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# 'We are the true guardians of the environment': Human–environment relations and debates about the future of the Chagos Archipelago

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## Note on contributor

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## Abstract

This article applies Ingold's conceptualisation of environmental outlooks ranging from the 'globe' to the 'sphere' to explore human–environment relations and debates about the future of the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean. Chagossians and conservationists broadly represent the two extremes of the engaged lifeworld of the sphere and the detached worldview of the globe respectively, but I argue that this does not necessarily determine their environmental outlooks for the future. It is not simply the case either that Chagossians uniformly advocate resettlement of Chagos or that conservationists uniformly oppose resettlement. Within each group two distinct environmental outlooks are identified: engagement versus withdrawal amongst Chagossians, and exclusion versus participation amongst conservationists. The article demonstrates, then, that environmental outlooks are influenced not only by understandings of human–environment relations but also by pragmatic and ideological considerations.

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### **Anthropologies of human–environment relations**

In an influential chapter on ‘globes and spheres’, Tim Ingold (1993) outlined two environmental outlooks. On the one hand, the sphere evokes the archetypically pre-modern lifeworld of people enmeshed in their own local surroundings; they are typified as imagining themselves at the centre of their own sphere of existence, and live in ‘an active, perceptual engagement with components of the dwelt-in world, in the practical business of life’ (Ingold 1993: 40). On the other hand, the globe evokes the characteristically modern worldview of people who have become increasingly detached from their natural environment; they are typified as imagining themselves on the surface of the globe, and conduct ‘disinterested observation of a world apart’ (Ingold 1993: 40). ‘The idea that the “little community” remains confined within its limited horizons from which “we” – globally conscious Westerners – have escaped’, Ingold proposed, ‘results from a privileging of the global ontology of detachment over the local ontology of engagement’ (Ingold 1993: 41), and he bemoaned the consequent ‘disempowerment of local people in the management of their environments’ through the privileging of technology over cosmology (Ingold 1993: 41). The chapter concludes with a caution that the globe and the sphere are not mutually exclusive: ‘We could say that both perspectives are caught up in the dialectical interplay between engagement and detachment, between human beings’ involvement in the world and their separation from it’ (Ingold 1993: 41-42).

Ingold’s insights on the privileging of technological detachment over cosmological engagement and the consequent disempowerment of local people in environmental management are helpful for understanding the development and global spread of Protected Areas (PAs) as the linchpins of international conservation strategy over the past century. Bill Adams and Jon Hutton (2007: 152) have argued that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the establishment of nature reserves from which humans were excluded reflected a modern Western conceptual division between nature and society. Nature was idealised as pristine and best left untouched, while humans were vilified as rapacious and damaging to nature. By the 1980s, however, sustainable development was increasingly conceptualised as the conservation and sustainable use of living

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organisms and ecosystems; in PA planning this understanding was combined with the argument that conservation would be best achieved where local people had a direct economic interest in the protection of local species (Adams & Hutton 2007: 151; Campbell 2005: 302-303). Participatory PAs subsequently included commercial activities such as safari hunting and ecotourism (Adams & Hutton 2007: 151; West et al. 2006: 263), but soon came under fire from conservation scientists arguing that human-oriented approaches to conservation had largely failed to achieve their main aim of protecting biodiversity (for an overview, see Wilshusen et al. 2002). In the 1990s, some conservationists returned to the protectionist ideal of people-free parks, arguing that human activities appeared to be incompatible with conservation, that the moral imperative of conservation is the preservation of biodiversity (and not, say, social justice), and that exclusionist PAs work when strictly protected (Adams & Hutton 2007: 165; Wilshusen et al. 2002). These assumptions have been used to justify the physical displacement of millions of people from nature reserves and the prohibition on extractive resource use, with the result that ‘the costs of PAs are born locally, while benefits accrue globally’ (Adams & Hutton 2007: 161).

In a fascinating case study contrasting ‘caring for nature’ with ‘working in nature’ on the Greek island of Zakynthos, Dimitrios Theodossopoulos (2004) highlighted the sites of overlap and disjuncture in an environmental dispute between environmentalists seeking to establish a nature reserve restricting human access to turtle breeding grounds and local landowners seeking to develop tourism. Both sets of protagonists asserted that they were the guardians of the environment: the environmentalists claimed that their ambition was to protect the fragile ecosystem from human threats, while the islanders insisted that their local expertise made them ideal environmental caretakers (Theodossopoulos 2004: 59). Both groups also presented themselves as working towards a better future: the environmentalists claimed global stewardship on behalf of future world citizens, whereas the islanders protested that their ambition was a more secure future for their families and the local community (Theodossopoulos 2004: 60). In Ingold’s terms, then, the environmentalists’ outward focus could be characterised in terms of the globe, while the islanders’ inward focus could be characterised in terms of the sphere.

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Theodossopoulos went on to show, however, that environmentalists and islanders both exhibited elements of engagement and detachment alike (Theodossopoulos 2004: 49-50). The environmentalists held an eco-centric and holistic vision of pristine nature untouched by human hands, and they criticised the islanders’ anthropocentric pretensions to paternalism, but they simultaneously sought to intervene to protect nature, which revealed their own brand of anthropocentric paternalism (Theodossopoulos 2004: 61-62, 65). Meanwhile, the islanders’ proposals for tourist development revealed a more detached monetary attitude towards their environment (Theodossopoulos 2004: 65-66). Moreover, Theodossopoulos noted that the divide was not entirely clear-cut since some environmentalists supported local engagement with the environment, and some locals had adopted environmentalist discourses (Theodossopoulos 2004: 62, 64). He therefore cautioned against easy attribution of environmental attitudes according to broad social categories, arguing that anthropologists should instead explore why actors might pragmatically assert either engaged or detached relationships with the environment (Theodossopoulos 2004: 67).

