

**The political ecology of community conservation in northern Kenya:
A case study of the Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy**

By

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ABSTRACT

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The Samburu of northern Kenya have had a long and close association with wildlife; yet have only recently begun to adopt wildlife conservation as a livelihood strategy. This spread appears to be related to Kenya's current strategy for wildlife conservation, which directs money and resources towards community-based wildlife conservation projects. While the performance of community conservation in Kenya has been initially described, the body of research examining how Kenya's wildlife conservation approach is being negotiated by local stakeholders and incorporated into local livelihood strategies and practices is limited. Based on a case study of the Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy in Samburu district, northern Kenya, that mainly utilized semi-structured interviews, this study examines the motivations of local and non-local groups to pursue wildlife conservation. Viewed through a political ecology lens, this paper analyzes how local people moderate the powerful influence of non-local conservation values and interests. In particular, findings suggest that local people adopt wildlife conservation projects to access better systems of rangeland management, pursue strategic linkages with external stakeholders and develop basic industries. I conclude that this process represents how Samburu pastoralists strategically embrace externally driven wildlife conservation efforts in self-defining ways to bolster their rangeland resources and livestock economy and scale-up to effectively increase their power base.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

*His passion never fades away
His hopes to achieve never die
His mission and goals never change
But his strategies to accomplish his mission always change
And that is why pastoralists are always nomadic in nature
His migration patterns always change
His adaptability techniques to his harsh environment are practical
And that is why pastoralism has stood the test of time in today's world
Always living with aridity and that is life in northern Kenya*

- A True Pastoralist by Joseph Letoole

1.1 Problem Statement

In 2009, the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies published a report entitled, “The Growing Specter of Africa Without Wildlife” (Conniff, 2009). The report referred to a Kenyan study by David Western who compiled over 270 wildlife counts between 1977 and 1997 to show that up to 41% of all ungulate species within Kenya’s five largest national parks had disappeared (Western, 2009a). The report was firm on the fact that wildlife in Kenya, both inside and outside of national parks, was in rapid decline. In the same year, statistical ecologist and modeler Joseph Ogutu published an analysis of wildlife counts for seven ungulate species that showed individual losses were as high as 95% for giraffes, 80% for warthogs, 76% for hartebeest, and 67% for impala throughout the Mara–Serengeti between 1989 and 2003 (Ogutu, 2009). Likewise, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) disclosed that Kenya’s lion population would face extinction by 2030 if the current rate of decline persisted (KWS, 2009). These studies built upon an earlier report by the Kenyan Department of Resource Surveys and Remote Sensing that showed a 32% decline in wildlife numbers between 1977 and 1994 (Grunblatt et al. 1995).

According to Western (2009a), the rapid decline is not surprising, given the inherent shortcomings in Kenya's conservation approach.

At present, national parks and wildlife reserves in Kenya only protect a modest portion of the annual migratory ranges of large ungulate herbivores (Western, 2009a). Local activities outside protected areas where up to 75% of wildlife persist (Homewood *et al.*, 2009), continue to impact wildlife populations by means of agricultural expansion (Okello, 2008), land tenure reform (Okello, 2009) and group ranch subdivision (Western, 2009b). This causes habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation to wildlife areas (Republic of Kenya, 2009). Large privately owned Maasai group ranches such as those in southern Kenya, where an abundance of wildlife persist unprotected, are being subdivided into smaller individual plots and sold for profit, fenced for cultivation and leased to agriculturalists. This trend significantly alters the dispersal range for wildlife outside of national park boundaries (Lamprey & Reid, 2004; Zeppel, 2006). To compete with such land-use transformation, Kenya's *Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, 1977*, was amended in 1989 to establish modalities for community partnership. In particular, Kenya developed revenue-sharing arrangements, which provided direct payments and development funds to pastoralist communities living adjacent to national parks and reserves in order to promote wildlife conservation on community-owned lands. The goal of this initiative was to encourage local communities to value wildlife in economic terms and to insist that wildlife pay for itself (Western, 1994; Lawson, 1996; Hulme and Murphree, 2001; Kuriyan, 2002). The key hypothesis was that economic benefits generated from wildlife utilization would engender increased local community support for conservation (Emerton and Mfunda 1999, IIED 1994, Metcalfe 1994, Murphree 1993, Sikoyo et al. 2001, Warner 2000).

As wildlife policy revisions were made throughout the 1990s, community conservation gained traction in Kenya. Pastoralist communities registered wildlife associations, forums, conservancies, trusts, and opened eco-lodges in an effort to participate in wildlife conservation management (Barrow, 2000). Since 1995, 17 new conservancies have been introduced in northern Kenya under the banner of Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), a large umbrella organization providing technical, advisory, and financial assistance to its members. NRT has pieced together a mosaic of conservation lands that covers just over three million acres in Kenya's northern rangelands (NRT, 2012). According to Tom Lalampaa, Community Manager of the NRT, there is potential to bring ten million acres into community conservation status (TNC, 2012). This dramatic expansion of wildlife conservation is unprecedented in Kenya's history and in the process has broken previously open pastoralist rangelands into grazing blocks, core-exclusion zones and buffer regions with new grazing by-laws being implemented and enforced on community-owned lands.

While community conservation is widely considered an improvement over past fortress conservation practices, critical research is beginning to reveal how community conservation spaces continue to represent "arenas of conflict" wherein local action is contested and mediated by interactions with non-local actors (Zimmerer & Bassett, 2003: 5; Young, 2003; Sundberg, 2003). Scholarship in political ecology reveals a world where people are divided by differentials of power and competing agendas and where "natural, economic, and political forces interact to mediate social and environmental change" (Bryant, 1992: 12). In the conservation context, research has found that non-local conceptions of nature, such as those generated by planners and conservation biologists, entrench themselves upon the ground and mold the needs, rights and interests of local

people into the resulting conservation framework (Adams & Hutton, 2007). In this regard, community conservation policies, which espouse such land-use controls as buffer or exclusion zones, reflect attempts by non-local stakeholders to manipulate and control local conditions to achieve externally motivated ambitions (Gibson, 1999, Ramutsindela, 2004, Jones, 2006). In the context of northern Kenya, it appears that NRT and other non-local stakeholders are able to drive specific forms of environmental change and promote wildlife conservation on the basis of their own vision and beliefs.

Whereas political ecology contextualizes local realities within broader political and economic realms (Walker, 2003; Murphy, 1999), it does not overlook the agency of local stakeholders to control and condition their interaction with non-local forces (Gezon & Paulson 2005). According to this view, local land-use decisions are not always the result of outside pressure, but can be attributable to the initiative of enterprising individuals and communities motivated to achieve goals consistent with their own interest (Sundberg, 2003). Accordingly, while local membership in the NRT is primarily marked by an express interest to pursue wildlife conservation, it also represents a strategic move by local pastoralists to consolidate power and address community issues on their own terms. Therefore, to understand the complexity of social interactions that condition wildlife conservation on community-owned lands in Kenya, it is necessary to investigate the strategies and motivations of both local and non-local stakeholders involved in pursuing community conservation as a land-use objective in northern Kenya.

Although a number of publications on community conservation in Kenya exist, they focus explicitly on evaluating the performance of community-based conservation in terms of its costs and benefits. Only limited emphasis is placed towards developing an understanding on how non-local forces condition local human-land relationships, or on

how local communities negotiate non-local conservation interests with their own motivations and livelihood ambitions. Accordingly, I present a study that analyzes how forces both internal and external help shape local land-use activities in northern Kenya. By understanding how external conservation stakeholders constitute local-level problems and how local communities interact with external forces, this study will hopefully help conservation stakeholders understand the complexity of goals and internal motivations that pastoralist communities have in relation to their overall participation in wildlife conservation initiatives.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The majority of Kenya's wildlife exists outside the network of national parks and reserves, predominantly in private and community-owned lands. Although works must be acknowledged for having explored the community conservation approach in Kenya (primarily focused on assessing the effectiveness of the initiative), the body of research examining how local and non-local stakeholders exercise different levels of power, authority and action to determine resource access and land-use is limited. In particular, questions of how non-local conservation ambitions interact with local livelihoods and the ambitions of local community members must be considered. This study aims to explore what drives various stakeholders in northern Kenya to adopt and promote conservation in pastoralist areas, and how those agendas interact with, and condition, each other. To carryout this study, fieldwork was undertaken in northern Kenya, which is an ideal case study location since there has been a dramatic increase in community-based conservation programs in the northern rangelands since the mid-1990s. Accordingly, the specific objectives of this research are to:

- Review the evolution of Kenya's wildlife conservation policies and discuss the

- inherent assumptions upon which those policies were based;
- Review the origin of community conservation in Kenya and provide an overview of the dominant assessments made in relation to its performance;
 - Examine the external forces that drove the expansion of community conservation into community-owned lands in northern Kenya; and
 - Explore the motivations, benefits and challenges experienced by local pastoralists in their effort to engage community conservation in Samburu district, Kenya.

To achieve such objectives, a comprehensive literature review on the evolution of Kenya's wildlife conservation policies and the origin of community conservation was carried out. In order to examine the non-local factors that influenced the expansion of community conservation into community-owned lands in northern Kenya a series of structured and semi-structured interviews with NRT management was pursued. As well, to explore the motivations, benefits and challenges experienced by local pastoralists in northern Kenya a series of structured and semi-structured interviews with pastoralists was carried out in Samburu district, Kenya. Finally, a document review was made of annual reports, board meeting minutes and organizational newsletters from local stakeholders that reside within the case study region.

1.3 Significance

The future of wildlife in northern Kenya requires support and engagement from local communities in order to retain an ecosystem approach to conservation. In Kenya, the dominant conceptual model for research that examines the performance of community conservation is based on an economic cost-benefit analysis. Such models do not often query the motivations, power struggles or strategies of the different actors involved in community conservation in Kenya. This apparent absence leads research to minimize or ignore the potential for unequal power relations that are interwoven into the community

conservation approach in Kenya. In particular, this research should inform policymakers of the complexities, and potential inequities, surrounding wildlife conservation in Kenya and help contribute to better natural resource management in the future.

The primary stakeholders of this study are the Samburu pastoralists who are able to articulate personal and cultural perspectives and motivations for pursuing community conservation strategies on traditional rangeland resources and the inherent obstacles they face. Research that explores the motivations and decisions to pursue community conservation strategies should help stakeholders understand how traditional livelihood strategies and production systems currently interact with contemporary or Western processes of wildlife conservation, grassland management and market-oriented enterprises. This may, in turn, re-orient the stated objectives of community conservation in Kenya, which presently relies upon the advocacy and skills of non-local stakeholders and may lead to a “normative understanding that there are very likely better, less coercive, less exploitative, and more sustainable ways of doing things (Robbins, 2004: 12). Through several means, the findings of this study should reach the stakeholders involved. There are plans to publish this work in an academic journal, which will allow for the distribution of the outcomes of the research to policy-makers and encourage experts to take the study’s results into consideration when reviewing the policy frameworks for community conservation strategies in Kenya. Furthermore, it is extremely important to present the results of the research directly to the specific organizations and pastoral communities consulted, including the NRT, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Meibae and the individual pastoralists who were interviewed. They are entitled to view the findings and ascertain their own conclusions from the results.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Research Paradigm

This research aims to explore the motivational forces that influence various stakeholders in northern Kenya to adopt and promote community conservation in pastoralist areas. The ontological position of this research is that of constructionism, which asserts that social phenomenon and their meanings are produced through social processes and interaction (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Accordingly, there is, in this research, no theory to be tested, rather this study is exploratory and seeks to gather personal information about community conservation largely based on the perspectives and impressions of individuals uniquely positioned to influence, or be influenced by, community conservation programs in northern Kenya.

2.2 Strategy of Inquiry

This research uses the case study approach to better understand community conservation within the natural setting of northern Kenya. Creswell (1994: 12) defines the case study as an exploration of a single entity or phenomenon “bounded by time and activity” through detailed data collection involving a variety of data sources (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995; Baxter, 2008). In general, there are two approaches to the case study strategy of inquiry (Baxter, 2008); one proposed by Robert Stake (1995) and the second by Robert Yin (2003). Both seek to ensure that the case is well explored, and that the essence of the phenomenon is revealed. Nevertheless, this research adopts Stake’s intrinsic case study approach, which places an emphasis on understanding the case, rather than utilizing the case as evidence, or an example, to support a broader theoretical argument (Stake, 1995).

2.3 Setting

This case study targets a recently registered conservancy located in the Samburu district of northern Kenya where, over the past 15 years, six other community conservancies have been established. The recent onset and registration of community wildlife conservancies within Samburu district represents a timely opportunity to explore the motivations driving local stakeholders toward community conservation. This study has selected one conservancy that is situated within the southern part of Samburu district.

2.3.1 Samburu District

Samburu district is situated between Lake Turkana in the north and the Ewaso Nyiro River to the south, and is largely inhabited by the Samburu people of north-central Kenya. The Samburu are semi-nomadic pastoralists who live mainly off the products of their livestock, which consist of cattle, sheep, goats and camel. Of these, cattle provide the most return in the Samburu economy (Spencer, 2004). The Samburu argue that with large herds of cattle, they can afford to lose considerable numbers in a drought or an epidemic, whereas with small herds such losses could be catastrophic in terms of their personal wealth and well being.

The high elevation Leroghi Plateau dominates the southwestern part of the district and is characterized by open savannah and grasslands. To the north and east the land drops away sharply to desert and thorn bush broken up by intermittent hills and forested mountains (Spencer, 2004). It is here within the lowlands that the case study site, the Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy, exists (see Figure 1).

