

Aspiring to Development: Maasai women and money in Oltepesi, Kenya

Julia Bailey
Department of Anthropology
McGill University, Montreal

At thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec

© Copyright Julia Bailey 2022. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Sommaire</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Chapter 1 – Participating in Development: Maasai women’s social ties and money</i>	<i>7</i>
1.1 Introduction	7
1.2 Contributions to Scholarship	10
1.2.1 Participating in Development: Aspirations and Social Networks.....	10
1.2.2 Gender, Social Change and Power among Pastoral Women	14
1.2.3 The Pragmatics of Money	18
1.3 Oltepesi	21
1.4 Methods	24
1.5 Structure of the Dissertation	28
<i>Chapter 2 – Women for Development: Women’s Groups in Oltepesi</i>	<i>32</i>
2.1 ‘Before the time of development’	32
2.2 Mobilizing Women for Development: State-building in Kenya	35
2.3 Participating in Development: Gender, Power and Autonomy	40
2.4 Women’s Groups in Oltepesi	43
2.5 Women’s Groups, Politics and Money	47
2.6 Making Money: Development led by Maasai Women	51
Conclusion	60
<i>Chapter 3 – The Social Life of Debt among Maasai Women</i>	<i>62</i>
3.1 Milking Money	62
3.2 The Social Productivity of Debt	67
3.3 Money and Credit/Debt Relationships	70
3.4 Women’s Groups and Credit/Debt Relationships	77
3.5 Establishing Rules and Building Trust	81
3.6 Micro-Finance Groups and Credit/Debt Relationships	87
Conclusion	97
<i>Chapter 4 – Gender and Housing: Building a Future Premised on Improvement</i>	<i>99</i>
4.1 Working Together	99
4.2 Gender and the House	101
4.3 Houses and Hearths: Building a Traditional Maasai House	106
4.4 Mabati Houses and Maendeleo	111

4.5 Moving: Traditional and Mabati Houses	117
4.6 Maasai Masculinities and Mabati Houses	124
Conclusion	128
<i>Chapter 5 – Uncertainty and Risk: Food and Relatedness between Maasai Women</i>	<i>129</i>
5.1 Food Aid.....	129
5.2 Food Security in Oltepesi	132
5.3 The Moral Economy of Exchange	135
5.4 Food Networks and Relatedness among Maasai Women	139
5.5 Black Foods: Changing Diets, Development and Risk	146
5.6 Moral Stakes: Maasai Women’s Decisions over Food.....	151
Conclusion	158
<i>Chapter 6 – Land, Money and Development</i>	<i>159</i>
6.1 ‘Too Developed’	159
6.2 Changing laws: From Gender Neutrality to Affirming Women’s Rights	166
6.3 Land, Money and Life: Maasai Women’s Rights to Land.....	171
6.4 Delivering Rights: Maasai Women and the State	175
6.5 Landlessness and ‘Public’ Process	179
6.6 Delineating Land Rights: The Kajiado County Land Control Board	184
6.7 Follow the Paper: Bureaucracy and Money	189
Conclusion	193
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>195</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>201</i>

Abstract

This dissertation answers a series of questions: How do Maasai women act on their aspirations to achieve development? What have been their experiences working with development organizations that aim to change their lives for the better? And what role does money play in providing Maasai women with a means to imagine better futures? To address these questions, this dissertation draws on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Oltepesi, Kenya. Oltepesi is a community where the Kenyan state has implemented numerous development interventions, accelerating after the 1960s, as part of an effort to ‘develop’ Maasai pastoralists in the area. These interventions involved land-tenure reforms and market-driven initiatives that encouraged Maasai communities to settle year-round and to become integrated into the national economy. Being settled and integrated into the national economy marks a shift from customary livelihood strategies that involved migrating seasonally with cows, goats and sheep to sites where there was available pasture and water. In addition to these interventions, Maasai women have been subject to other initiatives that focused on changing their daily activities, such as how they cooked, cleaned, built houses and coped with periods of food insecurity.