This article explores debates about human–environment relations in the context of a recently established Marine Protected Area (MPA) around islands from which the local population has long been displaced, and in which extractive economic activities are banned. It draws firstly on Ingold’s conceptualisation of environmental outlooks ranging from the detached worldview of the globe to the engaged lifeworld of the sphere, secondly on social science analyses of the tensions between exclusionary and participatory conservationism, and thirdly on Theodossopoulos’s ethnography showing how different sets of people might simultaneously claim that they alone are the ideal guardians of the environment working towards a better future. In this case study, the displaced islanders and the conservationists broadly represent the two extremes of the engaged lifeworld of the sphere and the detached worldview of the globe respectively, but I will show that this does not necessarily determine their environmental outlooks for the future in the sense that it is not simply the case either that displaced islanders uniformly advocate resettlement or that conservationists uniformly oppose resettlement. I identify two distinct

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environmental outlooks within each category: the committed engagement of many displaced islanders, the resigned withdrawal of many others in the displaced community, the exclusionary idealism of a majority of the conservationists, and the participatory ideology of a minority of the conservationists. In a highly politicised context, then, I will argue that environmental outlook for the future may be influenced not only by understandings of human–environment relations but also by pragmatic or ideological considerations.<sup>1</sup>

### ‘Protect Chagos’

In March 2009, at the Royal Society in London, the Chagos Conservation Trust (CCT) launched a glossy brochure, *The Chagos Archipelago: Its Nature and the Future*, which describes the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean as ‘the most pristine tropical marine environment surviving on the planet’ (Chagos Conservation Trust 2009: 7). The Chagos Archipelago is currently administered as a British Overseas Territory called the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).<sup>2</sup> The CCT appealed to the UK Government to designate the Chagos Archipelago as ‘a world-class, unspoilt, natural conservation area comparable to the Galápagos and the Great Barrier Reef’ (Chagos Conservation Trust 2009: 5). In November 2009, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) responded by launching a public consultation on whether to establish an MPA around Chagos. The FCO’s three proposed options were: one, a full no-take (i.e. no fishing) marine reserve for the entire territorial waters; two, a no-take marine reserve with exceptions for some offshore pelagic (e.g. tuna) fishing in certain zones at certain times of year; and three, a no-take marine reserve restricted to the vulnerable reef systems only (Stevenson 2010: 7).

Amongst the ‘stakeholders’ consulted were the displaced Chagos islanders. From the late eighteenth century onwards the Chagos Archipelago had been administered as a dependency of colonial Mauritius, populated with enslaved labourers and contract workers, most brought by French and later British colonialists from East Africa and Madagascar via Mauritius. From the turn of the twentieth century onwards, the population hovered around a thousand, an increasing proportion of whom were

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islanders born on Chagos rather than workers contracted from Mauritius (or, later, Seychelles); numbers fluctuated as residents made trips to Mauritius or Seychelles to visit family, give birth, seek medical attention, or purchase supplies (Gifford & Dunne 2012). In 1965, as part of the negotiations leading to Mauritian independence in 1968, the UK Government excised the Chagos Archipelago from colonial Mauritius and created the new British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).<sup>3</sup> In 1966 the UK Government made the largest Chagos island of Diego Garcia available to the US Government to build what quickly became a major overseas military base.

From 1965 onwards Chagos islanders who had gone on trips to Mauritius or Seychelles were prevented from returning to Chagos; they report going to the docks to seek their return passage and being told that the islands had been ‘closed’ or ‘sold’. Later, administration tactics such as the closure of the coconut plantations and insufficient provision of food persuaded others to leave the islands. All remaining islanders were removed from the inhabited islands of Diego Garcia in 1971, Île Boddam in Salomon Atoll in 1972, and finally Île du Coin in Peros Banhos Atoll in 1973. The authorities did not keep reliable records, so dates and numbers have long been disputed, but recent archival research indicates that over this period as a whole around 1,500 Chagos islanders were relocated to Mauritius, while 232 Chagos islanders were relocated to Seychelles (Gifford & Dunne 2012). No resettlement programmes were put in place.

Chagossian groups in exile have campaigned for compensation and their right of return to Chagos. Chagos islanders in Mauritius received limited compensation in 1977–1978 and 1982, but those relocated to Seychelles have hitherto received nothing, and in 2003–2004 a coalition of Chagossian organisations lost their legal case for further compensation from the UK Government (Jeffery 2011: 27-28). In 2000 and 2006, judicial reviews successfully challenged the immigration legislation preventing non-authorised persons from entering the territory, but the UK Government appealed to the House of Lords, which reinstated the immigration legislation in 2008 (Jeffery 2011: 40-41). The Chagossian coalition’s legal team appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled in 2012 that it had no

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jurisdiction to re-examine the UK rulings regarding either compensation or the right of return.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Chagos islanders and most of their second-generation descendants (totalling over five thousand people) were awarded UK citizenship under the British Overseas Territories Act in 2002, since when over two thousand members of the extended Chagossian community – i.e. Chagos islanders and their descendants – have migrated to the UK (Jeffery 2011: 95-110).

During the MPA consultation, the FCO’s consultation facilitator, Rosemary Stevenson, did not visit the largest Chagossian community in Mauritius, but she did hold an hour-long videoconference with the elected representatives of the Chagossian Welfare Fund Board in Mauritius.<sup>5</sup> Olivier Bancoult, the appointed chair of this Board and the leader of the largest Chagossian organisation, the Chagos Refugees Group (CRG), responded at length. As part of his submission, he stated that:

We want to return to our homeland. And this is why ... in the past we presented a resettlement plan, and in our resettlement plan we mentioned ... conservation. We made a place for conservation because we as Chagossians were the real guardians of the environment, having living there for many generations, and we don’t understand how suddenly the UK government come out with a plan to declare Chagos as a Marine Protected Area and at the same time forget that on Diego Garcia we have a huge US military base which is for defence purposes and can damage any of environment. We as Chagossian people have fundamental rights, wish to return, wish to ask you, to let you know that we people, we are not against conservation, but what we say is that our fundamental right should be taken into consideration. It’s the most important. And we don’t understand how suddenly, after so many years, how the British Government had earned money on fishing licenses, giving fishing licenses to many companies to fish in the region of Chagos, where no money, even peanuts, have been spent for the welfare of Chagossian community.<sup>6</sup>



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Like Bancoult, the majority of those Chagossians who responded to the consultation – amounting to several hundred people, mostly in Mauritius and Seychelles – opposed all three proposed options for a no-take MPA around Chagos (Stevenson 2010: 15). A significant minority of Chagossian responses – consisting of a large proportion of responses from Chagossians in the UK, but few of those in Mauritius or Seychelles – said they would only support a no-take MPA if it incorporated exceptions for pelagic tuna and artisanal fishing by Chagos islanders (Stevenson 2010: 16). Numerically, however, the Chagossian rejection of the three proposed no-take options was insignificant in comparison to support for the proposed MPA from over quarter of a million signatories of online petitions organised by Avaaz, Care2, Greenpeace, and the Chagos Environment Network (CEN), a coalition of conservation organisations led by the CCT (Stevenson 2010: 9-10).