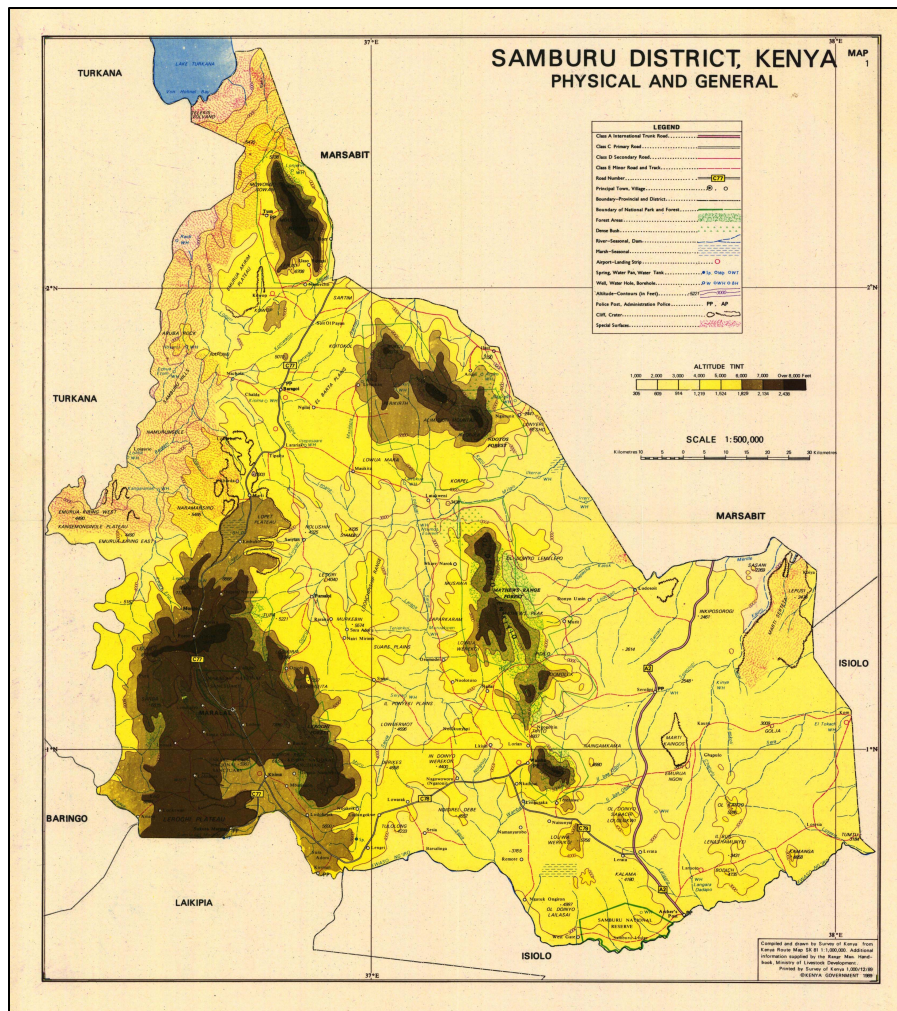


Figure. 1: Map of Samburu District, Kenya
 Source: Ministry of Livestock Development (MOLD) Range Management Division

In Samburu district, soil erosion and a general scarcity of water are the two most significant limitations affecting the Samburu economy. Annual rainfall averages 500 mm on the plateau and 250 mm on the lowlands (ILCA, 1977; Spencer, 2004). Such minimal rainfall and the poor condition of the soil do not allow the Samburu to practice any form of agriculture. Pastoralism is the main economic activity, with approximately 80% of the population holding livestock (Republic of Kenya, 1997; Kuriyan, 2002). In general, there is no explicit ownership of land among the Samburu. Any stockowner has a right to live with whom they please where they please and is free to migrate to these places (Spencer, 2004).

2.3.2 Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy

The Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy (Meibae) is located in Samburu district in the semi-arid region of northern Kenya. Meibae was established in mid-June 2006, following an aggressive community mobilization program carried out by the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) to rally five group ranches, namely Sesia, Lpus, Ltirimin, Resim and Ngaroni, on conservation issues. The conservancy borders Namunyak Conservancy on the eastern side and West Gate on the southeast side along the Ewaso Nyiro River. To the northwest, it borders Kirisia Forest where communities have not yet embraced conservation issues (see Figure 2). All members of Meibae are Samburu, Maa speakers, who raise livestock and engage in limited market-oriented activities.

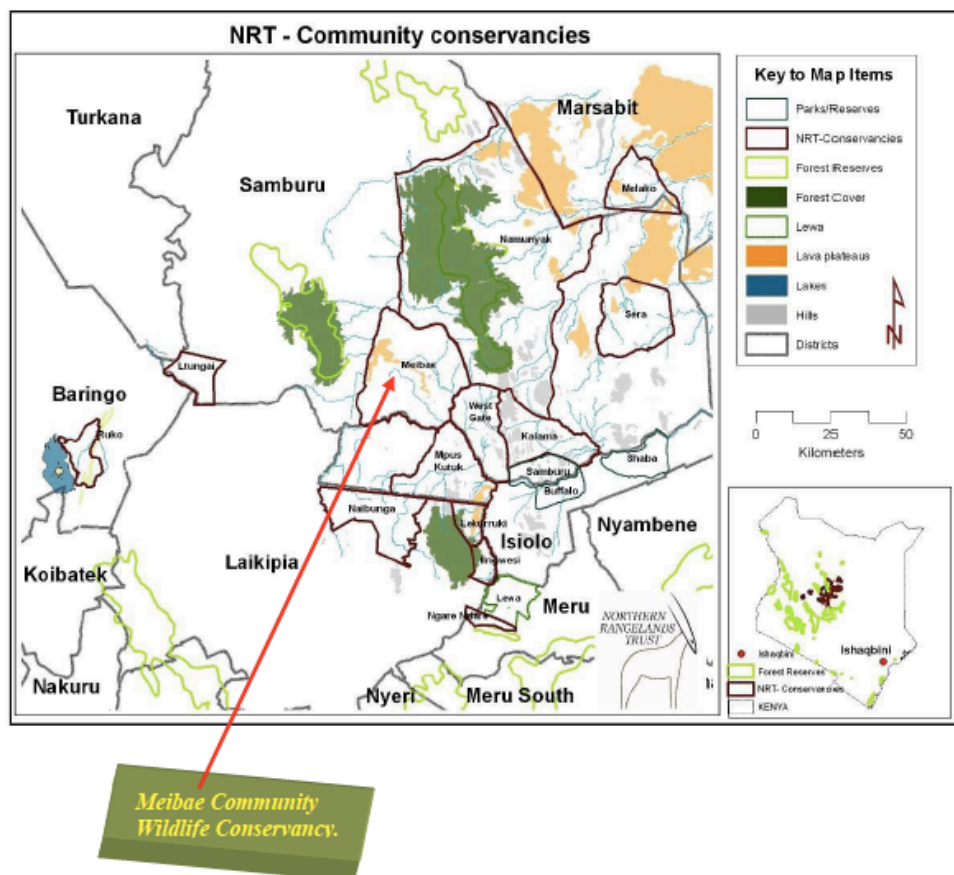


Figure. 2: Map of Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy
Source: NRT, 2011

Meibae was chosen as an accessible option based on personal connections with Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and the NRT, which were first established in 2006. A number of personal contacts offered unique entry points to the case study setting. As well, Meibae provides a clear case for this research given its young history, as the desires and motivations towards developing the Meibae conservancy are still present. As a result, Meibae stakeholders possess invaluable information related to the primary drivers and motivations towards community conservation in northern Kenya. More importantly, there is currently limited research engagement with Meibae. This is contrary to the experience of many other conservancies within northern Kenya, such as Lewa, Il Ng'wesi, Namunyak, Lekurruki and Sera which have already hosted a number of research projects leading to a sense of increased apathy and indifference towards researchers and their questions. This is extremely pronounced in communities where local experience with external research has not led to any measurable progress or change. In this context, Meibae has not experienced research fatigue and thus provides a credible source for high-quality qualitative data that is neither complacent nor vague.

2.4 Data Collection Strategies

Unlike positivist research designs that utilize quantitative methods, this research employed qualitative data collection strategies to understand the social phenomenon under review by entering the informants' world and obtaining their perspectives and meanings (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Accordingly, the data collection techniques used in this research included; (i) individual interviews, (ii) group interviews, (iii) document review and (iv) field notes.

2.4.1 Individual Interviews

The principle source of data in this research was individual interviews. In this regard,

two types of qualitative interview strategies were employed: structured and semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews were undertaken to seek specific points of information, in a precise order, that was directly related to the research objectives. As well, structured interviews were undertaken to enhance the comparison and evaluation of answers between different informants (Bailey, 2007). A pre-arranged list of questions was developed for the structured interview related to: the informant's motivations toward registering a conservation trust, the apparent strengths and challenges of the conservation trust, the informant's long-term goals in relation to the conservation trust and future projects that the informant believed the conservation trust still needed to carry-out. Each structured interview was followed by a semi-structured interview. This enabled a degree of flexibility in regard to the remainder of the interview process (Bailey, 2007). The objective of the semi-structured interview was to generate dialogue with the informant and to avail opportunities for them to express opinions and provide additional information that was not already covered in the structured portion of the interview.

Convenience sampling was used to recruit the interview participants. While qualitative research is not typically concerned with statistical significance or sampling strategies, it is concerned with achieving a particular level of generalizability (King and Horrocks, 2010). This means that purely *ad hoc* opportunistic sampling is not appropriate; rather the interview sample needed to make use of pre-existing groups and individuals (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). In this case study, a sample of informants was selected from Meibae, as well as, Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), who all, to some degree, were motivated to pursue community conservation in the northern rangelands as part of their livelihood strategy.

Based on timing and availability, a total of 25 individual interviews were carried out

in Samburu district. Of these, 20 individual interviews were with Samburu pastoralists living within Meibae and five were with NRT Management. This sample captured a representative reflection of individuals motivated to pursue community conservation. While it can be argued that convenience sampling does not uncover informants beyond those simply available to the researcher by virtue of easy and familiar access, it does provide an acceptable strategy for preliminary research and analysis (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Access to informants was gained through a variety of contacts who provided permission and authority to access interview participants. All interview participants were reached through one or more individuals who worked with Meibae and NRT.

2.4.2 Group Interviews

To supplement the principal source of data in this research, qualitative group interviews were carried-out. While individual interviews evoked and gave more time to information that was unique to the individual, group interviews revealed broader commonly held attitudes, beliefs and behaviors (King & Horrocks, 2009). Moreover, since community conservancies are largely made up of communal institutions and community groups, it was essential to obtain a generalized group perspective, particularly as it applied to the motivations toward community conservation. This necessitated the procurement of interview data based on the group's motivation and the group's agenda.

According to King and Horrocks (2010), data produced by means of group interviews reveals a deeper social and cultural context in terms of people's understandings and beliefs. The explicit function of the group interview was primarily exploratory, yet in this research it was also motivated by methodological triangulation. Five group interviews were carried out in relation to different demographic characteristics of the Samburu (male, female and moran). Again, convenience sampling

was utilized to recruit members from pre-existing social groups. An informant was utilized to recruit the most appropriate and feasible group interview sample. While such methods have a propensity to bias the data, the use of pre-existing groups, as well as, an amicable relationship between group members offered a higher level of confidence in the group's ability to discuss and interact with the researcher. Each group interview involved between three and eight participants.

2.4.3 Document Review

Primary data for this research was also gathered from micro-level organizational documents and records, including: Meibae Annual Reports, minutes of the Meibae Board Meetings, NRT updates, NRT quarterly Reports, NRT Annual Reports, the NRT's website, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy newsletters, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy Research and Monitoring Annual Reports, Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT) Annual Reports and Grevy's Zebra Trust (GZT) Annual Reports. Document reviews, and analysis, of existing documents and records provided additional insight into the NRT and Meibae and also functioned as a third data point for methodological triangulation. Particular attention was paid to documents that provided data on the NRT's strategic expansion of community conservation into community-owned lands and how pastoralists responded to the introduction of the community conservation approach.

2.4.4 Field Notes

The final method for data collection was the production of field notes. This method provided personalized detail on the circumstance and settings of the other data collection techniques, as well as, an opportunity to verify and supplement data. Emerson *et al.* (1995) considers field notes to be the very essence of ethnographic field research, however, field notes were, in this study, secondary to the interview data. The field notes

in this research represented more of a repository, whereby certain descriptions about, or actions and decisions that affected the direction and focus of data collection, were articulated. As well, field notes in this research were unstructured. While a deliberate protocol related to the frequency of entries (every 24-hour period) was followed, it did not adopt a structured observational methodology. As a result, there was no clear focus in the field notes to orient the observation and data entry. Nevertheless, the field notes did provide: (i) detailed descriptions of interactions in the field, (ii) detailed information on conversations and informal interviews that occur in field, and (iii) analytic ideas, reflexive thoughts and ideas around social meanings of particular events or patterns in the field.

2.5 Verification

Verification of the data in this research was based on methodological triangulation, whereby data obtained through different research methods was corroborated and compared to ensure that core concepts were seen to consistently occur (Denzin, 1989; Bloor & Wood, 2006). This approach facilitated cross verification and helped ensure that accuracy was being maintained throughout the study (Stake, 1995). Methodological triangulation can be separated into two types: within-method triangulation and across-method triangulation (Denzin, 1989). Within-method triangulation is carried-out when two or more qualitative methods are used to measure the same phenomenon, as opposed to, employing both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods (Denzin, 1989). This research followed principles based on within-method triangulation. In this research, qualitative individual interviews were corroborated and compared to qualitative group interviews, and both forms of qualitative interviews were corroborated and compared to a comprehensive literature and document review. Methodological triangulation enhanced

the completeness and confirmation of the data and helped determine if commonalities were emerging between data sets, which ultimately helped generalize the findings of this study.

2.6 The Researcher's Role and Positionality

In qualitative research, the role, values and positionality of the researcher significantly influence the results and interpretation of the data being collected (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Accordingly, the role of the researcher and the identification of any personal values, assumptions and biases must be presented at the outset of the study. In comparison to the majority of subjects being interviewed in northern Kenya, I am more or less privileged in my economic circumstances, my education and my ability to chart the course of my life. I am also white, which in the case study setting has particular poignancy as the region was, within the last 50 years, colonized by white Europeans, and skin colour has the propensity to enhance power imbalances, mistrust and misunderstanding. Moreover, my cosmopolitan upbringing is highly differentiated from that of rural and pastoral livelihoods. In many ways, the logistics of my relocation from Canada to Kenya and the relative ease with which I was able to gain access to key stakeholders in both Nairobi and rural Kenya highlight the geographies of difference implicit in my research. It must be recognized that the social connections that facilitated my entry into the cultures and communities may have influenced the data collected. Local elites and other actors with power are the individuals who assisted me in making local contacts. In using such social connections, certain socioeconomic and power stratifications embedded in local and regional structures were potentially exacerbated. For example, as one of my translators was the Manager of Meibae some interview data may have only represented what the interviewee thinks I, or the Manager, wanted to hear,

rather than it being the unbiased personal opinion of the interviewee.

Even though I did not invoke the authority of the government or local elites, it cannot be denied that, as a white research student, I assumed a relative position of power. My power was derived from several sources: a more privileged background, a higher level of education, fluency in English, contacts in more powerful positions, considerable autonomy, and the ability to determine the length of my stay and leave the area when I wanted. Moreover, I worked on the presupposition that I had a right to probe and question in search of the informants motivations and personal perceptions. This brings to light issues of identity and power in the production of knowledge, which all has potential to bias the results of this research in a subtle, yet complex way.