In exploring Maasai women’s engagements with different development initiatives over time, this dissertation shows how Maasai women in Oltepesi have drawn on their social ties to one another to access resources, particularly money, as part of their efforts to improve their lives. I argue that, in doing so, Maasai women gained autonomy from state-led initiatives that failed to address, and even perpetuated, the structural and gendered inequalities that they faced in their communities. These structural inequalities were reinforced by Maasai men and even staff from development organizations and government institutions, who tried to control the conditions under which Maasai women participated in development programs. I demonstrate ethnographically that Maasai women actively drew on their social ties to make development work for themselves and their communities. In doing so, they created a field of social practices that provided more egalitarian conditions that enhanced their personal autonomy as development unfolded within their communities.

Sommaire

Cette thèse répond à une série de questions qui explorent les expériences de développement des femmes Maasai: comment les femmes Maasai agissent-elles pour concrétiser leurs aspirations au développement? Quelles ont été leurs expériences de travail avec des organisations de développement qui ont pour but d'améliorer leurs conditions de vie? Et quel rôle l'argent joue-t-il pour donner aux femmes Maasai les moyens d'imaginer un meilleur avenir? Pour aborder ces questions, cette thèse se fonde sur quinze mois d'étude ethnographique à Oltepesi, au Kenya. Oltepesi est une communauté dans laquelle le gouvernement kenyan a mis en œuvre plusieurs interventions associées au développement, qui se sont accélérées après les années 1960, dans le but de « développer » les communautés pastorales Maasai des environs. Ces interventions comprenaient des réformes de régime foncier et des initiatives axées sur le marché qui encourageaient les communautés Maasai à s'établir à long terme et à s'intégrer à l'économie nationale. La sédentarisation et l'intégration à l'économie nationale marquent un changement des stratégies coutumières de moyens de subsistance qui impliquaient des migrations saisonnières avec des vaches, des chèvres et des moutons vers des lieux où se trouvaient de l'eau et des pâturages disponibles. En plus de ces interventions, les femmes Maasai ont été l'objet d'autres initiatives qui ciblaient des changements à leurs activités quotidiennes, comme leurs manières de cuisiner, de nettoyer, de construire des maisons et de composer avec des périodes d'insécurité alimentaire.

En explorant les engagements des femmes Maasai dans différentes initiatives de développement au fil du temps, cette thèse montre comment les femmes Maasai ont puisé dans leurs liens sociaux les unes avec les autres pour accéder à des ressources, particulièrement à de l'argent, dans le cadre de leurs efforts pour améliorer leurs conditions de vie. Je fais valoir que, de cette manière, les femmes Maasai ont gagné en autonomie par rapport aux initiatives menées par le gouvernement qui ont échoué à réduire, voire ont perpétué, les inégalités structurelles et genrées auxquelles elles ont fait face dans leurs communautés. Ces inégalités structurelles ont été renforcées par les hommes Maasai et même par le personnel des organisations et institutions gouvernementales de développement, qui ont cherché à contrôler les conditions dans lesquelles les femmes Maasai participaient aux programmes de développement. Je démontre par l'ethnographie que les femmes Maasai ont créé un domaine de pratiques sociales au sein de leurs communautés, dans les idiomes du développement, qui fournissait des conditions plus égalitaires pour déployer le processus de développement, tout en améliorant leur autonomie personnelle. Les femmes Maasai d'Oltepesi ont fait en sorte que les initiatives de développement fonctionnaient pour elles ainsi que pour leurs communautés en renforçant leurs liens sociaux les unes avec les autres.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to many people who have supported, encouraged and guided me in my doctoral studies and the writing of this dissertation. I am grateful, beyond words, to the Nchoki family in Oltepesi who cared for me in innumerable ways. Gloria and John Nchoki housed, fed and supported me throughout my research, and their children brought a vital sense play to my day-to-day life. My family will forever be indebted to the Nchoki's for their generosity. My deepest gratitude also goes to the people of Oltepesi, particularly the women who live there, whose experiences fill the pages of this dissertation and inform how I understand social life. I am also thankful to the Mainyoito Pastoralists Integrated Development Organization (MPIDO), particularly Joseph Ole Simmel, and the International Livestock Research Institute for their support in navigating the logistical dynamics of research in Southern Kenya. Stephen Moiko's family also supported me during my time in Oltepesi by welcoming into their home on numerous occasions.