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010, the then UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, announced that he was instructing the BIOT Commissioner to declare the world’s largest no-take MPA around the Chagos Archipelago. Portraying the Chagos MPA as a keystone of the outgoing Labour Government’s green legacy, Miliband announced that:

The MPA will cover some quarter of a million square miles and its establishment will double the global coverage of the world's oceans under protection. Its creation is a major step forward for protecting the oceans, not just around BIOT itself, but also throughout the world. This measure is a further demonstration of how the UK takes its international environmental responsibilities seriously.<sup>7</sup>

The CCT website hailed the MPA as a ‘conservation legacy almost unrivalled in scale and significance’<sup>8</sup> and the Zoological Society of London<sup>8</sup> described it as a new ‘global benchmark for responsible ocean stewardship’.<sup>9</sup> A no-take MPA has the support of many of the conservation scientists who work in the region, many – but by no means all – of whom are opposed to human resettlement of Chagos on environmental grounds.

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In December 2010, however, a US Embassy cable released by WikiLeaks suggested that the UK Government’s main intention in establishing a no-take MPA had been to safeguard the security of the US military base on Diego Garcia by making it increasingly difficult for the displaced islanders to pursue their campaign for resettlement (Guardian 2010). The Chagos Refugees Group launched an application for judicial review of the MPA on the grounds that it was established with the ‘improper motive’ of preventing the islanders from returning to the territory. The case is scheduled for April 2013 (after this article went to press).<sup>10</sup> Chagossian leaders and their supporters – along with some conservationists – do not see human resettlement as incompatible with environmental conservation. At a Chagossian Welfare Fund general assembly in Mauritius in June 2011, Olivier Bancoult proclaimed:

When Chagossians lived on Chagos we didn’t destroy the environment, we protected it. We took turtles and crabs but we didn’t finish them off. They want to protect sharks and coral, so are coral and sharks more important than us? We were the true guardians of the environment.

Chagos islanders and conservation scientists alike recognise that the Chagos Archipelago is special and agree that humans have a role to play in protecting the Chagos environment, but they each seek to represent themselves as having the best interests of the environment at heart. On the one hand, Chagossians tend to foreground the potential for mutually beneficial interactions between humans and their environments. On the other hand, conservationists seek to undo what they see as previous negative human impacts and to protect the environment against the spectre of human impacts in the future. This clash, I will suggest, is connected to different dominant models of human–environment relations, representing Ingold’s two extremes of sphere and globe respectively.

However, despite the fact that most Chagossians and conservationists seem to conform to expected categorisations, this does not necessarily determine their

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environmental outlooks for the future. In other words, it is not simply the case that displaced Chagossians uniformly advocate resettlement of Chagos or that conservationists uniformly oppose resettlement. Instead, in the following sections I identify two distinct environmental outlooks within each category. First, many Chagossians who are active members of the largest Chagossian groups have argued that the Chagos environment has suffered in the absence of human residents and would benefit from a resettled population, so the Chagossian struggle should continue to focus on the right of return. Second, others in the extended Chagossian community feel that the current ‘wild’ condition of the outer islands poses an insurmountable challenge to resettlement, and argue that – instead of continuing to fight for the right of return to the outer islands – the Chagossian struggle should focus on obtaining adequate compensation for the displacement, the provision of jobs for Chagossians at the US base on Diego Garcia, establishing uniform eligibility for UK citizenship, and securing assistance for integration in the UK. Third, many conservation scientists with fieldwork experience in Chagos believe that humans would threaten the nearly ‘pristine’ natural environment of Chagos, and they therefore support the exclusionary MPA. Fourth, other conservation scientists (including some with fieldwork experience in Chagos) have argued that resettlement is not necessarily incompatible with conservation, that conservation does not exist in an apolitical vacuum, and that the displaced Chagossians should be involved in decision-making about the future of Chagos. Thus I will argue that – in this highly politicised context – environmental outlooks for the future are influenced not only by understandings of human–environment relations but also by practical and ideological considerations.

### **‘We lived in harmony with the environment’**

A key element of idealised indigeneity is the idea that indigenous peoples traditionally live in harmony with their environments (Kuper 2003: 390-391). In this vein, displaced Chagos islanders have routinely evoked a settled community living in harmony with nature on the Chagos Archipelago (Jeffery 2011: 65). I noticed this during my first fieldwork with the displaced Chagossian community in Mauritius in

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2002–2004, so such discourses clearly predate the current environmentalist turn, although they were not a central focus of my research until my current project, for which I undertook fieldwork with the extended Chagossian community – i.e. Chagos islanders plus their spouses, children, and grandchildren – in Mauritius in mid-2011 and the UK in 2011–2012. The following exchange took place during an interview I conducted with a Chagossian woman who was born on Diego Garcia in 1965 and whose family moved to Mauritius in 1966:

Q: As you know there are some scientists who say that people ought not to have the right to resettle Chagos because they will cause too much damage to the special environment of Chagos. How would you respond?

A: I’d say never! Because in the past we lived there without destroying anything. Because although we ate fish, there continued to be fish in the sea. Although we cut coconuts, we never cut down a coconut tree just to throw it away. On the contrary, it’s them who have ruined the nature because it’s abandoned ... with no inhabitants. And I also think that we weren’t wasteful. If we needed something to eat, we didn’t cut it and throw it away; we cooked it and ate it or else shared it with others who didn’t have any. Scientists say that because they didn’t live there.

Chagos islanders gave many different examples of how they lived in harmony with the environment of Chagos, but this excerpt highlights the three most commonly cited examples: fishing practices, use of coconut palms, and a spirit of sharing in which excesses were distributed amongst neighbours to reduce the production of waste.