To address such issues during the process of fieldwork and data collection, I recognized that I had multiple and dynamic positionalities in relation to other peoples' (the informants') identities (Shrivastava, 2006). As well, I attempted to draw upon previous understandings of the case study region in order to question research subjects and uncover information in a sensitive manner. As a researcher with a background in Education and Geography, I was perceptive to the existence of such complex differences. My past travel and knowledge of the case study region enabled me to thoughtfully respond to local concerns and perceptively respond to a multiplicity of positionalities in the field (some shared, and others not). It was significant that my multiple positionalities opened up space for creating shared positionalities with these subjects (Shrivastava, 2006). My previous knowledge base provided me with a level of comfort that made negotiating my available positionalities more plausible during the process of fieldwork. Since I felt capable of invoking multiple positionalities, I was able to negotiate my surroundings in a more responsible and effective manner. This means that my methods of

research worked to avoid abusing power structures and did not make the false claim of being unfailingly objective.

2.7 Limitations

In addition to the qualifications identified above in regard to the researcher's role and positionality, there were a number of limitations associated with this research project. First, the time available to conduct the research was short and thus, the sample size of interview subjects was relatively small. As a result, attempting an in-depth statistical analysis was ruled out, as it would likely produce skewed results that gave more weight to numbers than was valid (Denscombe, 2007).

Second, in comparison to a lengthier PhD program with greater funding, it was not possible to examine several case study communities in order to make comparisons and establish more generally applicable findings. As a result, this study attempted to broaden the demographic profile of the interview sample it had access to as much as possible in terms of the informant's age, gender, status and occupation in order to obtain strong findings that were valid and representative of one specific group within the community conservation framework in northern Kenya.

Third, there were inherent limitations associated with literacy, language and translations. Accordingly, written questionnaires were not used because many people lacked the necessary literacy skills. As well, a translator was used sparingly, because it was difficult to know if the meaning or details of certain questions were being lost in translation. If an informant could speak English, it was decided that a translator would not be used and the interview exchange would be simplified to meet the informant's level of English proficiency as this would neutralize miscommunication and provide more reliable data.

CHAPTER THREE

GETTING STARTED: THE EVOLUTION OF KENYA'S WILDLIFE CONSERVATION POLICIES

3.1 Introduction

In order to place Kenya's wildlife conservation and management issues in perspective, it is important to trace the historical and political evolution of the country's wildlife conservation policies (Akama, 1998). This chapter attempts to accomplish two goals in that regard. First, it presents a historical overview of wildlife conservation in Kenya, initiated by colonial governments and maintained into the era of independence. In terms of this history, three key interventions are highlighted: the enactment of game ordinances, the creation of national parks and reserves, and the promulgation of wildlife conservation legislation. Despite a progressive growth in wildlife management, the interventions implemented were based upon European assumptions about Kenyan environmental crisis and change that were later found to be empirically unfounded (Anderson & Grove, 1987; Leach & Mearns, 1996; McCann, 1999; Bassett & Crummey, 2003). As a result, the majority of Kenya's wildlife legislation was abolished in 1989, in favour of a new community conservation approach. In order to make sense of how this breakdown occurred, the second goal of this chapter is to explore the inherent assumptions upon which Kenya's early conservation approach was based. Specifically, it will be argued that initial conservation policies in Kenya were based upon a dualistic view of nature, as well as, misguided understandings of Kenya's environmental change (Leach & Mearns, 1996; Adams & Mulligan, 2006). Consequently, early conservation policies led to a significant decline in landscape productivity, biodiversity and social equilibrium, which required immediate rethinking in the post-independence era.

3.2 The enactment of game ordinances

The first land and wildlife regulations in Kenya were promulgated in 1898, when game laws controlling hunting were enacted within the East Africa Protectorate (GOK, 2007). Despite the widespread recognition that East Africa represented a 'sportsman's paradise' (Kelly, 1978), it was increasingly evident that such paradise was being lost and European hunters posed a considerable threat to wildlife concentrations within the region (Collett, 1987; MacKenzie, 1997). As a result, game laws were established for the entire Protectorate, which mandated licenses, prescribed hunting methods and regulated the hunting season for specific species (GOK, 2007). Game regulations were subsequently enacted in 1900 (amended in 1904, 1905 and 1906) to protect wildlife from foreign explorers, traders and pioneer administrators. These regulations were later consolidated, and replaced, by the first Kenyan Game Ordinance enacted in 1909 (Steinhart, 1989). The Game Ordinance established two game reserves situated within the expansive southern and northern grasslands of Kenya and were meant to protect priority wildlife, as well as, the territorial rights of pastoralist groups inhabiting the two regions (Collett, 1987; Steinhart, 1989; Barrow, 2000; Mathenge, 2000; Honey, 2008; Matheka, 2008). To administer the Game Ordinance and its regulations, a Game Department was established to enforce the hunting laws and oversee licensing throughout the Protectorate. The Game Department was subsequently charged with the protection and preservation of wildlife within the game reserves, based on early principles of sustainable yield management (Steinhart, 1989; Barrow, 2000; Mathenge, 2000).

With the advent of white settlement in 1919, game preservation became more complex. As soon as efforts were made to attract settlers, the dispersive wildlife areas in the southern and northern rangelands were tailored in a significant way (Kelly, 1978).

This began the process, as Collett (1987: 139) explains, of “packaging” and “setting down boundaries” to separate European from African land and productive from wilderness land, and legislating for the maintenance of differing forms of land-use (Collett, 1987). As a result, throughout the 1920s, a second phase of hunting and game control emerged (Steinhart, 1989) whereby the only protection afforded to wildlife would be within the newly tailored game reserves (Kelly, 1978). Any wildlife found outside the game reserves on settlement lands could be hunted at will and without a game license (Steinhart, 1989).

At the same time, pastoralists inhabiting the game reserve regions were seen to be degrading the grasslands within the reserves (Kelly, 1978). Criticism of pastoral land-uses deepened during the 1930 and 1940s by fears that overstocking and overgrazing of pastoral rangelands was contributing to increased environmental degradation and wildlife decline (Anderson & Grove, 1987; Collett, 1987). While a number of factors contributed to this, wildlife numbers were in measurable decline. As settlement, hunting and clearing of wildlife habitats within the East Africa Protectorate persisted, conservationists began to take note of the dramatic decline in wildlife numbers and realized that if left unchecked, the end result would be extinction (Steinhart, 1989).

3.3 The creation of National Parks

The impetus to preserve wildlife grew as an ideological force throughout the 1930s, in response to a number of shifting global political attitudes about conservation (Steinhart, 1989; Mathenge, 2000). The emergence of a new international conservation ethos, advanced during the second International Conference on Wildlife Conservation, 1933, introduced the principle of national parks and recommended that a series of protected areas, isolated from human interference, be established throughout East Africa.

Based on this convention, the colony of Kenya introduced a new form of game preservation in the form of National Parks (Steinhart, 1989; Mathenge, 2000). Pastoral grazing had been identified by the administration as a threat to wildlife and thus, removed from the primary grazing regions of wildlife (Collett, 1987). In 1945 the Royal National Parks of Kenya Ordinance was promulgated to establish a national park system and separate wildlife from the deleterious effects of people (GOK, 2007). The national park ordinance marked a significant shift in conservation policy away from protection through hunting legislation to preservation through land protection (Akama, 1998; Honey, 2008). The national park approach cleared large tracts of land from pastoralist people and led to the displacement of local people from important grass banks and water resources required to support their livelihoods (Western & Manziolillo Nightingale, 2003; Mburu, 2004; Mburu & Birner, 2007; Norton-Griffith & Said, 2009). As a result, the impact of national parks and the separation of nature from people led to dramatic environmental changes and socio-economic consequences across the East African rangelands.

3.4 The promulgation of wildlife legislation

At the incipience of Kenya's independence, wildlife numbers further deteriorated and poaching reached a crisis level (KWS, 2007). In 1975, the Kenyan government enacted *The Wildlife Policy of 1975*, which aimed to expand the management of wildlife through a larger system of national parks and protected areas. The goal of *The Wildlife Policy of 1975* was to reinforce the protectionist paradigm, secure an export market for tourism and regulate the products of consumptive wildlife utilization (Mathenge, 2000). This policy framework, however, failed to capture the fact that approximately 75 percent of all wildlife in the nation was found outside protected parks and reserves, in areas, under intense pressure from agriculture, settlement and livestock. Between 1940-1990 in the

Amboseli region alone (the former southern game reserve), 40 of 52 group ranches in Kajiado District were subdivided into private parcels (Homewood, 2009) and cattle numbers increased from 70,000 to nearly 200,000, leaving few grazing reserves available for either cattle or wildlife dispersal (Western, 1994). This trend significantly altered the dispersal range for wildlife outside national park boundaries.

To reverse this trend, the national government enacted the *Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, 1977*, by Act of Kenyan Parliament, to replace all colonial Game Ordinances and strengthen central authority over wildlife (Western, 1994; Mburu, 2004; Otuoma, 2004; Tolvanen, 2004; GOK, 2007). In an attempt to control the destruction of wildlife outside national parks, the Kenyan government banned all forms of hunting (Akama, 1998). As well, trade in all wildlife products was banned to curb the high rates of poaching for ivory and rhino horn (Kock, 1995; Akama, 1998). However, the killing of wildlife that posed threats to crops, domestic animals or human life continued unabated despite the heavy hand of statutory law (Kock, 1995; Akama, 1998).

3.5 Protectionist view of nature

Up until 1989, the overall trajectory of wildlife control in East Africa was to separate society from nature and pursue the creation of protected areas to the exclusion of people (Adams and Hulme, 2001). While ideas about conservation were central to the establishment of Kenya's protected areas, they were also a manifestation of an ideology held by British colonial administrators. Conservation in Kenya was based upon Western assumptions about environmental crisis and change that were empirically unfounded (Anderson & Grove, 1987; Leach & Mearns, 1996; McCann, 1999; Bassett & Crummey, 2003). This misguided approach represented a lack of attention to local social concerns, values, rules and regulations that had existed in the region for centuries before European

intervention. In many ways, it was this lack of attention that planted the seed for much of the land degradation and loss of habitat experienced across the productive rangelands of Kenya during the colonial era (Barrow, 1996). In order to properly understand how this dilemma emerged, it is important to explore some of the underlying assumptions that led to the protectionist conservation paradigm in the first place.

First, colonial ideas of nature repeatedly portrayed humans as separate from nature (Neumann, 1998; Adams and Hulme, 2001; Adams and Mulligan, 2006). According to Adams and Mulligan (2006: 22), the bedrock for such separatist ideas was the European enlightenment and “the fundamental Cartesian dualism between humans and nature” promulgated by Western society. This model aimed to separate humans from other species and protect nature from human interference through a ‘fences and fines approach’ that produced a landscape of segregation distinguished by zones of human occupancy and zones of human exclusion (Wells & Brandon 1992; Adams & Hulme, 2001; Adams & Mulligan, 2006). The inherent tension underlying this approach was that neither ‘zone’ was adequate for the long-term resilience of society or nature. This conceptualization of nature, as external to human society, has been questioned and its theoretical underpinnings challenged on multiple fronts in recent decades. One of the seminal pieces on this topic was carried out by Neumann (1998), who observed the influence of Western ideologies in the creation of the national park system. Neumann’s argument suggests that the intellectual history of European landscape art and class-based images of nature lie at the heart of the Western world’s view of nature (Adams and McShane, 1996; Neumann, 1998). This represents an important element to draw upon in the context of Kenyan wildlife policy. The landscape, which once represented a sustainable livelihood for many pastoralists runs up against the European ideal of an African landscape, which was

projected to be pristine and absent of humans (Neumann, 1998). The European view of nature justified the eviction of local people from large protected areas (Akama, 1998; Honey, 2008). This move resulted in the loss of 50 to 70 percent of the necessary land base local people once utilized to survive (Western & Manzollilo Nightingale, 2003; Hughes, 2005). This not only collapsed their control over the rangelands (Waller, 1988), but also restricted their broad seasonal movements to smaller more concentrated areas (Waller, 1990; Rutten, 1992; Homewood 2004).

Second, there was a tendency to view indigenous land-use practices as deleterious to the African landscape. This assumption received critical attention during the famine interventions in Africa in the 1980s (Bassett & Crummey, 2003). Notable writings by David Anderson (1984), Richard Grove (1995), James Fairhead and Melissa Leach (1996) all established comprehensive histories of colonial era environmental interventions in Africa, that argued how Euro-American understandings and perceptions of the African landscape and environmental change was largely misguided (Leach & Mearns, 1996). This literature attempts to show the fallacy of a persistent myth that Africans do not manage their environment effectively and that they tend to degrade the places where they live (Anderson & Grove, 1987; Leach & Mearns, 1996; McCann, 1999). The impact of this assumption is that many of the prescriptions for environmental management, and conservation in particular, prove to be more hazardous for the people and wildlife of Africa than originally considered (Anderson & Grove, 1987). In the Kenyan context, it has been well established that colonial administrators considered local land use practices, such as traditional subsistence hunting, pastoralism and shifting cultivation, to be the primary cause of wildlife decline (Akama, 1998; Homewood, 2004). As a result, exclusive protected areas were employed to separate wildlife from the

‘perceived’ threats of indigenous land-use methods (Akama, 1998). However, multiple studies now show that indigenous land-uses are not only sound, but are integral to the resilience of the East African socio-ecological system (Hary, 1996; Hesse, 2006; Abkula, 2010).

Third, colonial ideas of nature focused specifically on the goal of increasing revenue and productivity (Adams & Mulligan, 2006). Largely based on the economic returns of wildlife-based tourism, Kenya’s initiative to convert rich biota landscapes into commodifiable protective enclosures was, in fact, the initial capitalist process of primitive accumulation (Mugabe *et al.*, 1998; Kameri, 2002; Büscher, 2009). The integration of Kenya into the global economy, triggered by the growth of tourism, was intertwined with the creation of enclosed protected natural areas. As a result, protected areas represented an important commodity and basic industry from which a significant amount of foreign exchange was being derived (Kiringe & Okello, 2007). Following the creation of national parks, “nature tourism in Kenya took off, increasing at the rate of more than 300 percent between 1960 and 1972, adding to the nation’s GDP significantly” (Honey, 2008: 297). According to Western (1994), wildlife provided capital for development in the fledgling post-independent nation-state. The government, however, was largely removed from the costs of living with wildlife and was instead able to displace wildlife externalities onto local pastoral communities. The majority of land owners living within, or adjacent to, the rangelands did not see freely roaming wildlife as an asset, rather they counted their losses in terms of opportunity costs of hosting wildlife on their land and direct costs from wildlife damage (Kibiri, 2010). As a result, although Kenya’s rangelands represented the “foundation of one of the country’s lead export

sectors, wildlife tourism, these lands are some of the least economically development in the country” (Kibiri, 2010: 427).