I am extremely grateful to many individuals at McGill University. John Galaty, my supervisor, has been my mentor for over fifteen years. His ability to connect personal experiences to theoretical debates and world problems inspired me to become an anthropology student. In addition to being a brilliant educator, John Galaty's patience and empathy towards me made it possible to complete this dissertation. He built a community of skilled researchers who informed my studies, many of whom continue to be my friends. I am also thankful to Ismael Vaccaro, Katherine Lemons and Kristin Norget for their thoughtful advice and thorough feedback on this dissertation and on proposals, papers and conference papers.

My fellow PhD students at McGill University were my friends and champions during my doctoral studies. Thank you especially to Anne-Elise Keen, Jennifer Campbell and Giulia El Dardiry who were my intellectual bedrocks, educators and family in Montreal. Thank you to my dear friends Claire Ashton and Jill Morin and to my father, Peter Bailey, for visiting me in Oltepesi. My father's presence helped situate me as a member of a family, spurring numerous conversations about social responsibility that inform this dissertation. Matthew Wyman-McCarthy and Gretchen Bakke taught me how to write ethnographically and in dialogue with theory. They expertly guided me through the writing process.

Funding for this project, both in the form of fellowships and field research grants, was provided by the International Development Research Center, The Center for International Governance Innovation, McGill University and Fonds de recherche du Québec. I also benefited from participating in the Centre for Development and Environment's doctoral course on 'Women, Energy and Health' at the University of Oslo and the Bergen Summer Research School's course on 'Gender and Globalization.'

Completing a PhD can be an incredibly lonely process. In addition to the friends mentioned above, I am grateful to Monica and Nadine Kronfli, Liz Ashby, Courtenay Crosby, Chelsi Ferguson, Melanie Macdonald, Olive Bailey, Eifion Wynn, Carolyn Birdsall, Kariuki Kirigia, Gabriella Djerrahian and many others who supported me during critical moments during my degree. I could not have completed this project without their presence in my life. I would also like to thank Fahimeh Mianji for her incisive guidance. My most heartfelt thanks go to my parents Suzanne and Peter Bailey who raised me with a keen curiosity about the world that I share with my brother Simon and sister-in-law Imola Berzci, whose love and tenderness were unwavering. Simon and Imola's children, Avery and Lia, provided a source of levity during the final steps of the writing process. I will be forever grateful to my family and friends for their enduring support.

Chapter 1 – Participating in Development: Maasai women's social ties and money

1.1 Introduction

One bright sunny morning in late December, one of my last days in Oltepesi, I walked from Lankenua's house, where I lived in Oltepesi, to Mabe's house to see how she was doing. Mabe's family had very few livestock and no land. Her husband drank heavily and spent most of his meagre earnings on alcohol. The family's lack of resources meant that Mabe had to work small jobs for other families in order to earn money to buy basic goods, like food. Despite her best efforts, Mabe did not make enough money to sufficiently feed her four small children. To manage this deficit, she relied on assistance from her neighbour Lankenua, who gave her milk, packages of maize meal, and beans on a weekly and sometimes daily basis.