The Chagos islands are so small that everyone lived near the sea; without refrigeration facilities, fishing was an everyday activity for the inhabitants. A common refrain amongst Chagossians is that the sea around Chagos was so full of fish that one could just step into the water and pick up a fish with one’s bare hands (Jeffery 2011: 66). My own favourite fresh fish story came from an old Chagossian woman who was raised by her grandmother. This grandmother would apparently

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put a saucepan of rice on to boil before heading off to the sea – announcing in advance whether she was going to catch a grouper, a parrotfish, or an octopus – and would catch the predetermined fish so quickly that she would still have enough time to prepare and cook the fish to be ready at the same time as the rice.<sup>11</sup> From the perspective of safeguarding the plentiful fish stocks, my respondents insisted that Chagossian fishermen held detailed knowledge about reproductive sites, and understood that juvenile catches should be returned to the sea and that commercial fishing should be restricted by zoning and closed seasons.

Coconut plantations were the economic base and main source of employment on the Chagos islands, and coconuts were a major part of the Chagossian diet. Chagossians extracted the sap to make an alcoholic coconut toddy called *kalu*; they drank the water of unripe coconuts; they made *seraz* dishes out of octopus, fish, fowl, green sea turtle, lentils, fruit or vegetables cooked in the milk extracted from ripe coconut flesh; and they used grated coconut flakes to make coconut chutney and sweetmeats such as coconut crunch. Chagossians repeatedly emphasised to me that all parts of the coconut plant could be used, and nothing was needlessly thrown away. Lots of people could list the common uses for the various parts of the coconut plant. One afternoon when I was visiting Fernand Mandarin, the leader of the minority Chagossian Social Committee in Mauritius, he reeled off the following list: dried coconut flesh (copra) was pressed to produce coconut oil (for consumption, in cosmetics, and as fuel); and the remaining fibrous copra meal could be used as animal feed; coconut shells could be heated and used for ironing; coconut husks were burned as a cooking fuel; the ashes could be mixed with coconut oil to produce soap; coir from the husks was made into mattresses and pillows; and coconut fronds were used for roofing, woven into brooms, bags, and baskets, or twisted into rope.

The inhabitants of the Chagos islands had access to plots of land on which they planted food crops and raised animals such as poultry and pigs, and they supplemented their diets by catching wildfowl, fish, seafood, and occasionally green sea turtles (Ackroyd 1878: 23-30; Brooks 1875; Dussercle 1934; Farquharson 1864). Chagos islanders in exile correlated the abundance of freely available food on Chagos

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with a spirit of sharing with family, friends and neighbours, which had the side effect of reducing waste. Several Chagossians explained that whenever a green sea turtle was killed its constituent parts were divided up amongst the inhabitants so that everyone benefited and none went to waste.<sup>12</sup> I was often told that neighbours would freely give away ripe produce from their kitchen gardens in the knowledge that they would later receive produce from others. According to their nostalgic recollections, people did not keep track of precisely what was given and received, but expected their exchanges to even out in the long run. Thus they recalled an ideal social system of generalised reciprocity. This ‘spirit of sharing’ [*lespri partaz*], Chagossians reported, had become difficult to sustain in exile due to the chronic impoverishment and geographical dispersal of the displaced community (Jeffery 2011: 65-66).

It is worth noting that these recollections of living in harmony with the environment relate to a population whose economic livelihood depended on agricultural production (i.e. the coconut plantations) but who did not otherwise depend entirely on the land or the sea. That is, fishing and hunting, raising animals for consumption, and cultivating kitchen gardens were not the sole sources of food consumed by the inhabitants of Chagos; rather, they supplemented the food rations and bonuses that workers received in part-exchange for their labour. These rations and bonuses varied by island, estate, and time period but included coconut products (coconuts, coconut oil, and coconut toddy) plus imported staples (such as rice, lentils, maize, and salt) and luxuries (rum and tobacco). The Chagos Archipelago was never tried and tested as a subsistence economy: the islands were colonial plantations enmeshed in systems of import and export.<sup>13</sup>

### **Chagossian conceptions of Chagos as unpopulated and overgrown**

Chagossians were proud of the neat and tidy manner in which they had kept Chagos cleared of fallen coconut fronds and other vegetation debris. As Janine, a Chagos islander born on Île Boddam in the Salomon Atoll, put it,

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We didn't let coconut leaves lie around everywhere, we kept the pathways clean, we cut the grass and collected it. The environment was good over there.

This view was not only common amongst nostalgic Chagos islanders; it was also shared by a non-Chagossian Mauritian man who spent a couple of years on Diego Garcia in the early 1970s. Seewoosankur Mandary worked for the Mauritius Meteorological Services, and was posted on Diego Garcia from about July 1970 until about March 1972. He was one of the last Mauritians to leave the island (after the commencement of construction of the US military base from about May 1971 onwards and the removal of the last Chagossians from Diego Garcia by the end of September that year). Mandary originally lived in the Chagossian village at East Point, but then outstayed the last Chagossians by five or six months. I asked him what changes he had noticed during this time. He replied:

Where I was staying in East Point what changed was the general appearance. When the people were there they had to clean – near the big house, the shop, and the office – but once they people had gone away there was nobody to look after these places so the trees and weeds had started to grow wild in the rain. You could not even see the road. The houses started to fall in ruin. You get the feeling that it's a place that had undergone some kind of epidemic or calamity and life had stopped.

According to Mandary's recollections, these major transformations took place in this lush tropical landscape within a matter of a few months. Three and a half decades later, in 2006, the UK Government organised the first ever large-scale return trip to Chagos for Chagos islanders. One hundred Chagos islanders visited the three main formerly inhabited Chagos islands: Diego Garcia, Île du Coin in the Peros Banhos Atoll, and Île Boddam in the Salomon Atoll. When I interviewed some of them on their return from Chagos, their main complaint concerned the abandonment and dereliction of their former pathways, houses, school buildings, clinics, chapels, and cemeteries. They described coconut palms lying over the sea and blocking the routes

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through the interior of the islands, and overgrown vegetation causing damage to the remnants of the human settlements on Île du Coin and Île Boddam in particular, but also beyond the confines of the military base on Diego Garcia, including the former settlement at East Point. Such changes were routinely described as a change from a ‘clean’ [*prop*] to a ‘dirty’ [*sal*] environment. For instance, one Chagossian man asked me rhetorically why Diego Garcia’s environment had remained ‘clean’ [*prop*]; his response was that it was because it was inhabited by the US military base, whereas the abandoned islands of Île du Coin and Île Boddam had been ‘spoiled’ [*gate*] because there were no people living there and looking after the land. Chagossians saw their own relations with the environment in terms of generalised reciprocity: interactions between the inhabitants and their environment were mutually beneficial.