3.6 Conclusion

The evolution of Kenya’s wildlife conservation policies is marked by three key interventions advanced during the colonial and early post-colonial periods. The most significant shift in Kenya’s wildlife conservation policies came in 1945 when the Royal National Parks of Kenya Ordinance was promulgated and effectively changed Kenya’s conservation policy away from protection through hunting legislation to preservation through land protection. In this way, a new protectionist paradigm was implemented in Kenya that established clear boundaries between wilderness and people. Despite the progressive growth in wildlife conservation management, the protectionist interventions were based upon European assumptions about Kenyan environmental crisis and change that were found to be empirically unfounded (Anderson & Grove, 1987; Leach & Mearns, 1996; McCann, 1999; Bassett & Crummey, 2003). As well, the protectionist interventions triggered a significant decline in wildlife and social equilibrium that required immediate attention in the post-colonial period. As a result, community conservation prescriptions were elevated in 1989 as the solution to Kenya’s conservation woes and capital funding was used to motivate pastoralist communities to participate in wildlife conservation programs. This forged a clear set of linkages between conservation and direct economic-benefit that continues to underwrite the community conservation approach in Kenya today.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONTEMPORARY ERA: COMMUNITY CONSERVATION IN KENYA AND ITS CRITIQUE

4.1 Introduction

The 1990's marked an important turning point in the management of natural resources in Kenya, towards a community-based approach. The basic idea was that if communities benefit from natural resources, they would be motivated to protect those resources and use them sustainably. This chapter focuses on two themes in regard to this idea. First, this chapter examines the origins of community conservation in the contemporary era of conservation in Kenya. The Kenyan approach differs greatly from those adopted elsewhere in Africa where legislation provided communities with the right to manage their natural resources, such as in Namibia and Zimbabwe, or where strong local institutions or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were able to facilitate the process, such as in Zambia and Tanzania (Watson, 1999). Second, this chapter provides an overview of the dominant assessments made in relation to community conservation in Kenya. The initial assessments of community conservation in Kenya were undertaken in the Amboseli ecosystem of the southern rangelands around Amboseli and Tsavo National Parks. This region represents the initial funding area for community conservation, as well as, the location of the first conservation enterprise in Kenya. Subsequent assessments were focused on projects in the northern rangelands, wherein a growing number of community conservancies have been developing since 1995.

4.2 Origin of the community conservation approach

According to Western and Wright (1994), three key events precipitated the move towards community conservation in Kenya: (i) international concerns over Kenya's

environment and its degradation; (ii) national concerns over meeting local livelihood needs; and (iii) local concerns over social justice and the development of indigenous peoples movements. In response to these concerns, Kenya's *Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, 1977*, was amended in 1989 to establish modalities for community partnership in the management of wildlife in Kenya. In particular, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), a semi-autonomous government corporation, was established and developed the *Policy Framework and Development Programme 1991-1996* (also known as the "Zebra Book"), which called for the establishment of community-based conservation programs and the decentralization of services to district regions (Barrow, 2000; Barrow et al., 2001; Mburu, 2004). The initial practice that grew out of this policy aimed to benefit local communities through revenue-sharing arrangements and the integration of protected areas into local plans. Under the direction of Richard Leakey, the first Director of KWS, the primary objective of Kenya's community-based conservation program was to reinvigorate the national park system and offer gate fee revenues to buffer zone communities (Honey, 2008). In this regard, Leakey established a taskforce of anti-poaching rangers, brought in new managers, research teams, vehicles, equipment, armaments, and aircrafts to re-empower the protective capacity of national parks and generate a highly functional commodity for tourism (McRae, 1998). At the same time, Leakey secured loans and funding from various international donors, including the U.S.A., Dutch, British and Japanese governments, to underwrite a revenue-sharing program that offered a 25 percent share of revenues from gate fees to communities living adjacent to parks and reserves and within wildlife dispersal areas (Barrow, 2000; Honey, 2008). While this program helped offset a number of the key costs associated with dispersing wildlife onto community-owned lands, it did not effectively prevent local

activities from further impacting wildlife populations by means of agricultural expansion (Okello, 2008), land tenure reform (Okello, 2009) and group ranch subdivision (Western, 2009b).

With the signature in April 1992 of the Conservation of Biodiverse Resource Areas (COBRA) Project Grant Agreement, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated a new effort to assist the Government of Kenya, through KWS, with increased funding towards community-based conservation programs (Hall *et al.*, 1996). The goal of the COBRA Project was to promote local community development through conservation-based initiatives and enterprises, rather than direct payments through gate fee revenues (Hall *et al.*, 1996; Barrow, 2000). Accordingly, by 1993, the revenue-sharing program ceased and was converted into the Wildlife for Development Fund (WDF), which broadened the provision of funds from direct payments to capital investments for community development projects (Barrow, 2000; Honey, 2008). Under this program, communities could submit development proposals for capital funding, so long as they could provide a clear linkage between the proposed initiative and wildlife conservation. This approach enabled communities to set up conservation-based enterprises, such as wildlife sanctuaries, concession areas with private business, campsites and tourist bandas (Barrow, 2000).

In 1994, a new director, David Western, was appointed head of KWS whom supported the new approach and the funding goals of COBRA (Watson, 1999). Western's goal, through KWS, was to give rural communities and landowners a direct stake in wildlife conservation through wildlife-based enterprises. According to Western (1994), the basic conservation challenge was to make wildlife a locally valuable natural resource upon which basic industries could be developed (Honey, 2008). His goal was to help

Kenyan pastoralists grab a direct share of the \$436 million in tourism-related revenues that flowed into the country (Baskin, 1994). Western was specific in his agenda to grant local communities earning potential from wildlife (Lawson, 1996). As a result, KWS commenced the *parks beyond parks* community conservation strategy (Rutten, 1992; Watson, 1999; Otuoma, 2004). Under this program, local communities were granted development funds to set up tented camps and other tourist activities in areas bordering national parks (Hackel, 1999; Otuoma, 2004). Towards this end, the Kimana Community Wildlife Sanctuary located in the Amboseli ecosystem of southern Kenya around Amboseli National Park was established in 1996. This WDF project represented the first community-based conservation enterprise to be set-up under the new conservation regime in Kenya. The nature of the enterprise was a strategic partnership between the Kimana group ranch, KWS, and a private ecotourism provider (Watson, 1999; Mburu & Birner, 2002; Rutten, 2004; Meguro & Inoue, 2011).

Very soon after, KWS grants were used to ‘kick start’ conservation projects in the northern rangelands. The Il Ng’wesi Group Ranch on the edge of the Mukogodo hills represented the first group ranch in northern Kenya to set up a community-based conservation enterprise (Barrow, 2000; Kibicho, 2008). Over the past 15 years, a growing number of community conservancies have been established in northern Kenya that effectively increases the dispersal range and habitat for wildlife (IISD, 2009). At present, the land base dedicated to community conservation in northern Kenya is over 3 million acres (NRT, 2011a) and embodies an important refuge for a number of endangered species of wildlife, including Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*), Grevy’s Zebra (*Equus grevyi*) and African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*) (NRT, 2011b). Despite the

popularity of the community conservation approach, however, the outcomes have been mixed (Kellert et al. 2000) and success on the ground has been limited (Otuoma, 2004).

4.3 Assessment of community conservation in the southern rangelands

Kellert *et al.* (2000) produced the initial, and arguably, most seminal piece of critical research on community conservation in Kenya with research based in the Kimana Sanctuary. Using six social and environmental indicators (equity, empowerment, conflict resolution, knowledge and awareness, biodiversity protection, and sustainable utilization), Kellert *et al.* compared cases from Kenya, Nepal and Washington and Alaska in the United States, to evaluate assumptions linking local communities and sustainable resource use across diverse geographic conditions and economic situations. The authors found that problems associated with implementing community conservation strategies were more apparent than any measurable improvements in biodiversity protection goals. If anything, most of the successes focused on the socio-economic objectives, and most of the failures focused on the conservation objectives, implying the difficulty in accomplishing both goals simultaneously. This was a significant problem in Kenya, specifically around the Kimana Sanctuary, where the absence of any clear conservation goals and laws continued to lead to the over exploitation of resources. Kellert's *et al.* analysis concluded that the Kimana Sanctuary did not: (i) result in more equitable distribution of economic benefits; (ii) reduce conflicts; (iii) consider traditional Maasai grazing and wildlife movement knowledge; (iv) improve biological diversity protection; nor, (v) improve sustainable resource use (Kellert *et al.* 2000).

Mburu and Birner (2002) produced a follow-up assessment of the organizational efficiency of the Kimana Sanctuary. While their query was largely theoretically based, they provided insight on the cost-benefit analysis that local pastoralists undertook when

integrating community-based conservation projects in land-use schemes. In particular, Mburu and Birner (2002) highlighted an apparent discrepancy in the production and transaction costs between internal and external stakeholders. They found, “wildlife management may be efficient from the society’s perspective, but inefficient from the landowners’ perspective, especially if the opportunity costs of land and time are taken into account” (Mburu & Birner, 2002: 293). From the landowner’s perspective, therefore, although some benefits were being derived from conservation programs, they were not financially viable when transaction costs for acquiring those benefits were taken into consideration. What this suggests, according to Mburu and Birner (2002), is that conservation enterprises are only feasible, and socially just, if external stakeholders continue to provide compensation to internal landowners for costs associated with land-uses compatible with wildlife conservation.

While the aforementioned studies by Kellert *et al.* (2001) and Mburu and Birner (2002) concede that a flow of benefits are being derived (mostly socio-economic) from the Kimana Sanctuary, they do not provide any detailed explanation of what the benefits actually are (Meguro & Inoue, 2011). Meguro and Inoue (2011) therefore, expand upon this series of research to provide a more insightful review of the benefits being derived through conservation within the Kimana Sanctuary. The goal was to describe the actual benefits in detail, and to consider the sanctuary’s achievements with regard to community development and its consistency with conservation goals. According to this research, local people derived monetary benefits from the Kimana Sanctuary that were being used for educational and medical subsidies and costs associated with land subdivision. Of these, land subdivision, private rights and title deeds were interpreted as being the greatest beneficial impact to local livelihoods from conservation. This raised an important

question in regard to the definition of ‘conservation benefit’. While local stakeholders viewed sub-division as a benefit, external conservation stakeholders viewed the same phenomenon as a threat to wildlife. The conclusion Meguro and Inoue (2011) made being, if local people enjoy benefits and regard wildlife as a resource, it does not automatically mean that they will conserve or sustain wildlife in the manner outsiders expect.

Rutten (2004) broadens the study region to embrace key conservation enterprises within the broader terrain of the Amboseli ecosystem. Rutten (2004) provides a critical discussion of the partnership approach to conservation by evaluating two public-private partnerships that were used to promote conservation enterprises on the Kimana and Selengei group ranches. His report concludes that while community benefits increased, people continued to have antipathy to wildlife because of the damage done to their livelihoods. Rutten (2004) reinforces the fact that internal and external stakeholders possess wildly different motivations towards entering into partnerships that centre on conservation enterprises. The core problem was that there was no genuine motivation by the tour operator to develop the sanctuary for the benefit of the local people. Rutten (2004) found that claims by the tour operator that the project would bring financial benefits were dubious. This case illustrates a broader argument in relation to community-based approaches made by Agrawal and Gibson (1999: 3) that “wildlife policies...do not necessarily protect animals...rather wildlife policies and their outcomes reflect attempts by individuals to gain private advantage”. As a result, the conservation project largely failed, as Rutten (2004) reports, because benefits were not distributed equally and various people still suffered damage and costs from wildlife on their land.

The results from these case studies, indicate that economic benefits have the potential to reduce local hostility toward conservation, but the positive effect of those benefits are offset by the absence of any clear conservation goals (Kellert *et al.*, 2000); the unfair distribution of economic benefits (Kellert *et al.*, 2000); inefficient returns from the landowners' perspective (Mburu & Birner, 2002); discrepancies in the meaning of conservation benefits between local people and external conservation stakeholders (Meguro & Inoue, 2011); and a lack of motivation between stakeholders to help, and benefit, each other (Rutten, 2004). As a result, community conservation in the southern rangelands continues to be questioned and success remains elusive, particularly when alternative land-uses yield greater benefits than what tourism or wildlife conservation are able to provide (Norton-Griffith & Said, 2009). In addition, several problems with the way benefits are distributed remain a key problem, particularly in the Kimana Sanctuary, where it was reported that key group ranch officials appropriated funds from sanctuary revenues, or contracts were negotiated unfairly leading to power asymmetries and the unfair distribution of benefits (Rutten, 2004).

4.4 Assessment of community conservation in the northern rangelands

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a dramatic increase in community-based conservation enterprises in the northern rangelands of Kenya. The land area currently hosting conservation has doubled in the last decade, now covering approximately 30,000 km², and it continues to expand (King, 2011). Despite this rapid growth, critical geographic research in the region remains meager. This is primarily due to the fact that most communal conservancies in northern Kenya have only been established in the last 10 years, but also to the fact that community conservation enterprises are seen to be relatively successful in comparison to other initiatives in the country and continent. In

contrast with national trends, the northern rangelands have shown a 15 percent wildlife population increase between 1981 and 2010 (King, 2011). The first community wildlife conservancy to be established in northern Kenya was Il Ng'wesi and the initial assessments of community conservation in northern Kenya were focused on this enterprise.

According to unpublished research by Harrison (2001), while the initial Il Ng'wesi community-based enterprise established in the northern rangelands does yield a number of benefits at the community level, it was found that wildlife tourism does not benefit the individual. While revenue, through increased tourism, is likely to grow, it will likely always remain too insignificant to bring-in personal wealth. As a result, individual livelihoods will likely remain pastoral-based, with many of the associated risks, particularly drought, predation and disease still largely in tact. Manyara and Jones (2007) support this analysis through an evaluation of the potential for community-based enterprises, specifically the Il Ng'wesi conservancy, to alleviate poverty. Their study concluded that although some community-based enterprises have been successful, such as in relation to occupancy rates and income generation, there is doubt that the community-based enterprise model will significantly impact poverty (Manyara & Jones, 2007). Similarly, Gadd (2005) found that while the community enterprise approach has the potential to encourage tolerance towards wildlife and pro-conservation attitudes, wildlife-based benefits did not change local subsistence methods toward land-uses that were more compatible with wildlife. In general, Gadd's (2005) overall concern with enterprises found in the Mpala Ranch, Koija group ranch and Endana agricultural settlement scheme was that if the motivation to conserve wildlife becomes purely

financial, and aesthetic benefits are lost or forgotten, the effects could be disastrous when financial incentives are interrupted or discontinued.