On the day I was visiting Mabe, I handed her a 1000 Ksh banknote—worth about 12 Canadian dollars. This would cover most of the cost of her food for one week and, I hoped, temporarily relieve some of her stress. Looking down at the banknote in her hand, and then up and around at her crumbling, round house made of dried cow-dung, Mabe told me that when I returned to Oltepesi, years after finishing my degree, I would find her 'developed' and living in a tin-sided, rectangular house. These houses, unlike the homes that Maasai women build, cost a sizable amount of money, equivalent to at least two cows, which Mabe did not own. Much to my surprise, rather than relieve Mabe's stress, the banknote in her hand excited a sense of hope and optimism for the future, one that was expressed through the idiom of *maendeleo* – meaning development — and imagined as a new house.

Guided by numerous conversations about development with Maasai women, this dissertation asks the following questions: How did Maasai women act on their aspirations for development? What have been their experiences working with development organizations,

which aimed to change their lives for the better? How did Maasai women gain access and control over resources in their households and communities? And what role did money play in providing Maasai women with the means to imagine better futures?

To address these questions, this dissertation draws on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Oltepesi, Kenya. Oltepesi is a community where the Kenyan state has implemented significant development interventions, accelerating after the 1960s, as part of an effort to ‘develop’ Maasai pastoralists in the area. Historically, Maasai pastoralists had migrated livestock seasonally to different areas of land through communal land-tenure systems in order to manage large herds of cattle, goats and sheep. However, ‘progress’ and ‘development,’ as imagined and initiated by the state and international development organizations, has encouraged Maasai pastoralists throughout East Africa to settle in the same place year-round, as well as to invest in commercial livestock production. To achieve these two objectives in Southern Kenya, where Oltepesi is located, the Kenyan government, in coordination with the World Bank, encouraged Maasai communities to create and settle in group ranches. These ranches were each privately managed by their own group ranch committees that controlled the resources within each ranch’s boundaries. During the 1990s, however, many group ranches were subdivided into private parcels of land, owned by individuals. Almost all of these individuals were men, leaving Maasai women legally landless and without formal rights.

While Maasai women in Southern Kenya have been largely ignored by development projects, such as the group ranch initiative, since the 1980s there has been a shift in development planning and policy making across the Global South. Namely, in response to the inequalities that women faced as a result of development projects, international organizations and donors began to support and implement policies and programs that specifically targeted women (Palpart, Shirin and Staudt 2002). In Oltepesi, this shift in approaches to development

was apparent: NGOs, micro-finance institutions and the Kenyan state all encouraged Maasai women to learn new skills, create women's groups and claim their rights to resources through various programs and initiatives. As I observed, Maasai women, at times, readily adopted the messages that were originally introduced to them through development projects; for instance, they frequently identified certain material and social goods, such as tin houses, as mentioned by Mabe above, as signs of 'improvement.' In other cases, however, Maasai women were highly critical of development projects and initiatives, particularly the subdivision of land that had previously been held communally. For example, they often described certain places and people as being 'too developed.' Being too developed meant that an individual or community no longer adhered to certain social and cultural norms that Maasai women valued, such as practicing pastoralism, sharing resources and living communally in the same homestead. These norms were connected to traditional forms of exchange, subsistence and living in a community, yet were often the target of development interventions as needing to change.

In using idioms of 'development' to assign value to both new and old social and cultural norms, Maasai women subjectively defined the term. Elderly women, for example, had different understandings of development than younger women who were more formally educated. Their differences of opinion sometimes caused debate, but more often Maasai women did not rigidly subscribe to a single definition of what counted as being associated with development. Instead, they used the term regularly in daily conversation as a way of describing positive aspects of their lives. Moreover, despite having, at times, different understandings of 'development,' Maasai women shared a common desire and commitment to act on their understandings of development and to 'improve' their families' living conditions. To do so, Maasai women participated in certain development projects that were led by external development organizations, however, they did not gain power or resources by

engaging with these actors. In response, Maasai women turned to their social ties to one another in order to access resources and to gain control over the terms and conditions through which they participated in development activities. These social ties were rooted in a set of moral and social norms built on trust and mutual responsibility that sharply contrasted with the lack of power they held when interacting with both Maasai men and representatives of development organizations. This dissertation describes the various ways in which Maasai women used these social ties to access power and resources, particularly money, in their efforts to improve their lives. I argue that Maasai women, in doing so, were creating the very social conditions for how development processes unfolded in their communities in ways that made development work for themselves and their families.