Thus Chagos islanders have developed a historically and socially informed understanding of the environment of Chagos. In essence, they argued that when they lived on Chagos they lived in harmony with the environment, took only what they needed, used all parts of a plant or animal, and shared any excess so that there was no waste, and kept their environment neat and tidy by caring for plants and sweeping paths clean. Return visits to Chagos since 2006 have revealed the changes in the environment since their departure, changes which from a social perspective were negative: uncontrolled vegetation had become wild and trees had become overgrown, making it difficult to negotiate one’s way around the islands on foot and sometimes making it impossible to find remnants of the former settlements. One of the key tasks undertaken during return visits has been *netwayaz* [cleaning, tidying, weeding]: i.e. the demarcation of the human presence on the land by cutting down and clearing coconut trees and other overgrown vegetation in the former settlements (Johannessen 2011: 202). A key argument made by Chagossians in this context is that Chagos needs its inhabitants in order to keep its environment in good (i.e. tidy and useable) condition (Johannessen 2011: 205). This *netwayaz*, periodically undertaken by visiting Chagossians, poignantly serves simultaneously to commemorate the human past and to inscribe a human future on the outer islands. In Ingold’s terminology of the sphere, this clearly represents engagement with a



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specific local environment, ‘an active, perceptual engagement with components of the dwelt-in world, in the practical business of life’ (Ingold 1993: 40).

### **Contrasting Chagossian visions of the future for Chagos**

All of my Chagossian respondents shared the view that the islanders had lived in harmony with the Chagos environment. All of those who have been on one of several return visits to Chagos since 2006 criticised the abandoned state of the depopulated outer islands, and many suggested that the British administration or American military ought to have cleared [*netwaye*] the islands in preparation for the visits. For example, several respondents commented on the impenetrability of the forest on Île du Coin in particular, and felt that paths ought to have been cleared inland from the harbour so that Chagossians could more easily pass through the vegetation as they visited their former settlements to lay wreaths, pray, and hold ceremonies at the chapel and cemetery. (Île Boddam in the Salomon Atoll, by contrast, has become a popular mooring site for visiting yachts people, with the result that the vegetation there is apparently somewhat less overgrown.<sup>14</sup>)

However, interviews I conducted in 2011 and 2012 with members of the extended Chagossian community who had been on return visits to Chagos demonstrate that Chagossians did not hold unanimous views about the implications of environmental change (in the form of overgrown vegetation) for the future of the outer islands. Their responses to my question about what future they saw for Chagos fell into two distinct categories. Some respondents were optimistic: they felt that it would be possible to clear the land and revive the former settlements on Île du Coin and Île Boddam. As one such interviewee put it,

The islands could have a future but we’d have to develop them ... send people there to work [*travay*], clean up [*netwaye*], renew [*renuvle*]...

Others were pessimistic about the future prospects for the outer islands of the Chagos Archipelago: they told me that the overgrowth had become so impenetrable

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that too much work would be required to transform them back into habitable environments, and/or that the prospects for economic livelihood, infrastructural development, and social welfare would be too limited to induce people to return to the outer islands. As one such respondent put it,

For the natives it was sad. We won't be able to live there. I didn't see a single island where we could live again... How could we make it like it was? We'd suffer. It's too much work. How could we return? I don't believe so... There's no future there.

Such statements were often accompanied by the suggestion that the Chagossian struggle should refocus its attention away from resettlement of the outer islands and towards compensation for the displacement, the provision of jobs for Chagossians at the US military base on Diego Garcia, uniform eligibility for UK citizenship, and assistance with integration in the UK.

Individual responses do not seem to have been demarcated by either generation, age, sex, family status, socio-economic status, or level of engagement in Chagossian organisations. Those who were born on Chagos were not necessarily more optimistic than those who were born in exile. Neither retired nor working-age people were necessarily more or less optimistic about the scale of the task that would lie ahead in the event of resettlement of the outer islands. And those who were more active in Chagossian organisations were not necessarily more optimistic than those who were not closely affiliated with any Chagossian organisation. Given that all of these Chagossian respondents agreed that a ‘good’ environment is a socially lived environment, I do not argue that their different environmental outlooks for the future rest on a different understanding of human–environment relationships. Rather, I am suggesting that within the engaged lifeworld of the sphere, which is clearly predominant amongst Chagos islanders, there is still a space for the resigned detachment of those who have pragmatically withdrawn from the idea of resettling the uninhabited outer islands (although not necessarily from Chagos as a whole, in

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the case of those who seek the provision of jobs for Chagossians on the US military base on Diego Garcia).

### **Exclusionist conservationist conceptions of Chagos as uninhabited and pristine**

Many of the conservation scientists who have been involved in scientific expeditions to Chagos hold markedly different views to Chagossians, both about the condition of the Chagos environment when the islands were settled and about the changes to the Chagos environment since the depopulation of the islands. Recent return visits to Chagos organised by the UK Government via the BIOT Administration have enabled Chagossians to engage with island heritage sites rather than the marine environment, which perhaps explains why the land rather than the sea dominates their commentaries about the current condition of Chagos. However, the Chagos Archipelago comprises about 55 small islands surrounded by vast seas: the total land area is only around 63.17km<sup>2</sup>, of which Diego Garcia is 27.20km<sup>2</sup>, whereas the total geographic area, including the lagoons within atolls, is over 15,000km<sup>2</sup>, and the Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends 200nm from each atoll, totals 544,000km<sup>2</sup>. Conservation scientists agree that the marine environment is the more exceptional in terms of biodiversity, endemism, genetic interconnectivity with the Western Indian Ocean, and lack of invasive alien species compared to the terrestrial environment, although the islands themselves harbour some of the world’s largest concentrations of hawksbill turtle, red-footed booby, and coconut crab.<sup>15</sup>

Charles Sheppard, now a professor of biological sciences at the University of Warwick, has been at the forefront of Chagos science since his first expeditions there in 1975 (under David Bellamy’s supervision) and in 1978–1979. Even at that time, Sheppard was concerned about the impact of humans on the populations of species such as green turtles, hawksbill turtles, and coconut crabs, and he anticipated that:

With the absence of people on the islands, the populations of these species may increase. Under British control at present, only the Southern atoll of Diego Garcia is inhabited, although this has a military base. On all

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the Northern parts the common conflict between the needs of a rare species and those of an indigenous population does not now exist, with a correspondingly improved prognosis for these species. (Sheppard 1979: 310)

As a CCT member, Sheppard has been central in mobilising conservation scientists and some of the largest conservation groups in the UK and beyond. In 2008, the CCT formed the Chagos Environment Network (CEN) in association with the Linnean Society of London, the Pew Environment Group, the Royal Society, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Zoological Society of London, and Charles Sheppard in his capacity as organiser and lead scientist for the BIOT scientific expeditions. Membership was subsequently extended to include the Marine Conservation Society, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and Coral Cay Conservation. The MPA campaign seems to have been CEN’s entire *raison d’être*; by early 2012, the CEN’s defunct internet address redirected to the CCT website.<sup>16</sup>

Conservationists associated with the CEN have stated in numerous forums that the Chagos coral reefs are in good condition precisely because Chagos has been uninhabited for the past four decades. Rachel Jones, deputy team leader of the aquarium at London Zoo who participated in a scientific expedition to Chagos in 2006, expressed this viewpoint at length during the 2 March 2011 episode of the BBC Radio 4 series *Costing the Earth*:

Because there’s only human habitation on one island – which is Diego Garcia, which is a military base – all the remaining islands are uninhabited – the people were moved from the islands to make way for the military base in the 70s, there hasn’t been anybody there since then – so what’s happened is that the reef has reverted to its natural condition, so it’s *absolutely* amazing, it’s very very different from anywhere else that I’ve dived around the world. What you’re really looking at is almost a reef going back in time to a time before people were really having a huge impact on coral reefs. There’s an *enormous*

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number of fish, of very big fish, things that you wouldn’t normally see, lots of sharks – not as many sharks as there should be, because there is some poaching for shark fins – but lots and lots of big fish, and the corals are in *incredible* condition, and there’s an amazing coral cover everywhere.

Chagos scientists have correlated the lack of human impacts with the ability to recover from extreme weather events, such as the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) in 1998, which bleached and killed a vast proportion of corals in the Indian Ocean. Charles Sheppard told me that Chagos had ‘bounced back to its pre-El Niño state’, recovering better than other reefs in the region because the archipelago is not inhabited by humans and is therefore not subject to additional threats such as over-fishing or sewage. Comparing Chagos to other reefs in the region, he told me:

Where you have hungry people you have over-fishing. People say you can mix people and healthy reefs but it hasn’t happened in the Indian Ocean. Chagos won’t get better, but the difference with places it’s better than is getting bigger.

Continuing in this vein, Sheppard told me that the good condition of the Chagos reefs has positive implications for people elsewhere in the region: ‘the Indian Ocean needs Chagos as it is’. His argument is that the healthy and unexploited Chagos coral reefs provide shelter for marine species that either migrate themselves or produce larvae that migrate further afield, thus replenishing depleted fish stocks around the Indian Ocean rim where high populations have resulted in threats such as over-fishing and sewage. And, during our discussion of the concept of the ‘greater good’, Sheppard expressed the view that the rights of a few hundred or a few thousand Chagossians should not be prioritised over the many millions of people living in the Indian Ocean rim who rely on the healthy Chagos coral reefs upstream. This general line of argument was taken up by Rachel Jones in *Costing the Earth*:

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So it's something that, you know, has a huge impact on the rest of the Indian Ocean, the Western Indian Ocean, which has, you know, literally millions of people, particularly in places like East Africa, who live on the reef, and who rely on the reef for food security for very basic, you know, requirements, and the reefs there are really overexploited and in quite a poor state. So the fact that in the middle of the Indian Ocean you've got these fantastic pristine reefs able to replenish other reefs further downstream that have been, you know, more impacted by people's activities, means that that's a really really important source of new genetic materials for reefs in the region.

Thus conservationists associated with the CEN tend to idealise Chagos as a 'pristine' natural environment which is best preserved – for the greater good and for the future – in the absence of humans, which clearly represents the exclusionary extreme in PA thought.

### **Participatory conservationist conceptions of Chagos as inhabited and habitable**

As mentioned above, however, not all conservationists subscribe to the exclusionist perspective; some support participatory PAs on the grounds of efficacy and/or social justice. The CEN's successful campaign to establish a no-take MPA around Chagos was controversial even amongst conservationists, who disagree amongst themselves about the effects of human habitation in the archipelago in the past, and therefore about the potential implications of human habitation there in the future. Many natural and social scientists have argued that there are some important problems in the three arguments outlined above by conservationists associated with the CEN: i.e. firstly that the Chagos coral reefs are only in good condition because Chagos has been uninhabited for four decades; secondly, that Chagos recovered better from ENSO than inhabited regions of the Indian Ocean; and thirdly that the fish and larvae harboured by the unexploited Chagos coral reefs replenish stocks in the overexploited Indian Ocean rim.

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First, the implication that there is a direct correlation between lack of human habitation and ‘pristine’ environmental condition is far from clear, not least because, as one senior natural scientist member of the UK Government’s Science Advisory Group for Chagos told me,

It’s obvious that people led sustainable lives there – and in fact some say Chagos was in better condition 30 years ago – so the changes might not be to do with population.

Moreover, the notion that the archipelago is pristine and uninhabited is challenged by the fact that Diego Garcia has allegedly housed up to 5,000 people, which is about five times as many people as lived on the Chagos islands at any one time prior to the establishment of the military base. Sheppard’s response is that the US military base imports its supplies and exports its waste, thus reducing its footprint on the local environment. In turn, critics such as the environmental lawyer Peter Sand have retorted that a major military base housing several thousand people necessarily has a major impact on the local environment: 4.5 million cubic metres of coral was dredged from Diego Garcia’s lagoon to build its 3.6 kilometre runway, the US military has reported a series of fuel spillages and pollution over four decades, and the base apparently generates 200 tonnes of solid waste per year (Sand 2010).