In a slight change of analytical focus, beyond the cost-benefit approach, DeVeau (2008) studied the negative effects of tourism in Il Ng'wesi, as well as, the variables that impact conservation friendly and unfriendly expenditure decisions. In her analysis, it was found that tourism employment does not have any impact on the household's decision to purchase livestock, which continues to represent the 'perceived' threat to resilient wildlife concentrations. In fact, DeVeau (2008) found that the higher the household valued conservation, in terms of the potential benefits derived from conservation enterprises, the more likely they were to purchase livestock with their accumulated income. This has, as DeVeau (2008) properly asserts, "important implications for proponents of providing economic incentives for conservation" (DeVeau, 2008: 21). In essence, providing people with economic incentives to make conservation friendly decisions does not appear to be working at Il Ng'wesi (DeVeau, 2008). It appears that the goals of the project founders are not being met and indeed is having the opposite effect as intended.

In one of the most recent studies, Glew *et al.* (2010), examines two community conservancy initiatives within the NRT framework. The study found that livelihoods in participating communities were enhanced compared to what would have been the case without the conservation initiative. In contrast to Harrison's (2001) study, benefits were found to occur at both the household and community level. Examples listed included education and health care, security, road infrastructure, relations within the community, relations with other communities, grazing access and quality. Nevertheless, this study showed that while NRT conservancies could bring benefits to both the household and

community level, they tend not to be financial in nature. While some direct financial impacts have occurred through the provision of educational and medical scholarships and to a lesser extent through paid employment, increasing physical security and access to affordable transport were found to be the most important impacts for households.

4.5 Conclusion

As wildlife policy revisions were made during the 1990s, community conservation prescriptions were elevated as the preferred approach and financial incentives were provided to pastoralist communities to encourage the protection and conservation of wildlife. This not only forged a clear nexus between conservation and economic gain, but also formed a front between local and non-local interests within regions wherein wildlife existed. The implications of this nexus set the stage for what Blaikie (1998: 14) describes as “the battle of representation” between the various local and non-local actors who seek to satisfy their ambitions and ideas on the ground. The introduction of economic-based incentives by non-local actors represented the principal motivational tool that would, or could, encourage local communities to pursue conservation-based schemes as an integral part of their livelihood strategy. Once community conservation was adopted, local land-users were driven to adopt new conservation-based land practices or secure core areas for wildlife use only. Over all, the assessments of community conservation in Kenya provide strong empirical evidence to suggest that local interests associated with the earning potential from wildlife is limited and problematic, yet at the same time non-local interests associated with the achievement of rebounds in wildlife population numbers is proving successful (King, 2011). This paper argues that behind the community conservation approach in Kenya, there exists an unequal power relation between local and non-local stakeholders that favours external interests over internal

welfare. Accordingly, there continues to be a need for case study research that investigates the motivations, power struggles or strategies of the different actors involved in community conservation in Kenya in order to highlight opportunities for greater equity and social justice in wildlife conservation programs.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSERVATION FOR WHOM?

5.1 Introduction

In Kenya, the rapid development of community conservancies is often more a reflection of external influences than internal drive. This is consistent with the theoretical rootings of political ecology, as well as, recent geographic theory that suggests that the evolution of place depends on the details of its relations to, and connectivity with, other places (Cronon, 1992; Harvey, 1996). In this sense, geographers use a variety of terms to describe how places are connected across space, the most common of which are distance, relative location, accessibility, and situation (Sheppard, 2002). Of these, the concept of situation stresses the conditions of possibility in a place that does not depend wholly on local initiative, but on embedded relationships and direct interactions with distant places.

The implication of geographic situation, within the context of political ecology, is that local transactions are heavily conditioned and embedded within broader political and economic spheres. Therefore, as we analyze the context within which local stakeholders registered the Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy, it is important to first understand the broader spatio-temporal conditions within which such decisions and motivations evolved. Accordingly, this chapter examines the geographic factors that influenced the expansion of community conservation into community-owned lands in northern Kenya.

5.2 Pioneer conservancies

To begin, colonialism placed foreign ranch owners, with contacts in diverse spatial realms, in close proximity to Samburu pastoralists. In 1919, the British Government

allocated land within the pastoralist territories of northern Kenya to former military officers in Britain as part of its Soldier Settlement Scheme (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992). This abutment necessarily produced a unique set of social relations between ranchers and pastoralists that helped forge new networks and connections between groups and places. In 1922, former military officer Alec Douglas took up land rights on Lewa Downs located on the northern flank of Mt. Kenya, in Meru District, and operated his land as a cattle ranch. This operation took place over three-generations until 1983 when conservation at Lewa Downs began in earnest.

Under the ownership of Ian Craig, the grandson of Alec Douglas, the first wildlife conservation initiative in northern Kenya started when a small group of conservationists persuaded Ian Craig to set aside 5,000 acres of his ranch to form the Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary (Lewa, 2011). This request stemmed from the fact that during the 1970s and 1980s, Kenya was experiencing a precipitous decline in black rhino populations from an estimated 20,000 in 1970 to fewer than 400 animals by 1990 (KWS, 2007). It was recognized that the only way to protect the remaining black rhinos in Kenya was in concentrating security for rhino within smaller areas having intensive protection. In total 13 ring-fenced rhino sanctuaries were established under the Kenya Rhino Project, which included the Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary located on Lewa Downs (KWS, 2007). The sanctuary was successful in both protecting and breeding rhino. To accommodate the increased numbers, the original 5,000-acre reserve was expanded to 10,000-acres in 1988. In 1994, with the support of KWS, a decision was made to fence the entire 62,000-acre Lewa Downs ranch (Sowinski, 2010) and register a conservation Trust. This conservation Trust was called Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (Lewa, 2011).

At the time this registration occurred, Lewa had already been using the ranch for wildlife tourism (Honey, 2008). Since the 1970s, Lewa was gradually building up its tourism operations privately from mobile tents to more permanent camp structures, attempting to capitalize on the deteriorating conditions of Kenya's national parks and reserves (Honey, 2008). By the late 1990s, Lewa had established itself as a premier destination for ecotourism (Honey, 2008). As the wildlife business grew, however, Lewa observed a number of deleterious environmental changes taking place from the increased concentration of wildlife, particularly Samburu elephant, within their new 62,000-acre fenced property. According to Richard Moller, Chief Conservation Officer at Lewa, Samburu elephant numbers on Lewa consistently remained in high concentrations as a result of an increased number of illegal firearms to the North and East of Lewa, where elephant poaching had increased, thus forcing the animals to remain in areas where they felt safe (Moller, 2009). The permanent elephant population on Lewa devastated woody vegetation and browse, which compromised the majority of the black rhino's diet within the conservancy. As a result, Lewa management soon realized that for the conservancy to be sustainable, it would need to increase the dispersal range for Samburu elephant, as well as other wildlife, and gain the support of neighbouring communities. This led Lewa to reach beyond its borders and attempt to expand wildlife conservation into community-owned lands to the north.

During the early 1990s, Lewa persuaded the Il Ng'wesi Maasai, a pastoralist group that bordered Lewa's northern boundary, to adopt conservation techniques and establish a new conservation-based enterprise to help them earn revenue from wildlife. According to David Silakan, Grants Manager of the NRT, the Il Ng'wesi elders were open to the idea of community conservation based on the benefits Ian Craig was able to demonstrate to

them, such as increased employment and territorial security, as demonstrated by the statement below:

“Seeing the success of Lewa and with the input from Ian Craig, he actually managed to make that idea sink into the Il Ng’wesi community who were bordering Lewa. And after seeing the successes of Lewa, which was actually a cattle ranch initially, turning into a wildlife sanctuary and seeing the creation of employment, the support it is giving to the communities in terms of security, then the community embraced conservation.”

According to Tom Lalampaa, Community Manager of the NRT, this process was slow, yet profound. He put it this way:

“So way back, in 1995, Ian Craig saw the need of approaching the pastoralist communities in the north, asking them to integrate wildlife conservation and livestock management. He started off with Il Ng’wesi, which is in Laikipia North...they formed Il Ng’wesi Trust...they created an eco-lodge and it really did very well and the benefits were trickling through the community. Once that took off and everybody was educated about it and everyone saw that it works, you know wildlife doesn’t have to displace livestock – they can be done together...it really helped trigger interest in other communities.”

In 1995, Il Ng’wesi obtained a Wildlife for Development Fund (WDF) grant and commenced the construction of an ecotourism lodge (Watson, 1999). In 1996, the Il Ng’wesi Lodge was built and represented the first community-based tourist initiative in Kenya to be fully owned and run by group ranch community members (Lewa, 2006), as opposed to a partnership agreement with private commercial stakeholders as in southern Kenya. With considerable support from Lewa, Il Ng’wesi established an exclusive ecotourism lodge that began to generate revenue for conservation and the community (Manyara & Jones, 2007). The success of Il Ng’wesi helped establish the legitimacy of community conservation in northern Kenya. With Il Ng’wesi behind him, Ian Craig followed the tracks of the Samburu elephant north to an important water tower located in the Mathews Range and effectively persuaded the 75,000 acre Namunyak Group Ranch to open a conservation trust and conserve resources for the benefit of wildlife. According

to David Silakan, Ian Craig went about leveraging Il Ng'wesi to strategically influence Namunyak to register its wildlife conservancy. In the regard, David Silakan stated the following:

“Then with people seeing the glory of Il Ng'wesi and the international recognition it received, people going to South Africa presenting this model and even getting international guests coming to Il Ng'wesi... So the second one to grow from this was Namunyak... after seeing Il Ng'wesi, Ian being a board member of Il Ng'wesi, visited Namunyak and he found elephants being poached here. And when he saw this, he said we have to see how we can curb this. So getting the community from Namunyak, come for an exposure tour at Il Ng'wesi, learn from this - this is what gave birth to Namunyak and convincing the people here this is actually the only way we can protect the wildlife.”

The response by Namunyak towards wildlife conservation was positive and benefits were soon realized. According to Tom Lalampaa, these benefits included bursaries for education, employment, security and healthcare. As a result, other group ranches became interested in community wildlife conservation and wanted to join the growing initiative. Lekurruki, located directly north of Il Ng'wesi, quickly followed (see Figure 3).

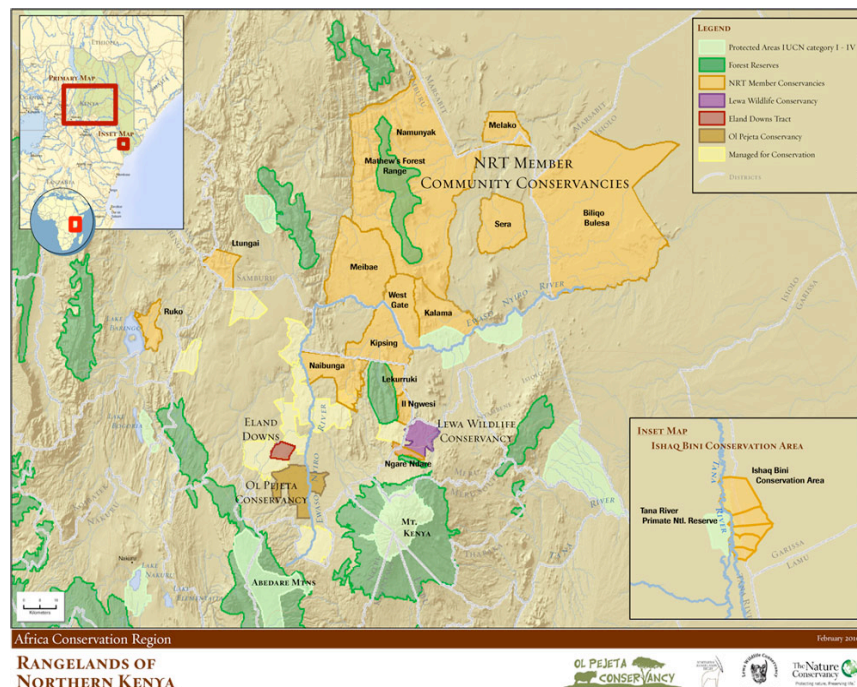


Figure 3: Map of the NRT Member Community Conservancies
 Source: <http://www.nrt-kenya.org/home.html> (last accessed May, 2012)

Lekurruki provided a key corridor for wildlife, specifically Samburu elephant, moving between the northern National Reserves of Samburu and Buffalo Springs and Il Ng'wesi Group Ranch and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. As the registration and number of wildlife conservancies in northern Kenya expanded, an increased number of group ranch communities in northern Kenya observed how other communities were benefiting from conservation. David Silakan stated the following in relation to the impact those observations had:

“Then after Namunyak now, we have other two that came up, we have Lekurruki, Kalama and then West Gate moving in that order. Then we have Ngare Ndare Forest coming again, then we have Naibunga, Sera came and we have Melako, Biliqo-Bulesa, we have Ltungai, Ruko and now we went down to the Tana (river). So that evolution just grew out of this small conservancy here, Il Ng'wesi having an influence over this. Then these people here, the neighbouring communities in Namunyak, West Gate and Kalama said also we need a conservancy – we have seen what Namunyak is doing and we need one.”

According to Tom Lalampaa, it was the impetus of those first pioneer conservancies that triggered the wave of conservation across northern Kenya. Tom Lalampaa stated the following:

“It's really the success of those first pioneer conservancies that sort of catalyzed the growth of other conservancies.”

As community conservation in northern Kenya grew, an idea was developed to unify the management and vision of conservation within the region. This idea was acted upon and in 2004 the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) was established, with direct funding from USAID Northern Rangelands Trust program, to help expand conservation into community-owned lands. Tom Lalampaa had the following to say in relation to the creation of NRT:

“Lewa continued supporting the conservancies until 2004, when those communities that already engaged in community conservation like Il

Ng'wesi, Nanyumak, Sera, Kalama for instance, came together and made a resolve to register a body that was going to co-ordinate them and so that was how the communities came to produce the Northern Rangelands Trust in 2004. Basically, the NRT took over facilitating, and growing and supporting community conservancies from 2005 fully.”