1.2 Contributions to Scholarship

1.2.1 Participating in Development: Aspirations and Social Networks

By describing how Maasai women sought to improve their lives by leveraging their social ties to one another, I contribute to anthropological studies of development by shifting the focus away from the state as the dominant agent of modernization and towards the actions of individuals who are typically depicted as the targets and subjects of development interventions. Anthropologists have described development as being led, instead, by the state and international organizations, such as the World Bank, as part of a broader agenda to so-called modernize individuals and communities through a series of interventions. These interventions seek to transform the social, economic and cultural conditions of people's lives in order to move them along a linear continuum towards further economic growth and social change that reflects Western norms. Since the 1990s, many studies of development in anthropology have attempted to understand the processes and consequences of these interventions and initiatives by examining the power dynamics involved in development

encounters. Many of these studies have done so by drawing on Foucauldian notions of diffuse and disciplinary power (Agrawal 2005; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990; Li 2007).

For example, James Ferguson (1990) argues in his widely cited reading of development as an ‘Anti-Politics Machine’ that development turns political issues into technical problems. The projects implemented to resolve these technical problems rarely achieve their stated goals, but nevertheless create secondary affects. Ferguson makes this argument by drawing on the example of a rural development project in Lesotho that was implemented by the state and supported by the World Bank and Canadian government. While its stated goal was to resolve the problem of poverty through market interventions, this project ended up expanding state bureaucracies and control over people and places in rural areas of Lesotho, while also accentuating inequalities in rural areas. Guided by this example, Ferguson asks anthropologists to consider the impact of development projects that fall outside of a development project’s stated objectives, which points to the intersection between state power and development. However, in his description of development as an ‘Anti-Politics Machine,’ Ferguson does not fully consider how people in rural Lesotho respond to development projects by using forms of power at their disposal. As a result, the state and international development organizations in his account of development are the main drivers of social and political change.

Anthropologists have similarly looked at how development affects the everyday behaviours of ‘development subjects’ (Agrawal 2005; Biza et al. 2021; Li 2007). Arjun Agarwal (2005), for example, draws on Foucault’s concept of the self-governance to analyze dramatic shifts in conservation politics in forest regions of Kumaon in India since the mid-19th century. He explores why community members govern, regulate and protect forests after a history of violently protesting conservation initiatives implemented by the colonial and post-colonial state. He uses the term ‘environmentality’ to highlight the connection between

changing modes of governance and the ‘conduct of conduct’ of environmental subjects over time. The implementation of Forest Council Rules by the colonial government in 1931, as he explains, marked a distinct shift in ‘governance-from-a-distance’ to ‘intimate governance.’ Intimate governance provided communities the opportunity to create village councils to manage their forests. Having community members play this role marked a shift in their relationships to the natural environment. While once an object that was meant for human use, the forest came to be viewed by residents as in need of protection. Through this example, Agrawal highlights how local forest residents participate in a development project through local institutions, yet in so doing frames their actions as a reflection of and response to state power. As a result, their agency is portrayed as restricted to the parameters of encompassment within a larger, state project that evolved overtime.

