: An Anthropological perspective from Africa”, *Social Identities* 7/2, 2001, p. 273.

139 Klaus Deininger, *Land policies for growth and poverty reduction* (Berlin Ibadan: World Bank Publications, 2003) and C Toulmin & J Quan, *Evolving land rights policy and tenure in Africa* (London: IIED, 2000).

140 Benbo, *Bophuthatswana at independence* (Pretoria: Benbo Publications, 1977), p. 9.

141 Interview with Mrs Sekhu.

142 Interviews with Mrs Kgari, Mrs Maphalare, and Mrs Mohlahledi. According to the interviewees the Chinaman owns the “fafee” and they bet numbers from him starting from 1 to 36 and if the business owner (Chinaman) draws a certain number those who hit the number will win and get money according to the amount they betted with.

143 Interview with Mrs Kgari.

goods and food. Horrell explains that local authorities were unsympathetic to such informal traders and they were forced to seek hard-to-acquire licenses.<sup>144</sup> Many people borrowed money in order to survive and this added to a vicious cycle of poverty as they went deeper into debt as the land on which they were resettled could not assist them in supplementing the low wages they earned. This made the residents degrade the landscape further as their focus became day-to-day survival instead of environmental conservation and preservation.

Subsistence farming in Ga-Rankuwa was hampered by poor soil quality, lack of land and funds to purchase fertilisers.<sup>145</sup> The overall social setting indicates that there was very little scope for any kind of agriculture-based self-support and most residents abandoned cultivation.<sup>146</sup> Relocation in infertile Ga-Rankuwa was a betrayal of the history, tradition, humanity and culture of the Sotho-Tswana, who had been committed to agriculture in Lady Selborne. The Sotho-Tswana had traditionally chosen their settlement areas according to soil fertility, and favoured *mokata* (red loam) and *seloko* (heavy black clay).<sup>147</sup> Ga-Rankuwa did not provide such soil. Poor quality soil was worsened by the local climate, with summer rainfall and unreliable precipitation.<sup>148</sup> Mid-summer average temperature was 22,5–25 degrees Celsius and in winter 10–12 degrees Celsius. Availability of water was another challenge.<sup>149</sup> Reasons for water shortages include low rainfall, high evaporation and flat topography,<sup>150</sup> all of which affected Ga-Rankuwa.<sup>151</sup> Interviewees complain that the erratic water supply affected their relationships with the environment as they had to use what little water they had for cooking instead of watering their gardens.<sup>152</sup> The situation did not improve by the 1970s and the government introduced water restrictions that precluded the watering of gardens,<sup>153</sup> which alienated people further from their environment. Resettlement in Ga-Rankuwa hit women particularly hard because they had involved themselves in subsistence agriculture, though some were creative in this regard and used food spills to make fertiliser.<sup>154</sup> Male migrancy meant that male labour was largely unavailable to those seeking to improve the soil. Other major problems facing

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144 Muriel Horrell, *A survey of race relations in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971), p. 361.

145 Interviews with Mrs Kgari and Mrs Mohlahledi.

146 Interviews with Mrs Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu and Mrs Mohlahledi.

147 Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 109.

148 Benbo, *Bophuthatswana at independence*, p. 8.

149 CA BAO 5077G57/4/1547/1, Martens – Liebenberg.

150 Benbo, *Bophuthatswana at independence*, p. 15

151 Interview with Mrs Tshweni.

152 *Ibid.*

153 *Ibid.*

154 Interview with Mrs Mohlahledi.

women were linked to house design and plot size.<sup>155</sup> Long walks and competition, as well as scarce resources like firewood and water, tired them further. Their previous self-reliance continued, but now in a hostile environment. Davidson maintains that “in many areas women are at the centre of environmental improvements by using traditional methods of planting and modern styles of agro forestry to provide for alternative approach to a much more sustainable agriculture”.<sup>156</sup> This was the case in Ga-Rankuwa where some women, like Mrs Maphalare and Mrs Madumo, tried to improve the soil, though some like Mrs Kgari and Mrs Mohlahledi gave up.