In fact, the increased requests by group ranches to register conservation trusts and participate in conservation placed a serious burden on Lewa due to its limited resources and the fact that supporting such an extensive range of conservation was beyond Lewa's scope and mandate. The creation of NRT enabled serious strategizing, refocusing, and a reflective initiative in mapping out both human and biodiversity resource potential that existed within northern Kenya.

5.3 Strategic expansion of conservation into community-owned lands

The NRT, headquartered at Lewa, was created in 2004 to help facilitate the spread of community conservation across the northern rangelands of Kenya. With direct funding from USAID, the creation of NRT enabled new group ranch communities to be targeted and purposefully embedded into the community conservation fold. Within this context, five group ranches without title for Nkaroni, Sesia, Lpus and Ltirimin and Trust land at Resim in Samburu district were rallied into community conservation. These five group ranches, which now collectively make up the Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy, were situated within a strategic conservation region for the NRT. Based on an individual interview with David Silakan, the strategic importance of Meibae was based on both social and ecological factors.

From a social perspective, it was increasingly important for NRT member conservancies to persuade other pastoralists within the Samburu district to integrate into NRT's conservation framework. Logistically, conservancies and rangelands administered under the NRT umbrella can harmonize and manage land-use strategies and goals

together with grazing by-laws, policies and committees. Non-member pastoralists, who do not respect or abide by member conservancy grazing by-laws or policies, often take advantage of the favourable grasslands found within conservancy lands. This can easily cripple the success of any managed outcomes. Although the majority of pastoralists within the region live on private group ranch land, they still rely on land outside of their own during the dryer periods. As mobility continues to be one of the most important coping mechanisms for pastoralists, groups that do not consider themselves bound by conservation norms tend to move into managed areas and exploit the conservation areas. If, however, all group ranches were on board with NRT resource management systems, the need for mobility, as well as, outside disturbances would be mitigated. So there is an incentive to create an environment whereby all regional pastoralists operate under one regulatory body with a common goal and commitment to rangeland management.

From an ecological point of view, Meibae is home to elephant, gazelle, impala, gerenuk, cheetah, leopard, African wild dog, Greater Kudu, eland, ostrich, lion and a number of birds. More significantly, Meibae is part of an important region that hosts over 600 endangered Grevy's Zebra representing over 30% of the global population (NRT, 2012). The Grevy's Zebra move between group ranches, community conservancies and the Samburu and Buffalo Springs National Reserves to the south. Additionally, Meibae is well positioned for the Samburu Elephant Circuit, which circulates between Mt. Kenya, Kerisia forest, Matthews Range Forest and Sera. The Samburu elephant travel through Meibei, along the Ewaso Nyiro river, between the community conservancies and the Samburu and Buffalo Springs National Reserve. It is thus important, from an ecological point of view, to bring Meibae into conservation.

In 2005, NRT developed the *Northern Rangelands Endangered Species Programme*, which provided funding towards the strategic expansion of conservation into community-owned lands where Grevy's Zebra persisted in high concentrations (NRT, 2012). The first strategic acquisition of the *Northern Rangelands Endangered Species Programme* was 128,500 acres of prime habitat held by local Samburu pastoralists living within the Ngutuk Ongironi Group Ranch. With committed funding from the San Diego Zoo, the Ngutuk Ongironi Group Ranch readily registered a conservation trust, called West Gate, and adopted new land management techniques to develop a conservation area (NRT 2012). The second targeted region was Meibae. The five group ranches that make up Meibae, however, were not forthcoming in their expression of interest to open a conservancy, and as a result an aggressive recruitment process commenced by the surrounding conservancies under the banner of NRT to help demonstrate the benefits conservation held. Based on interpretations provided on the NRT website, the following statement was made:

“Meibae Community Wildlife Conservancy was established in mid-June 2006 following an aggressive community mobilization programme carried out by NRT to rally the communities on conservation issues.”

This was not a straightforward process. As Tom Lalampaa puts it:

“The NRT don't go looking for conservancies. We don't go out there looking for communities to support. Basically, I think the word has gone out there and so what's happening is that we are receiving applications from communities seeking to be supported, seeking to join NRT, seeking to be supported to create a conservancy in their own land.”

The philosophy behind the NRT is that conservation must be community-oriented and driven through internal motivations. Thus, the inclusion of the Meibae region to the recruitment of conservation and the encouragement to participate was done through a process of 'exposure tours'.

5.4 Exposure tours

From the NRT's perspective, exposure tours are a strategic model to help inform communities about the benefits of conservation and thus primarily used to stimulate interest and motivation in local communities to register conservation trusts and manage natural resources. Accordingly, the NRT began the process of exposure tours to help expose the group ranches located within the Meibae region to the benefits of conservation. David Silakan had the following to say about exposure tours:

“Exposure tours is actually one of the models that we're using because the level of illiteracy is high and these people can only understand something by seeing. And they believe by seeing, you can't just come and say, “oh, conservation is just as important as any other investment”. They will not agree with that. What happens is, we don't want them to get the information from us - a literate persons. Let them get it from the old man, who has already tested the impact of conservation. They talk with elders within those areas, we don't talk to them, we don't, we just take them to, say, “OK we having a visit in your area, we're having these men, they're coming.” We set up a meeting and they have a dialogue. And you give your history of how you started and then they'll begin to ask you questions. So when the elders respond to their questions, it's more appealing to them, unlike somebody like me with papers and pen and they always question. The illiterate people are always not always open so they will trust more of their colleagues.”

According to male Samburu elders interviewed in March 2012, they recall being taken on exposure tours to help persuade them to pursue the registration of a conservancy:

“Before we started the conservancy, the NRT come here and take us on a special tour to the other conservancies and we saw different benefits. We visited Lewa, Namunyak, Kalama because they were started before this one.” (Manyatta 2)

“Before we made a conservancy we heard about another conservancy and we went there and observed that there's help and benefits.” (Manyatta 4)

According to one female elder interviewed at Meibae:

“I remember that people were taken for exposure to see other conservancies and that those people came back and educated us about the need to start a conservancy.” (Manyatta 1)

Based on the above interview, the exposure tour model represented a strong factor in the minds of Meibae community members in terms of what first triggered their interests and motivations toward opening a conservancy. In fact, when posed with the following question, “Why did your community decide to open a conservancy?” two male Samburu elders responded by saying:

“There is one reason is that because there was an example from the first conservancies created, like Namunyak and the rest, and they found that they are benefiting the community, there’s a benefit, so we decided to also engage or open a conservancy.” (Manyatta 1)

“Before we started the conservancy, the other conservancies, such as Namunyak, that were there before – we saw the benefits from that conservancy so we decided to start our own conservancy.” (Manyatta 5)

As well, two Samburu moran who were children at the time Meibae was registered recalled the following:

“The community decided to start a conservancy because other conservancies were bringing so many benefits to their own communities.” (Manyatta 5)

In this context, exposure tours were instrumental in raising awareness, as well as, influencing Meibae to register a conservation trust and integrate into the NRT community conservancy framework.

5.5 Conclusion

Over time the colonial abutment of white ranchers and black pastoralists produced a unique set of relationships and interactions that helped encourage Samburu pastoralists to not only observe the benefits of community conservation in northern Kenya, but to also adopt community conservation as a livelihood strategy. The successful launch of pioneer conservancies and the effective expansion of community conservation into community-owned lands established the legitimacy of the community conservation approach in northern Kenya and triggered interest in its widespread application. In cases

where strategic areas were not forthcoming in their interest to convert traditional lands into conservation trusts, exposure tours were used by NRT to motivate stakeholders towards community conservation. Research at Meibae shows that exposure tours were used to induce local decision-makers into conservation and to establish new conservation-based land-use regulations and controls. While NRT played a significant role in conditioning this new human-land relationship, local stakeholders were not passive recipients in the broader transaction. In many ways, it was the benefits local community leaders observed during exposure tours that drove their desire to open a conservancy based on their own self-defined interests. Accordingly, understanding what benefits they saw, or interpreted, as the most important in terms of persuading them to open a conservancy helps illustrate the capacity of local stakeholders to condition and shape their interaction with non-local forces (Gezon & Paulson 2005).

CHAPTER SIX

PASTORALIST MOTIVATIONS TOWARD WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the motivations, benefits and challenges experienced by local pastoralists in their effort to engage community conservation in Samburu district, northern Kenya. While it is important to recognize the unique spatio-temporal context within which the Samburu pastoralists find themselves in (as outlined in Chapter Five), it is really the benefits Meibae community leaders observed in adjacent conservancies that drove the community's desire to open a conservancy. As political ecology now exposes, local land-use decisions are not always the result of outside pressure, but can be the initiative of local stakeholders motivated to achieve goals consistent with their own interest (Sundberg, 2003). According to this view, local stakeholders are not passive actors in the face of more powerful non-local forcings, but rather enter into wildlife conservation for their own, complex reasons. To understand the complexity of these reasons, it is necessary to investigate the strategies and motivations of pastoralists found within the local context. According to field data collected within Meibae in March 2012, Samburu pastoralist were active participants in their confrontation with the ideals of community conservation and cite three primary motivational factors that influenced their decisions to pursue community conservation in Meibae; including: (i) access to better systems of rangeland management; (ii) strategic linkages to external stakeholders; and (iii) the growth of basic industries.

6.2 Access to better systems of rangeland management

Until the early 1960s, the Samburu were among the wealthiest livestock keepers on record, with a central cultural emphasis on cattle rearing and wealth (Holtzman, 2007).

Over the past several decades, however, a variety of processes have led to a significant decline in the region's livestock economy; including, increased population, sedentarisation, shortages of grazing land, land degradation and changes in water availability and distribution (NRT, 2011). In particular, perennial grasses that are the primary source of support for pastoral communities have declined significantly over the years. Their disappearance has contributed to a highly degraded landscape and the establishment of less palatable herbaceous plants and woody vegetation (NRT, 2012).

Since the most complex, subtle and increasingly serious threat in Meibae is the loss of range (GZT, 2007), addressing escalating land degradation is critical to the local pastoralists' long-term survival. This can be done through contemporary systems of rangeland management and planned grazing, which few Samburu pastoralists have access to, or knowledge about. There is considerable evidence to suggest that access to better systems of rangeland management is one of the primary benefits Meibae community members observed during their exposure tours at NRT community conservancies. According to Fred Longonyek, Manager of Meibae, the primary motivating factor to develop the wildlife conservancy was access to improved natural resource management techniques so that local residents would have access to quality pasture and water. He had the following to say:

“I think the most important thing that really strike me was about the management of the natural resources around West Gate, in terms of grasses. The way the communities are able to be rightful about how to manage their grasslands. There was a lot of, particularly around the side of Kalama, West Gate, Sera and Il Ng'wesi also that there was a bold step to make sure that livestock are really planned to go in those grasslands so that they are taken during the right period and this sort of thing.”

Local community members responded similarly, and stated that they wanted a conservancy because they observed how other conservancies were successfully managing

their grasslands for livestock with assistance from NRT. According to three male elders in the community:

“When the NRT come here to introduce about the conservancy, they come up with the issue of land management, you know the Samburus they keep a lot of animals and the land is overgrazed. So the NRT come with an idea of land management so they can have grazing plots and that is why we wanted a conservancy” (Manyatta 3)

“Before they start the conservancy, they saw in other conservancies the grass management. Unlike here, wildlife were everywhere they want and they graze once a month on the same grass and so when they go there to the other conservancies on a special tour they saw some grass there and its management.” (Maynatta 4)

“When the NRT come with the issues of conservancy they told them that even land management it will be easier for them and they will benefit as a community, for the livestock.” (Manyatta 5)

Exposure to the ideas, methods and results of improved rangeland management in neighbouring conservancies were critical to the buy-in of Meibae community stakeholders and the successful registration and development of the conservancy. Exposure was carried-out in a variety of ways, including; conservation awareness, education, demonstration plots, exposure tours, field days and stakeholder meetings. By connecting members of the Meibae region to larger, more contemporary, reservoirs of knowledge about land management, the Meibae community was not only able to understand and appreciate the benefits of managing rangeland resources, but willing to adopt those methods as promoted by NRT.

Specific land management techniques observed were based on examples tested on Lewa and established conservancies like Il Ng’wesi, Namunyak, Lekkuri, Kalama, Sera and West Gate as part of their rangeland management programs. Lewa and NRT developed a system to manage conservancy rangelands by dividing grasslands into different land-use blocks. One block was exclusively dedicated to conservation, whereby

no human activities, including grazing, could take place within a core-exclusion zone (this zone was dedicated to wildlife grazing). Buffer regions were established around the core-exclusion zone to serve as grassbanks during the dry season. The NRT's system of rangeland management also included reparation to degraded grasslands and the re-planting of grasses to help improve grasses for both livestock and wildlife. Having access to these systems of rangeland management in Meibae was reinforced as a motivating factor in the field data. One Samburu elder had the following to say about their observations of rangeland management in other wildlife conservancies:

“Before we started the conservancy, we observed in other conservancies their grass management. We see how they helped, or improved, their grasslands. We have seen how they put medicine, seeds, and fertilizer on the land and how they create blocks for grazing on the land.” (Manyatta 4)

When Meibae was registered in June 2006, methods of planned grazing were quickly integrated, grazing by-laws were established and a new grazing committee was elected. In June 2009, the NRT introduced Holistic Management, based on the innovative methodologies of Allan Savory, and NRT subsequently sponsored a number of workshops to expose the Meibae community to holistic land management practices and new methods of planned grazing. These clinics made a significant difference in the community's approach to cattle grazing and rangeland resource management. According to one female elder:

“When the conservancy came here, we've been able to manage grasses properly, grasses have been here in drought...Before the conservancy the grasslands were seen to be quite deteriorating very badly, but since the conservancy's came in they've been able to actually educate the community's about the need for them to manage...We want to imitate the Western approaches, with contemporary methods and to learn new technologies.” (Manyatta 1)

Moreover, the planned grazing techniques made a profound impact on both social and ecological conditions. Based on several interviews, a clear consensus was established in

regard to the measurable improvement of grassland quality and quantity. Grasses were more plentiful within the conservancy during the dry season and droughts. As a result, wildlife numbers were stabilizing and slowly increasing within the local region (King, 2011). The new approach to rangeland management also generated a number of social benefits. For instance, consistent annual access to grasslands has increased sedentarism, which is producing a more educated population. While this may have a negative cultural impact in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the Samburu moran, formal education is beginning to take root and replacing occupational succession as a source of knowledge.