As Friedman (2012) describes, development is not a hegemonic encounter between development ‘experts’ and the so-called recipients of programs. Rather, development processes often unfold through a dialectical conversation and mutual engagement between development experts and so-called recipients of interventions. Olivier de Sardan (2005: 3) also explains development as being a ‘configuration’ – that is, “a complex set of institutions, flows and actors, for whom development constitutes a resource, a profession, a market, a stake, or a strategy.” Both Friedman (2012) and Olivier de Sardan (2005) suggest that anthropological understandings of development should consider how development subjects – as in the individuals targeted by development interventions – negotiate this configuration to their own ends. Adopting this approach can help illuminate how these individuals, who are often poor, people of colour, rural and marginalized even within their countries, become active agents in development processes. They both influence the course of development projects, including a project’s failure, but also how social and economic transformations and changes occur in their communities. This dissertation seeks to address this call for research

by looking at how Maasai women acted on their aspirations for development both within and outside of governmental control. I do so by drawing on literature throughout the dissertation that considers how social actors reconfigure and redefine development in their efforts to move towards more hopeful futures.

One study that informs my perspective and deserves specific mention here is Arjun Appadurai's (2004) discussion of the poor's 'capacity to aspire.' As he describes, residents of Mumbai's informal settlements create Homegrown savings groups that allow them to access financial capital to build infrastructure in their communities, such as houses. These grassroots financial institutions are also networked with institutions across the world in order to secure material resources and to gain political clout within the Indian state. Appadurai considers local residents' efforts to improve their communities as representative of their 'capacity to aspire.' The aspirations of individuals that emerge from this capacity, as Appadurai (2004) describes them, are formed collectively in the 'thick of social life' through a 'dense combination of nodes and pathways' that connect present actions to an imagined future. To understand aspirations as a 'cultural capacity,' Appadurai draws on Sen's (1985) notion of 'capabilities' and Douglas and Isherwood's (1996) discussion of tastes, wants and preferences as being culturally shared. Appadurai's notion of aspirations as a 'cultural capacity' allows for an understanding of social practice as being driven by the future hopes and wants of social actors, rather than determined by institutions of governance.

Another work that informs my thinking about Maasai women's efforts to improve their lives and consequently the dissertation as a whole is Green et al.'s (2012) study on hometown associations. These associations are led by women who are from four rural areas in Tanzania and Cameroon, but who now live in urban centers in these countries and in Britain. As the authors outline in their discussion of development and futurity, these associations vary in size and how they operate, including how regularly they meet, but tend to be small and self-led by

members who have limited incomes. Nevertheless, they work to save, budget and leverage money towards their future goals through a number of disciplinary practices around money, including budgeting and engaging in a ‘ritual’ of saving money daily. These financial practices, as the authors explain, are not dissimilar to how international development institutions engage in planning, where budgeting, for example, is a common instrument for future-making in development projects. However, rather than viewing these members’ social practices around money as being an extension of power and control by a development organization, Green et al. (2012) discuss their agency as being reflective of their capacity to aspire. As the authors explain, homegrown associations create change that is driven by the future-making strategies of their members, particularly around money. Green et al. view these efforts as being indicative of how people imagine and act on their own futures through their ‘aspirational networks’ and different forms of social support.

I draw on both Appadurai (2004) and Green et. al’s (2012) understanding of aspirations and social practice when looking at Maasai women’s efforts to act on their futures, premised on improvement, through their social ties to one another. These social ties, as I contend, actively reconfigured the terms of how development unfolded in Oltepesi. Rather than being driven exclusively by an external organization, development in Oltepesi was also initiated by Maasai women.

1.2.2 Gender, Social Change and Power among Pastoral Women

In exploring Maasai women’s social ties to one another in the context of development interventions, this dissertation also builds on the literature on gender and social change in pastoral contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa. As research has shown, both state-building and development processes have altered social institutions, including the division and control of labour between women and men, property rights and customary legal proceedings in ways that negatively affect women’s rights (Ensminger 1992; Fratkin and Smith 1995; Hodgson