### 7.1 Environmental conservation and the state of the environment in Ga-Rankuwa from 1970 to 1977

Bophuthatswana’s national anthem is highly suggestive of the way in which the government prioritised nature conservation in the 1970s:

<i>Lefatshe leno laborrarona</i>	The land of our forefathers
<i>Releabetsweke Modimo...</i>	It is given to us by God...
<i>Are lebogeng are ipeleng</i>	Let us give thanks and rejoice
<i>Lefatshe leno laborrarona</i>	This land of our forefathers
<i>Releabelamatsheloarona</i>	We pledge our lives to it
<i>Retla le fufulelelwa</i>	We shall labour for it
<i>Go fitlhasethitho se fetogamadi</i>	Until sweat turns to blood
<i>Lefatshe leno la Kgomolemabele</i>	This land of cattle and corn
<i>Boswajwaronakabosakhutleng</i>	Our lasting heritage
<i>Ramasedi ale dibebe, gotswanele</i>	May God safeguard it fittingly... <sup>157</sup>

The anthem’s objective was to instil the concept of hard work and encourage people to look after the land that was their heritage. The term “land” in this context included animals, plants, minerals, soil and other natural elements. The anthem also explains that good governance, peace and good health assist in maintaining a good and fruitful environment. Hence the first President, Mr Lucas Mangope, pledged in 1977 that “the development of the land and its natural resources will be of primary importance for the future development of Bophuthatswana”.<sup>158</sup>

155 Hoffman and Ashwell, *Nature divided*, p. 8.

156 Joan Davidson, “Women’s relationship with the environment” in G Reardon (ed.), *Women and the environment* (United Kingdom and Ireland: Oxam, 1993), p. 6.

157 Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 3.

158 Lucas Mangope, “Foreword” in Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 5.

The government passed Nature Conservation Act no 3 in 1977, which led to the establishment of the Nature Conservation Division within the Department of Agriculture. Its major purpose was to conserve the flora and fauna.<sup>159</sup> Before 1973 the South African Conservation Acts were also applicable to Bophuthatswana. To ensure that conservation remained a priority, the government made it a law from 1974 that young men were recruited and trained as Nature Conservation officers at Cwaka Agricultural College in Kwa-Zulu Natal.<sup>160</sup> The Nature Conservation officers were assisted by the corps of locally trained field rangers. The government of Ga-Rankuwa tried to curb environmental degradation through the employment of officers. But it was difficult as the problem with the community was deeper than just being apathetic to environmental issues. Issues of poverty, anger about displacement and frustration about the soil that they could not use effectively for food production ensured that for many of the relocated environmental issues would be secondary.

The population of Ga-Rankuwa increased from about 70 000 to 350 000 people in the 1970s.<sup>161</sup> The overcrowding situation in the Bantustans was worsened by the consolidation process,<sup>162</sup> and Timberlake argues that government policies degraded already scarce resources, especially in the rural areas.<sup>163</sup> Segregationist policies institutionalised destructive land use practices like overgrazing, over-cultivation and deforestation.<sup>164</sup>

The environment of Ga-Rankuwa was degraded by the late 1970s. Bushes were depleted, soil eroded and its nutrients consumed.<sup>165</sup> Dongas became common<sup>166</sup> and, as McCann has argued, such dongas developed because of geological phenomena combined with socio-economic history.<sup>167</sup> The high level of clay in the soil exacerbated the situation because clay becomes marshy when exposed to water, which results in erosion and cracks.<sup>168</sup> Climatic conditions, particularly erratic rainfall and strong winds, worsened matters further.<sup>169</sup> Some informants complained that high water prices discouraged cultivation, which degraded the soil.<sup>170</sup> In Ga-

159 Campion, *Bophuthatswana*, pp. 84-85.

160 Anon., *The Republic of Bophuthatswana*, p. 184.

161 Baldwin, *Uprooting a nation*, p. 25.

162 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

163 Lloyd Timberlake, *Africa in crisis: The causes, the curses of environmental bankruptcy* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1985).

164 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

165 Personal observation made during fieldwork in 2004 in the area.

166 Observation made during fieldwork in 2004 and personal discussion with informants.

167 McCann, p. 145.

168 *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

169 Interview with Mrs Kgari.

170 Interviews with Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari and Mrs Sekhu.

Rankuwa rates<sup>171</sup> and water were expensive under South African Bantustan policy because the township was developed, and had permanent, as opposed to weekend, accommodation built with bricks, as opposed to wood, and this contributed a lot to the residents being alienated from the environment.<sup>172</sup> Leonard argues that “poverty and land degradation are becoming inseparable twins because the poorest people who have least access to investment capital and technology occupy the lands that need the most infrastructure management and external inputs if their utilisation is not to result in land degradation and environmental destruction”.<sup>173</sup>