According to Fred Longonyek:

“At the moment they have started staying put, longer because of the conservancy and grasslands and also the grasses are there most of the year, year-round. And so we encourage them not to move with their kids all of the time, to give them opportunity to learn.”

Despite access to better systems of rangeland management, however, new problems have emerged. For example, the Rendille community herdsmen and their livestock that occupy the more arid rangelands to the north invaded the conservancy in 2009 in pursuit of the abundant grasses in Meibae. They arrived with camels, cattle, sheep and goats accompanied by their make shift homes on donkey backs. While they did not make camp within the core-exclusion zone, they made daily trips into it until the grasslands were fully grazed (GZT, 2011). This scenario, in many ways, reinforces the NRT’s argument (as outlined in Chapter Five) that mobility of pastoralists operating outside of the NRT framework can cripple any progress made in relation to rangeland management. As free and open mobility continues to persist, it is important to draw regional stakeholders into the idea of resource management and have them respect all regional conservation grazing by-laws and policies.

6.3 Strategic linkages to external stakeholders

The aspirations and goals of Meibae community members is not simply driven by the accumulation of livestock, but also by the creation of relationships and social networks that increase their capacity and ability to subsist and progress. While new land management techniques are important, there is considerable available evidence to suggest that sustainable access to external stakeholders represents an even more important factor in terms of why community members were motivated to register the Meibae conservancy. Local community members are astutely aware of their overall marginalization within the Kenyan political sphere and the state of underdevelopment in their lives. According to David Silakan, Grants Manager of the NRT:

“The people have been marginalized over time, you see what happens, even actually the National Government has never been concerned with these areas.”

The region’s marginalization and underdevelopment is based on a number of socio-political factors, which the Kenyan government, through the Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya, 2008, is only beginning to address. The role played by NRT in supplementing government poverty alleviation efforts and connecting local communities to external stakeholders, continues to be one of the key strategies they possess in terms of helping to motivate local communities to embrace community conservation. The NRT’s ability to lengthen social networks and chains of contact that supply expertise, training and financial assistance represents an important asset to member conservancies. When one elder was asked, “why did your community open a conservancy”, his response was blunt:

“They decided to start the conservancy because they would get assistance.” (Manyatta 2)

Another male elder expressed his motivation in this manner:

“The NRT will assist us in many ways to link us to outsiders. Before the conservancy, there was no one that come and share with us, now hopefully the conservancy will bring people from different places to come and see us and teach us.” (Manyatta 2)

The express commitment by NRT to link Meibae to external stakeholders represents an important motivational factor towards community conservation. Once Meibae was established, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed in December 2009 that formally recognized NRT’s commitment to provide external assistance:

“ACKNOWLEDGING that Meibae requests external assistance in facilitating the development and operations of Meibae hereinafter referred to as the project.”

In particular, the overall objectives of the ‘collaboration’ between NRT and Meibae were expressed in the MOU in the following way: (i) to assist local communities in the project area to manage and benefit from wildlife conservation and natural resources management; (ii) to enhance the capability of local communities in the project area to independently manage and benefit from the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife and other natural resources; and (iii) to facilitate fundraising and donor engagement. Moreover, the NRT agreed to cover all operation costs associated with the new management structure for the first five years.

In many ways, the NRT’s core entry point was its promise to strategically link Meibae to external stakeholders and to help establish and strengthen community institutions, provide governance assistance and secure donor engagement for community projects. In 2006, the costs to register Meibae as a trust were entirely financed by a Conservation Endowment Fund worth \$19,875 USD, granted to NRT by the America Zoo and Aquarium Association. In 2007, additional funding strategies were brokered by NRT between individual donor partners and Meibae to help finance recurrent

expenditures and other core activities. Specifically, an individual donor from the United States, Ms. Leslie Roach, agreed to cover the entire annual operating budget of Meibae (\$55,700 USD) for five years and contributed her money to NRT through Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT). The NRT also covered budget shortfalls and fiscal deficits. For example, in 2008, Meibae opened its fiscal year with a deficit and additional funding was secured by NRT through the San Diego Zoo and the Safaricom Marathon. At the end of 2008, it was observed that the conservancy would run another deficit and community members were not hesitant to appeal to NRT again for assistance. According to the 2008 Minutes of the Board Meeting, the following comment was recorded in terms of Meibae's request to NRT:

“Mr. Tom (NRT) told members that the conservancy will operate with another deficit of about Ksh. – 461,965 at the end of 2008. Members appeal to him through NRT to look for ways to offset the deficit.”

As a result, in 2009, NRT helped community members secure another \$10,000 USD from Nick Lapham (a friend of Leslie Roach) to address short falls in security budgets. Additionally, Meibae received KSHS 900,000 through NRT from USAID to be used for rangeland rehabilitation projects. In 2010, a deficit of Kshs. 1.4 Million was settled through grants provided by Flora Fauna International (FFI) to NRT to offset a budgetary deficit to Meibae.

In addition to large operation costs, NRT has linked Meibae to a number of strategic partners, including the local district government, that have helped with infrastructure and community projects. In 2009, NRT connected Meibae with the Samburu East Constituency Development Fund (CDF) through the Leadership of Hon. Raphael Letimalo (MP-Samburu East) who provided Kshs 600,000 to fund the construction of a temporary conservancy head-quarters. As well, the NRT helped link

Meibae with the Samburu County Council, which provided Kshs 100,000 to be used to purchase basic office furniture's. The NRT also helped link Meibae Scouts to KWS in view of having conservancy scouts undergo training at the KWS Manyani Training School. In 2009, the NRT linked Meibae with a livestock market operated in partnership with Purdue College of Agriculture and School of Veterinary Medicine, Egerton University and the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI). In 2010, the conservancy acquired a new vehicle (Land Cruiser) to ease mobility problems through donations provided by Leslie Roach, US Fish and Wildlife and NRT. Finally, a new partnership between Meibae and Suyian trust was forged to help Meibae develop a new eco-lodge constructed with locally available materials.

These strategic linkages, facilitated by the NRT, have made a profound impact on the region's development and social capacity. A female Samburu elder describes the impacts in the following way:

“Unlike before it looks like there is more focus on development unlike before, so in our own consideration probably the government did not bother about the people. But now, so many things are coming now and we don't even know where they come from, we don't know where they've been, right now there's so many things everyday coming. It is most likely now due to our membership in the NRT.” (Manyatta 1)

In terms of increased levels of development, community members highlight their accrued social benefits in terms of security, communications, education, micro-credit, healthcare, water projects, vehicles and emergency services. From the perspective of two Samburu moran, the benefit of a vehicle and emergency services represents an important benefit and the line between their own life and death. They expressed it this way:

“As moran, we are now the people in the community who look after cattle and there's a time we can move from here to a very far distance with animals for water and grasslands there. In case of any accident, the vehicle from the conservancy will go to pick us there and go to the hospital, so that

if we're hurt we can benefit very well. Without the conservancy, most people die in the ground because there's no mobility there." (Manyatta 6)

In addition to social development, there has been a dramatic evolution in the community's recognition as a political stakeholder. In particular, the consolidation of five group ranches under a transparent institutional structure effectively achieves social cooperation and brings about a strong sense of unity and political self-recognition. Based on interview data, the benefit of uniting five group ranches under one institution has empowered them politically. According to two elders, they understand the benefits in the following way:

"When the conservancy starts, conservation bring unity among the community. When we say that we want to do something, we do it with one voice, all together, not like before. Because the community is working with one voice, so many people come here to assist us because we have one voice. Like the other projects that NGO's do here, those are the government NGO's and they come to assist us because we have one voice and one objective." (Manyatta 3)

"When the conservancy start here – all the people come together and now we are working together on the same objectives and so many things." (Manyatta 4)

Increased institutional capacity, unity and expanded social networks also facilitate Meibae's recognition as a regional political stakeholder. Since a dispersed collection of pastoral group ranches have now consolidated their power, centralized their management and formed a new collective space to satisfy community needs and social development, they have discovered a new and profound ability to influence government policy and solicit support for community projects aimed at poverty reduction and improved livelihood systems. According to three Samburu elders:

"I feel as a member of the conservancy, definitely we'll be able to now influence government policies and access government benefits." (Manyatta 1)

“The Councilors are more responsive from the previous dates because the community are coming together and we know our rights, even the Councilor knows that the peoples know their rights so we are now being more assertive than before.” (Manyatta 2)

“The Samburu government is more involved, now they know the importance of the community being with the wildlife so they come and help them more.” (Uriano Lekuiye)

The emphasis on the creation of social connections represents a strong factor that motivated Meibae to pursue wildlife conservation. While this factor has the ability to strengthen institutional capacity and political recognition, the assistance provided by external stakeholders also has the ability to establish dependence. The impact of dependence is well established in the geographic and development literature and, in short, has the capacity to generate a host of undesirable social and ecological impacts. Meibae community members are aware of this potential and thus, have been further motivated towards community conservation not only by the facilitation of linkages to external stakeholders, but by the promise of economic self-sufficiency and the growth of basic industries.

6.4 Growth of basic industries

The formation of strategic networks and connections with external stakeholders represents an important motivational factor in the community’s desire to open a wildlife conservancy. Nevertheless, community members recognize that outside relationships and social networking cannot always be focused on soliciting aid and making connections with donors. In this respect, two elders expressed concern about forming strategic linkages with external stakeholders that only yield charitable donations and sponsorship:

“The biggest challenge that is within the conservancy now is that the conservancy has only donors. We don’t have any income activities, like a lodge, that’s a big challenge because when donors stop the conservancy does not have any other options.” (Manyatta 5)

“The only money we have now is from donations... When the donors stop to donate their money, we ask the community now if we can think of other ways, such as bringing a lodge here so that we can have our own income – we are thinking about those issues apart from donors, so that the donors will support us until they get their solution.” (Manyata 5)

Moreover, Fred Longonyek expressed concern with developing dependence upon aid and donations in the following statement:

“At the moment we rely only on the one donor and if that donation not there, then there is no sustainability. But if we have some sort of facilities, which can attract the tourists to come and spend probably there days in this hotel, then certainly the conservancy would be able to be sustainable in that way. We still need donor-funding support, but I’m sure it will supplement.”

Despite a clear motivation to gain access to, and support from, external stakeholders, community members also articulate a desire to develop their own sustainable commercial enterprises to support the recurrent costs of the conservancy and the benefits it brings, such as rangeland management expertise, security, health care and increased mobility. A number of community members recognize economic self-sufficiency as the only sustainable way for their community to secure future livelihood goals. Accordingly, a third motivating factor related to the creation of a wildlife conservancy is economic growth and self-sufficiency. Fred Longonyek had the following to say:

“The top priority now for Meibae is to start an income generating activity through the construction of an eco-tourism facility, like a hotel, a tourist type of hotel where we are able to get revenue, where we are able to get some income.”

As with most other benefits observed during the community’s exposure tours, successful commercial enterprises stood out as a key benefit of conservation under the NRT umbrella. In particular, the creation of community owned eco-lodges was a significant feature that attracted group ranch members to the idea of conservation. Based on a clear and positive history of eco-lodge operations at Lewa, Il Ng’wesi, Namunyak, Lekurruki,

Kalama, West Gate and Sera, the idea of building a similar commercial eco-lodge enterprise was an important motivational factor. According to David Silakan, the construction of eco-lodges has always been intricately weaved into the trajectory of NRT supported conservancies and plays a large role in the reason why communities open wildlife conservancies. Despite low concentrations of wildlife and the harsh arid environment associated with the Meibae region, however, NRT remains optimistic that an eco-lodge can operate successfully. For example, David Silakan stated the following:

“You might find people are not that interested in wildlife, they’re interested in culture, they’re interested in excursion and Meibae you can find, they’re interested in bird watching, they’re interested in – different aspects. So when you have such a kind of a mix, that does not actually make you less in terms of getting an investment. One of the things is if this is, because now the Isiolo-Mara road is being opened up and Meibae is part of that infrastructure. People here, who live in surune or kitich or whatever you have guests who want to come in a see the Grevy’s Zebras – who you find here. Meibae is not dangerous, you’re only saying it’s hot, but you’ll find tourists coming here. The trekkers would be more actually to be here, in Meibae – and having also the Ulso River coming down here. Good areas for excursion there. So there is – I wouldn’t rule out because you have people, actually Meibae would be another product to West Gate, Kipsing, or this other Conservancy.”

Based on such optimism, Meibae community members have grown increasingly motivated to open a conservancy and commence the construction of a lodge. According to one Samburu elder:

“They say, the only way they can make money from wildlife is the conservancy to have a lodge, a big lodge, which can attract visitors from all over and they come to visit them and they go to watch wildlife and they get money. That is what the community thinks they need to do to make money from wildlife. (Manyatta 5)

While an eco-lodge has not been built, there continues to be a powerful desire to open an eco-lodge at Meibae. In fact, Meibae management, through NRT, has recently procured a feasibility study (2012) to determine where an eco-lodge should be situated within the conservation area. According to Fred Longonyek:

“It’s just a matter of waiting and then we can get a lodge...I am waiting for somebody by June to come and do a feasibility study to establish the strategic place, for an eco-lodge.”

In addition to the development of a commercial eco-lodge, a second economic activity cited as a motivational factor in regard to developing the Meibae conservancy was access to NRT’s livestock market. A number of community members identified the expansion of NRT’s livestock market as a critical factor driving their motivation to develop a wildlife conservancy. This was noted in the following two comments:

“When the NRT come here to introduce about the conservancy, they told us that there’s another way they can get income and they come up with the issue of a possible livestock market.” (Manyatta 3)

“They say, when the conservancy starts, they will get so many benefits. When the NRT come here, they say there will be a livestock market they buy cattles from the community and also the community would benefit from that market because they go very far to look for a market, but the NRT would come to the community and bring the market here. This market brings income.” (Uriano Lekuiye)

According to Caroline Karwitha, Livestock Programme Officer at NRT, the NRT’s livestock market program was strategically created to induce community members to pursue community conservation. The program is structured to guarantee market access for herders on the condition that they comply with positive grazing practices and support grassland management and livestock committees to improve rangeland management. According to NRT, it is only those communities that show progress from a conservation perspective that are given access to livestock markets. For pastoralists, livestock are and will continue to be the most important livelihood option and therefore any assistance that promotes livestock represents a clear motivational factor toward community conservation. In this sense, during Meibae’s exposure tours, NRT advertised their livestock market program as a key benefit the community would access. According to Caroline Karwitha, the livestock market program was created to motivate communities to

engage community conservation. She expressed the purpose of the initiative in the following manner:

“The project is called *Linking Livestock Markets to Wildlife Conservation* and as the title suggests it comes in as an incentive for conservation. It helps communities conserve and diversify their income. So it is really like an incentive, but at the same time, they have need for income, so it is meeting a need at the same time it is helping conservation.”