Second, the claim made about the recovery of the Chagos reefs after ENSO has not gone unchallenged. Mark Spalding is an international coral reef expert at The Nature Conservancy and the Department of Zoology at the University of Cambridge, and is a co-author of the major reports *Reefs at Risk* (Bryant et al. 1998) and *Reefs at Risk Revisited* (Burke et al. 2011). He told me that whereas others may have in-depth knowledge of a few coral reefs, his broader global perspective allows him to state with confidence that Chagos recovered at least as well as any other – and indeed better than many – reefs in the region. To claim, however, that Chagos recovered better than *everywhere else* is, he said, an exaggeration that risks another so-called ‘climategate’ such as the controversy surrounding emails circulated amongst the University of East Anglia’s Climatic Research Unit in 2009.

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Third, the argument that Chagos replenishes other coral reefs around the Indian Ocean that have been depleted by human activities is not yet based on substantial evidence. Preliminary results reported by Sheppard et al suggest that genetic linkages amongst coral reef fauna are stronger between Chagos and the western Indian Ocean than between Chagos and the eastern Indian Ocean (Sheppard et al. 2012: 246). The authors speculate that this may be due firstly to the smaller distances from Chagos west to Saya de Malha (1050km away) and Seychelles (1700km away) than east to Cocos Keeling (2750km away), and secondly to the fact that the oceanic currents flow west for eight months and east for only four months of the year (Sheppard et al. 2012: 244). However, scientists do not yet claim to know whether these genetic linkages are the result of historic or ongoing species migration: more research is called for (Sheppard et al. 2012: 247). Thus Sheppard et al cannot yet go beyond the tentative statement that Chagos is ‘likely to be an important “stepping stone” for marine organisms in the Indian Ocean’ (Sheppard et al. 2012: 245).

### **Contrasting conservationist visions of the future for Chagos**

Debates amongst conservationists about the relationship between human habitation (or its lack) and the past and present condition of the Chagos environment also play out in relation to differences in their visions of a sustainable future for Chagos. Those who were involved in the CEN generally hope that Chagos will remain uninhabited because they fear that human resettlement will be incompatible with environmental conservation. As a former Chair of the CCT put it, resettlement ‘could well be detrimental for conservation’.

Those conservationists who distanced themselves from the CEN, however, have disagreed with either the basic premise (i.e. that human resettlement would be incompatible with conservation), or the conclusion (i.e. that Chagossians should therefore be prevented from returning to Chagos), or both. A first line of argument is that humans do necessarily have (usually negative) impacts on their environments



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but that conservationism cannot pretend to exist in an apolitical vacuum: conservation is not the only consideration, and sometimes – such as in cases of human rights abuses – social justice should be considered alongside conservationist aims. A second line of argument is that resettlement is not necessarily incompatible with environmental conservation. At *Chagos Regagné*, [Chagos Regained], a 2011 conference on the future of Chagos, Mark Spalding argued that it is a matter of scale:

There are some fantastic stories ... of the huge jump in biomass once you stop fishing on reefs. So I think there’s no point in trying to pretend it doesn’t happen. Humans have an impact on reefs. I think one thing that you really need to bear in mind in Chagos is the size of the reefs. Chagos has one and a half percent of the world’s coral reefs. That’s a huge area of reefs. And what we’re talking about is a relatively small island area, huge reef to island area ratio, which means that it’s quite conceivable that you could have resettlement and exploitation of a limited area of reefs and still have vast areas of reefs that you could keep totally un-fished if you wanted to.

A third line of argument is that a resettled population could be beneficial for conservation work in Chagos. Personnel on Diego Garcia and visiting yachts people on the outer islands undertake recreational fishing, licensed fisheries operated in Chagos waters between 1991 and 2010, and marine species such as sharks and sea cucumbers continue to be under threat from illegal poaching (Graham et al. 2010; Koldewey et al. 2010; Mees et al. 1999; Price et al. 2010). One suggestion is that resettled Chagos islanders would be ideally placed to monitor the seas against illegal poaching. As Spalding put it at *Chagos Regagné*,

Let’s not forget Diego Garcia, which is being quite heavily fished and not being very well monitored. And let’s not forget the illegal fishing which is going on which could actually potentially be quite well policed if you have a resident population in the northern atoll, so you might actually reduce some of that illegal fishing which is taking out the top predators.

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Indeed, this argument is perhaps supported by scientific research finding that the largest concentrations of sea cucumbers, hawksbill turtles, red-footed boobies, and coconut crabs are around Diego Garcia, where populations are monitored, rather than around the outer islands, which suffer from poaching (Price et al. 2010; Sheppard et al. 2012).

Some conservationists have therefore proposed a role for small numbers of resettled Chagossians in assisting the research carried out during scientific expeditions. While several participatory conservationists have thus offered their support for Chagossian campaign for the right of return, it is important to note that their visions of the future entail small numbers of resettled Chagossians participating in scientific research and monitoring. Their assumption is that a resettled population could engage in small-scale artisanal fishing but should not undertake industrial fishing, which many Chagossians feel would be required to make resettlement economically feasible. Thus even the attempt by some participatory conservationists to include Chagossians in decision-making about the future of Chagos remains, from a pro-resettlement perspective, constrained by conservationist priorities. Nevertheless, it is clear that a distinction can be drawn between those conservationists who believe that conservation is incompatible with resettlement and have promoted their own vision of Chagos as ‘pristine’ and best protected through a no-take MPA, and those who do not believe that conservation is necessarily incompatible with resettlement and have sought to involve the former local inhabitants in decision-making about the future of Chagos. This implies a contrast between an idealistically exclusionist global perspective on the one hand and an ideologically participatory (but still global) perspective on the other.

### **Engagement, withdrawal, exclusion, and participation**

Chagossians and conservationists agree firstly that the Chagos Archipelago is a precious natural environment of global ecological significance and secondly that good stewardship of the environment requires careful management by humans. But

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they hold quite different – although equally romanticised – visions of a ‘good environment’ on Chagos that are linked to quite different concepts of ‘the environment’. For Chagossians, the concept of ‘the environment’ tends to refer to the ‘lived environment’, the totality of one’s surroundings, where ideally nature and society should coexist in harmony. According to many proponents of this lifeworld, Chagos should be restored to a state of mutually beneficial interaction between humans and their surroundings. Depictions of a low-impact lifestyle in the past are accompanied by an insistence that Chagossians would pursue a similarly low-impact lifestyle if they resettle Chagos in the future. Yet it is worth noting two things in this context: firstly that Chagossians are prevented through immigration legislation from having to prove the sustainability of their resettlement proposals in practice, and secondly that not all Chagossians believe that resettlement of the outer islands is either feasible or desirable.