Hardships in the resettlement area caused a damaging nostalgia for “home”: Lady Selborne. This made many revert to the second stage of Scudders and Colsons resettlement process (the “transition stage”). Some of the former residents of Lady Selborne failed to look after the environment in Ga-Rankuwa, in that they romanticised the past but did not implement its lessons. This can be termed “resettlement memory reverses” because the resettled tend to restart their historical journey using their memories, often causing misery and rejection of the present. Zwingman argues that: “When life is threatened the reaction is physical but where total loss of love is involved the reaction is mental. People suffering from ‘uprootal’ and reacting negatively are in a ‘borderline state’ and their behaviour cannot be measured and judged by the norms of ordered intact society.”<sup>174</sup>

## 8. CONCLUSION

Resettlement in Ga-Rankuwa for the former residents of Lady Selborne impacted diverse people differently. To the former landlords, relocation brought anger as they lost their land and spacious plots. To the former tenants, however, resettlement brought liberty from renting to owning private plots in the new township. But the core ramification is that it brought land alienation and environmental injustice to the resettled as they were all removed from the fertile lands of Lady Selborne, where they could engage in subsistence farming, to the township where the soil was infertile and easily degraded. Relocation led to the erosion of many positive conservation measures and reverence for the landscape that was practiced in Lady Selborne, which resulted in environmental degradation. Some interviewees blame forced removals, the Mangope government’s interference and also poor soil quality

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171 According to Horrell, the monthly charges for services and administration was R2. See Muriel Horrell, *Survey of race relations in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1961), p. 164.

172 CA T60/8/1547/1, Redelinghuys – Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner.

173 Cited in Hoffman and Ashwell, *Nature divided*, p. 137.

174 Margaret Nash, *Black uprooting from white* (Braamfontein: South African Council of Churches, 1980), p. 78.

for their new environmental apathy.<sup>175</sup> Forced to focus on survival strategies, many residents of Ga-Rankuwa saw environmental issues as trivial. Jacobs has argued that “environmental historians should give explicit considerations to how tensions between the environment, production, reproduction and consciousness give rise to revolutionary changes in human relation with the non-human world”.<sup>176</sup> Many of the relocated changed their relationship with their environment as a means of protesting against their loss of “home”. The cycle of poverty in Ga-Rankuwa meant that, even though many former tenants felt humanised by landownership, few could afford to improve their new property and they got alienated further from the environment. The ownership of land in Ga-Rankuwa was through the Bantu Affairs Department. Residents were given certification permission to occupy plots, not private ownership *per se* like the former landlords of Lady Selborne who had title over their homes. In Ga-Rankuwa former tenants and former landlords were equal – they all had the same status in terms of occupation rights of their plots in the new township.

Underdeveloped infrastructure and lack of recreational facilities in Ga-Rankuwa heightened nostalgia for Lady Selborne, which crippled many residents’ ability to complete the stages of what Scudder and Colson term as a successful resettlement of involuntary relocation.<sup>177</sup> Cernea’s eight sub-processes of impoverishment<sup>178</sup> indicate the unsuccessful nature of the resettlement as those displaced were faced with poverty and environmental problems. Some felt that a new community was formed but most felt that the community spirit that prevailed in Lady Selborne was non-existent in Ga-Rankuwa. This represents a major failure of resettlement as the Sotho-Tswana see community as a vital means of defining the self. Nash terms the resettled an “uprooted” person who is in a state of individualism that is more malignant than that found among white elitist capitalist society, and argues that community feeling will only exist when an individual is returned to a community.<sup>179</sup> Some of the problems in the resettlement areas like Ga-Rankuwa occurred because communities, dislocated from their families, neighbours and friends, were lead to adopt individualism instead of communality. The close relationship with the environment enjoyed in Lady Selborne, which affirmed people’s humanity, withered in Ga-Rankuwa. Many interviewees claim that their connectedness with humanity and the environment was severed. Their only connection was with the dead. Shutte states that in traditional African culture and

175 Interviews with Mrs Tshweni, Mr Matlaila and Mrs Matlaila.

176 Nancy Jacobs, “The colonial ecological revolution in South Africa: The case of Kuruman” in S Dovers (ed.), *South Africa’s environmental history cases & comparisons* (Athens, Cape Town: Ohio University Press, David Philip, 2002), p. 32.

177 Cited in De Wet, “Resettlement in the Border Ciskei”, pp. 63-64.

178 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

179 Nash, *Black uprooting*, p. 54.



religion “self and world are united and intermingle in a web of reciprocal relations”, which shows that disunity had a destructive effect on the identity of the person or that person’s relationships with the environment, humanity and the dead.<sup>180</sup> This shows that forced removals are linked with the environmental problems of Ga-Rankuwa and explains why those resettled romanticised Lady Selborne and had difficulty acclimatising in Ga-Rankuwa.

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180 Augustine Shutte, *Philosophy for Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1993), p. 4.