

CREATING NEW ‘HOMES’ ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE RESETTLEMENT SITE: ALTERNATIVE SETTLEMENT BEHAVIOR AMONG THE RESETTLED SAN HUNTER-GATHERERS

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This paper examines how the San hunter-gatherers are constructing new social space at their resettlement site. The San, traditionally nomadic indigenous people of Southern Africa, have recently been displaced from their homelands due to nature conservation programs, development projects, and the expansion of commercial ranches. In 1997, the Central Kalahari San were relocated from areas that have been designated as nature conservation sites, to live in government-planned resettlement sites. In this new and unfamiliar territory, they have engaged in a lifestyle that is completely different from their former nomadic existence. Although residents' access to social and economic welfare programs has improved since their resettlement, their access to natural resources has declined considerably. Furthermore, since each household has been allocated a fixed residential plot, they have not been able to practice their once customary migrations.

Since 2000, however, some of the residents have established dwellings on the outskirts of the resettlement site. While the resettlement site has a dense population and offers some wage work, the dwellers on the outskirts of the resettlement site live in the bush, in small and mobile residential groups, where they engage in hunting, gathering, herding, and farming activities. The practices of the dwellers of these areas bear marked similarities to those of their traditional lifestyle. Furthermore, the clear differences between residential patterns and livelihood strategies within and outside the resettlement site have not created a rigid boundary between the two settings. Rather, people flow back-and-forth between the two settings, for economic and social reasons.

More recently, new practices have been emerging among the people residing on the outskirts of the resettlement site. Some of these dwellers now attempt to keep numerous livestock and cultivate larger crop fields. This may have a profound impact on the once “egalitarian” San community. The new agricultural practices on the outskirts of the resettlement site indicate that life is no longer “home-like” and “egalitarian,” but is becoming tied up with active attempts to accumulate wealth. In this paper, I will explore these new dimensions of the San resettlement areas, in order to elucidate the process of their efforts to convert their new homes into a livable, multifaceted social space.

Keywords: Development programs, Dwellings on the outskirts of the resettlement site, Hunter-gatherers, Relocation, San