For the conservationists, by contrast, the concept of ‘the environment’ tends to refer to an idealised ‘natural environment’ in which today’s experts should seek to reverse the negative impacts caused by previous generations of humans and to prevent detrimental human activity in the future. For exclusionist conservationists, Chagos should be kept in a condition as ‘pristine’ as possible by erasing past human impacts, denying present human impacts, and limiting the possibility of human impacts in the future. However, this produces a contradiction. Different kinds of humans are imagined differently: local people are conceived as a threat, to be prevented from resettling and seeking to subsist and make a living from the natural environment; military infrastructure and personnel are treated as givens and/or counter-intuitively considered to be relatively benign; and scientists themselves are conceived as the solution and therefore entitled to visit for the purposes of research that should ideally back up conservationist ambitions. As a result of such contradictions, this exclusionist position has been challenged by participatory conservationists who point out that social justice would demand consideration of the rights and interests of the displaced population, and/or that anyway resettled islanders would be unlikely to have as negative an impact on the natural environment as does a military base.

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Thus Chagossians and conservationists hold different understandings of human–environment relations broadly representing Ingold’s engaged lifeworld of the sphere and his detached worldview of the globe respectively. Even when people conform to expected categorisations in terms of their understandings of human–environment relations, however, this does not necessarily determine their environmental outlooks for the future. As I have shown, it is not simply the case that displaced Chagossians uniformly advocate resettlement of Chagos and that conservationists uniformly oppose resettlement of Chagos. Within each group I instead identified two distinct environmental outlooks for the future: engagement versus withdrawal on the part of Chagossians, and exclusion versus participation on the part of the conservationists. This implies that environmental outlooks are influenced not only by understandings of human–environment relations but also by pragmatic and ideological considerations.

Chagossians and conservationists alike see themselves as the ‘true guardians’ of the environment. While most of the conservationists see themselves as having the expertise and ability to protect the environment, they see non-experts including Chagossians as having a dangerously predatory impact on the environment. While Chagossians see themselves as having a generalised reciprocal relationship with the environment, they criticise the conservationists for their paternalism, which privileges scientific expertise, downplays the military’s environmental footprint, ignores Chagossian perspectives, and refuses to accept the possibility of mutually beneficial interaction between humans and their environments. Conservationists and Chagossians alike idealise the comparatively favourable characteristics of their own relationship with the environment and applies comparatively unfavourable characteristics to one another’s relationship with the environment. The attributed unfavourable elements are mutually rejected, leaving limited common ground for successful communication and collaboration concerning the development of ideas for a sustainable future for Chagos.

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<sup>1</sup> It may seem counter-intuitive to describe a displaced community as ‘engaged’ with the territory from which they have been physically dislocated for four decades, but – as will become clear – my argument concerns Chagossians who have been on return visits to Chagos since the displacement and are embroiled in debates about the changes in the Chagos environment since its depopulation and about the feasibility (or otherwise) of resettlement.

<sup>2</sup> The Mauritian Government claims sovereignty over Chagos, and does not recognise the BIOT. Mauritian perspectives are a focus of my ongoing research, but are not discussed in depth in this article.

<sup>3</sup> The excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius was contrary to the 1960 UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (which was intended to prevent ‘the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country’) and the 1965 UN declaration on the Question of Mauritius (which specifically reminded the UK Government of its responsibility not to ‘dismember the Territory of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity’). Since 1980, successive Mauritian governments have repeatedly claimed Mauritian sovereignty over Chagos.

<sup>4</sup> <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-115714>

<sup>5</sup> The Ilois Welfare Fund was established within the Mauritian Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions in 1999 to provide financial and social support to Chagos islanders in Mauritius. It was renamed the Chagossian Welfare Fund in May 2011 – i.e. after the FCO’s consultative videoconference in March 2010 – but for clarity I refer to it by its new name throughout this paper regardless of the time period under discussion. See:

<http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/ssnssite/menuitem.5b07c6cea797b90e8f77861084d521ca/>

<sup>6</sup> This is my transcription from an audio recording of the videoconference, during which Bancoult spoke English. In this paper, respondents whose opinions are publicly known are identified by their full names. Other respondents are anonymised. All other quotes from Chagossians (including Bancoult) are my translations from Kreol.

<sup>7</sup> [www.ukotcf.org/pdf/News/MPA100401FCOStatementonBIOT.pdf](http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/News/MPA100401FCOStatementonBIOT.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.chagos-trust.org/>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.zsl.org/conservation/news/chagos\\_698\\_NS.html](http://www.zsl.org/conservation/news/chagos_698_NS.html)

<sup>10</sup> The Mauritian Government is contesting the MPA under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the grounds that the UK does not have the jurisdiction to declare an MPA in this disputed territory. This case may be heard in 2014, if a diplomatic solution is not reached in the interim.

<sup>11</sup> This tale should perhaps not be taken quite literally, since – although grouper and parrotfish can indeed be cooked very quickly – octopus takes longer to cook than rice.

<sup>12</sup> This was before the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species ([www.cites.org](http://www.cites.org)) introduced controls on the international trade of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) in 1975 and upgraded them to prohibit international trade in 1977. Since 1982, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species ([www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)) has classified green turtles as endangered.

<sup>13</sup> Any future resettlement of the islands would have to consider the costs and practicalities both of exporting coconut products and fish/seafood and of importing staples that could not be cultivated on such small coral atolls, especially given the geographical remoteness of the islands (i.e. its isolation from markets) and the fact that the price of copra has fallen since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Debates about the feasibility of resettlement are a focus of my ongoing research.

<sup>14</sup> The BIOT Administration issues permits for visitors by yacht to anchor at approved mooring sites on the outer islands for £50 per week up to a maximum of four weeks (<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/british-indian-ocean-territory>).

<sup>15</sup> The IUCN Red List classifies hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) as critically endangered, red-footed boobies (*Sula sula*) as least concern, and coconut crabs (*Birgus latro*) as data deficient.

<sup>16</sup> Several of the main organisations formerly associated with the CEN have subsequently together launched a ‘Manifesto for Marine Reserves’, viewable at <http://www.marinereservesnow.org.uk/>