Before the NRT livestock market program was introduced, access to livestock markets in the Meibae region was almost non-existent. The role of NRT is to link communities with the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, which provides access to beef markets for community cattle. Since the program commenced, the NRT livestock market has travelled to Meibae twice and purchased a fixed number of cattle from the community as a whole.

Despite the benefits the livestock market offers, there are constraints associated with the project, such as lack of rural banking, lack of infrastructure, and lack of options for use of cash. As well, there continues to be the issue of whether or not livestock markets encourage pastoralists to accumulate more cattle than before, which can overgraze grassland resources. For example, according to one pastoralist the promise of money through the market has actually encouraged people to accumulate more cattle. He put it this way:

“Yes, they (herds) increase because the NRT come up with livestock marketing within the community and they use that income to go and buy another livestock, so they increase their livestock (holdings). Livestock holdings have increased by 30%-40% because the community is very large, the conservancy itself, so they get about 200 cattle per market.”
(Manyatta 2)

The emphasis on self-sufficiency and the growth of basic industries clearly motivated local leaders to pursue wildlife conservation and register Meibae. While the growth and development of basic industries represents an important motivational factor towards

community conservation, it is likely the most difficult to achieve. Market entry into the wildlife tourism industry requires excellent wildlife viewing opportunities, access to capital and a defensible market niche (Elliott & Mwangi, 1997). Moreover, the quality of beef produced by northern pastoralist cattle is low and in very limited demand throughout Kenya. Despite these potential constraints, the Samburu remain optimistic and continue to adjust their livelihood strategies to ensure self-sufficiency, security and growth, which in many ways represent the ultimate motivational factors toward community conservation for pastoralists in northern Kenya.

6.5 Conclusion

According to Caroline Karwitha, Livestock Programme Manager, NRT, “promoting community conservancy in northern Kenya is challenging considering communities need to understand the benefits before getting engaged” (Karwitha, 2008). Accordingly, it is the benefits that local community members observe in adjacent conservancies that motivate them towards community conservation. While broad non-local structures are certainly implicated in the reason Samburu herders were motivated to register a conservancy, this chapter set out to explore what key benefits Samburu pastoralists viewed as the most important in terms of motivating their willingness to engage community conservation. This research found that Samburu were motivated by three principal factors related to resource management, strategic relationships and the growth of basic industries. The findings in this chapter highlight how Samburu pastoralists strategically embraced community conservation in self-defining ways to not only bolster their rangeland resources and livestock economy, but to scale-up through linkages and networks that would effectively increase their power base.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This research set out to explore the motivations and interplay of stakeholder agendas in regard to wildlife conservation in Samburu district, Kenya. The hope was that this research would assist conservation stakeholders understand the complexity of goals and motivators driving environmental change in northern Kenya. In order to explore stakeholder motivations, fieldwork was undertaken in northern Kenya where a dramatic increase in community conservation programs has taken place since the mid-1990s. The setting for this case study (outlined in Chapter Two) was in Samburu district where, over the past 15 years, seven new community conservancies have been established. The recent onset and registration of community wildlife conservancies within Samburu district represented a timely opportunity to explore the motivations driving local stakeholders toward community conservation.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the case study objectives and then provides a comprehensive discussion of the findings in the context of political ecology. Three trends are identified in relation to the political ecology framework. First, the research findings suggest that NRT mediates local land-use decisions by strategically channeling external political and economic power towards Meibae in order to drive environmental change towards NRT's vision. Second, NRT strategically defines and delineates Meibae's resource-use on the basis of Western scientific-based models and not local traditional knowledge. Third, despite NRT's ability to mediate local land-use decision-making, local community members continue to exercise a strong level of agency

to engage with non-local forces in strategic and self-defining ways. Notwithstanding this last trend, however, the chapter ends with a warning about the growing capacity for non-local stakeholders to confront wildlife decline in Kenya on their terms and the impact this might have on local settings.

7.2 Study overview

Despite a century of environmental management in Kenya, wildlife populations continue to be in rapid decline (Grunblatt et al. 1996; Conniff, 2009; KWS, 2009; Ogutu, 2009; Western, 2009a). National parks and wildlife reserves only protect a modest portion of wildlife habitats and human activities outside protected areas, where up to 75% of wildlife persist (Homewood, 2009), continue to impact the welfare of wildlife by means of agricultural expansion, land tenure reform and group ranch subdivision (Okello, 2008; Okello, 2009; Western, 2009b). In an effort to reverse wildlife losses, Kenya developed a unique approach to community wildlife conservation in 1989 that aimed to provide direct payments and development funds to local communities living within wildlife dispersal areas. The goal of this initiative was to encourage local individuals to value wildlife in economic terms. This approach to wildlife conservation, however, has created a stage for a broad range of stakeholders with different levels of power and motivation to drive environmental change on the ground.

To accomplish the objectives set out in Chapter One, a comprehensive literature review on the historical evolution of Kenya's wildlife conservation policies and the origin of community conservation in Kenya was carried out. This helped place Kenya's wildlife conservation and management issues in perspective. In order to explore the motivations, benefits and challenges experienced by the different stakeholders engaged in community conservation in northern Kenya, a series of structured and semi-structured interviews

with Samburu pastoralists and NRT management was pursued. Based on all data collected, the findings suggest that both NRT and Samburu herders are motivated towards wildlife conservation for different reasons and that each set of stakeholders possess different levels of power to carryout their visions of conservation on the ground. While the findings of this study are applicable to a specific group within the community conservation framework of northern Kenya, they respond to a series of broader trends about community conservation in general that warrant further discussion, particularly when viewed through the lens of political ecology.

7.3 Political ecology of conservation in northern Kenya

Political ecology is used to unearth subtle or hidden power relations between people and groups in natural resource management (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987; Bryant, 1992; Walker, 2005). Initially developed to analyze the social causes of environmental degradation (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987; Peet and Watts, 2004), political ecology has more recently been applied to the analysis of community conservation and wildlife protection (Neumann, 1998). Within this context, the question being asked by political ecology is “conservation for whom?” The analysis attempts to untangle the web of actors’ involved in conservation projects and identify the power struggles between them for access to and control over local resources (Zimmerer & Bassett, 2003; Adams, 2004; Adams, et al., 2004). Blaikie (1998: 14) describes this scenario as “the battle of representation” where the environment becomes an arena of conflict between the various actors who seek to satisfy their ambitions and ideas. Political ecology presents an integrated, and often downward, causal chain of explanations that focus on environmental change (Neumann, 2005; Adams & Hutton, 2007). Although recent studies no longer adopt the chain of explanations, the focus of analysis in political ecological is on how

broad political and economic forces mediate local land-use decision making, access to land and control over natural resources (Stonich, 2000; Robbins, 2004; Campbell, 2007; Neumann, 2005).

In this study, multiple stakeholders in the community conservation program, including Samburu pastoralists, NRT, government officials and international conservation stakeholders yield different levels of power and thus, exercise different levels of control in terms of how rangeland resources should be, and can be, used. For Samburu pastoralists in Meibae, the rangelands provide a critical resource for grazing livestock, fuel wood and building materials. For NRT and various international conservation stakeholders, the rangelands represent critical habitats for endangered wildlife species and natural conditions conducive for eco-tourism. The introduction of community conservation to Meibae thus introduces two competing perspectives, held in tension, which ultimately shapes environmental change within the region. In order to discuss the implications of this power arrangement, I intend to highlight three developing trends that emerged from this study.

The first emerging trend is the way in which NRT is able to channel external political and economic power towards Meibae to drive specific forms of environmental change. Ian Craig and NRT have largely orchestrated the overall structure of community conservation in the region and control the flow of benefits, funding and technical support for member conservancies (IISD, 2009). Given this control, NRT is able to monitor and manage land-use activities over an extensive area through incentive-based policies that favour exclusive zones for wildlife. Through strategic political partnerships with businesses, governments, and multi-lateral institutions, the NRT channels power from a wide field of stakeholders to implement conservation programs in local communities,

effectively mobilizing local people into the front lines of Kenya's most pressing conservation threats.

Evidence of this trend is exemplified by the fact that NRT strategically links community wildlife conservancies to external stakeholders that not only possess strong conservation agendas, but qualify their support on conservation results. Donor support for community conservation is generally based on the assumption that it is making a significant contribution to biodiversity conservation (LTPR, 2007). For example, Leslie Roach, one of the principal donors to Meibae, has a self-proclaimed "passion for wildlife" and "is highly committed to testing new models for conservation." Her donations target specific initiatives that prioritize conservation initiatives and support wildlife programs. Moreover, NRT uses incentive based programs to bring community members into conformity with conservation modalities. For example, the NRT livestock market program, which promotes the destocking of livestock, is guaranteed only if pastoralists comply with positive grazing practices and grassland management techniques as promoted by NRT. Accordingly, the flow of benefits that Meibae receives is heavily conditioned on community obedience, capacity and motivation to participate in conservation programs.

The second emerging trend is the way in which NRT increasingly defines and delineates Meibae's resources on the basis of Western scientific-based models. One of the principal objectives of NRT is to ensure the conservation, management and sustainable use of natural resources within each of its member conservancies (NRT, 2012). In order to do so, NRT's conservation programs, specifically its *Endangered Species Programme*, is informed by Western science and zoological institutions in both the US and Europe (NRT 2012). In this respect, NRT's conservation planning is

dominated by people trained in the natural sciences and who draw extensively on science-based paradigms. Moreover, the rangeland management techniques being promoted in Meibae are largely informed by the needs of wildlife conservation, which necessitate core-exclusion zones designated as livestock free. The implementation of this model effectively re-structures local land-use rights and resource-use on the basis of Western scientific models and not local traditional knowledge.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that community conservation under the banner of NRT is based on contemporary ideas, methods and results of Western systems of rangeland management. In fact, wherever NRT member conservancies arise, new types of conservation spaces emerge that control people and resources. In the case of Meibae, within three years after its registration, NRT sponsored a workshop to introduce Meibae to new grazing techniques, and land management practices. Community lands were divided into land-use blocks, which included a core-exclusion zone, a heavily regulated series of buffer regions, grazing by-laws and new grazing techniques. Accordingly, traditional access to grassland resources was modified and ultimately mediated by the community's interaction with non-local actors.

The third emerging trend is the realization that agency is not centred in one place, but rather distributed across stakeholders (Goldman *et. al.*, 2011). In his discussion on scale, Neumann (2009: 399) highlights how political ecology tends to result “in the global being assigned causal force while localities are stripped of agency”. Understanding that localities are not passive recipients in this process (Escobar & Paulson, 2005) represents an important insight towards understanding how local communities engage with non-local political and economic forces in strategic and self-defining ways. To investigate these views, a few academic pioneers have explored how scales empower

'local' groups. Amin and Thrift (1994) demonstrate that local places can strategically moderate global forces through governance structures that assemble local capabilities to hold down the global. Perreault (2003) provides an insightful essay that demonstrates how indigenous groups strategically scale-up to increase their power base through participation in new local institutions that link local and trans-local processes. Escobar (2001) argues for a perspective that he terms "strategies of localization" that resist global forces. This collection of work is just a sample of what provides an important point of departure for examining how Samburu pastoralists in Meibae strategically engage community conservation to empower their community.

Evidence of this trend is exemplified by the fact that pastoralists in Meibae were able to articulate self-defined motivations towards their participation in community conservation that were separate from the NRT's conservation agenda. In particular, Meibae strategically pursued community conservation to access better systems of rangeland management, which according to local pastoralists effectively increases the resilience of their livestock economy. While particular elements of NRT's rangeland management system work to exclude access from rangeland resources, in general the introduction of holistic management is tailored to the needs of people through the utilization of livestock to restore degraded watersheds and rangelands. As well, community members clearly recognized the value of extended relationships with larger scales of social networks that could strengthen institutional capacity and governance and facilitate the community's recognition as a political stakeholder. This has facilitated their recognition as a regional stakeholder and provided an effective power-base to influence government policy and solicit support for community-oriented projects that are geared towards social development and poverty alleviation. By integrating their community

within the NRT framework, new strategic linkages could also be forged with a global network of individuals and organizations willing to support their livelihood ambitions and goals. Accordingly, while local membership in the NRT is primarily marked by an express interest in developing conservation and tourism programs, it also represents a strategic move by local pastoralists to consolidate power and address a breadth of local issues.

7.4 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the strategies and motivations of different stakeholders involved in the pursuit of community conservation in northern Kenya. The findings illustrate that different stakeholders possess unique and differentiated motivations for pursuing wildlife conservation in the region. Viewed through a political ecology lens, it is also apparent that such stakeholders yield different levels of power and thus, separate abilities to pursue their goals on the ground. While political ecology typically contextualizes local realities within broader political and economic realms, there is evidence to suggest that a degree of local agency is at play and also moderates the influence that these broader power structures have. It must be noted however, that local agency is tenuous and the balance of power can easily shift towards outside interests should conditions on the ground warrant increased intervention by more resourceful, strategic and powerful entities bent toward wildlife conservation. As a result, continuous research is required to monitor the ever-changing power dynamics on the ground and the social impacts that any such shift, one way or the other, may yield.

Adding to the urgency of this research agenda is the emergence of a new stakeholder in the northern rangelands. In 2006, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) launched its 'Africa Program' to enable lasting conservation results on the continent.

According to the TNC (2010) Africa program brochure, “collaboration continues to be the foundation of our work in Africa”. While there are many instances where conservation organizations provide funds for local groups (Murphree, 2005), there are other cases where, as advanced by Chapin (2004) and Dowie (2005), it has been alleged that large conservation NGOs are combining with corporate interests to the detriment of local landholders. As wildlife in Kenya continues to decline and the “Growing Specter of Africa without Wildlife” becomes increasingly real, the urgency to protect wildlife will increasingly affect local land-uses in powerful ways. Evidence of this renewed sense of urgency is being exemplified by the fact that Lewa itself, the pioneer conservancy in the region, continues to ramp-up security efforts and strengthen its existing security infrastructure as the only means of conserving wildlife. Moreover, Il Ng’wesi, the first community-based conservancy in northern Kenya is now planning to construct a fence around their conservancy to protect wildlife. Such enframing is not only reminiscent of the protectionist paradigm, but “the fundamental Cartesian dualism between humans and nature” as promulgated by Western society (Adams and Mulligan, 2006: 22), which led to the unprecedented rate of wildlife decline in the first place.

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