2001; Straight 2000). Hodgson (2001), for example, considers existing gender inequalities in Maasai communities in Northern Tanzania to be the result of a series of historical processes. In the 19th century, colonial indirect rule consolidated and increased men's power, dividing the formerly complementary and interconnected responsibilities of Maasai men and women into hierarchical and spatially distinct, gendered 'domains/spheres.' Both colonial and post-colonial policies of monetization and commoditization further facilitated the disenfranchisement of women's rights to land and to livestock. Drawing on the example of a ten-year USAID sponsored project in Northern Tanzania in the 1970s, Hodgson also shows how men were targeted by post-colonial development interventions as livestock 'owners' and 'experts.' Maasai women, consequently, were largely excluded from resource ownership and management. One result of these combined factors, as Hodgson explains, was the material disenfranchisement and conceptual devaluation of Maasai women, both as pastoralists and as women.

Aud Talle's (1988) book 'Women at a Loss' also focuses on the inequalities between Maasai women and men in Kenya that have become exacerbated by the commodification of pastoral resources. One of Talle's key theses is that women have lost the ability to control the livestock that were once attached to their houses as a result of the transition to market-exchange, which were associated with state-building and development processes. As she outlines, in the 19th century, Maasai women had the same possibilities as men to participate in regional and global trade networks. However, the transition from a barter to market economy since the 1900s profoundly diminished women's economic clout, and thereby circumscribed their political and social influence, particularly compared to men. Maasai women also became less involved in decisions over livestock and later land as a result of the state's failure to recognize their rights both as pastoralists and as women. Prior to the early 1900s, for example, livestock were inherited by male children through a woman's house, which Talle

theorizes as being an economic institution that Maasai women control. With the increasing sale of livestock for money during the 20th century, however, Maasai men expanded their decision-making authority over resources that were once allocated to women's houses, thereby alienating them from their rights over cattle and livestock products that they once controlled. Hodgson and Talle share the same understanding that state-building and development processes negatively affecting Maasai women's economic and social power, over time leading to the gender inequalities one finds today in Maasai communities.

Hodgson's (2001) and Talle's (1988) research highlights the structural inequalities that Maasai women face in their households and communities over material and cultural resources. More recent research, however, describes the diverse forms of power that Maasai women have at their disposal to mitigate these inequalities, and which I observed in Oltepesi (Hodgson 2005, 2001; Hutchinson 2000; Straight 2007, 2002, 2000). For example, Hodgson's (2005) more recent book explores Maasai women's participation in Christian Churches. She eschews androcentric and essentialist representations of the Maasai to explore the gender differences in customary Maasai religious practices, approaches to missionization and willingness to participate in Christianity, specifically Catholicism. She found that Maasai women, compared to men, were far more receptive to participating in organized religion in Northern Tanzania where missionaries have worked to convert the Maasai to Catholicism since the 19th century. In explaining why Maasai women have so eagerly joined the church, Hodgson describes their participation as an extension of their traditional roles as spiritual and moral leaders in the community. She also notes that church activity provides Maasai women with an alternative female community outside of men's influence and control. Maasai women, in short, have used the church as a platform to criticize men and to exercise spiritual and moral clout.

In addition to Hodgson's more recent research, studies have also elucidated how pastoral women, within their cultural frameworks, negotiate the shifting economic and social conditions of their lives in their efforts to earn an income (Homewood 2008a; Straight 2000). Pastoral women in East Africa have worked to earn an income by participating in the tourism economy and development projects and by engaging in a number of entrepreneurial pursuits, such as selling beadwork (Fratkin and Smith 1995; Homewood 2008; Straight 2002). Straight (2000) describes, for example, how Samburu women in Northern Kenya, who share many cultural and linguistic similarities to Maasai communities, have increasingly participated in development projects that over the past 30 years have encouraged them to expand their income earning activities through the market economy. Through their engagement with these projects, Samburu women have begun to describe their income-earning pursuits through the idiom of *maendeleo*, not unlike what I observed among Maasai women in Oltepesi. Straight interprets this change to the meaning women ascribe to their work as signaling their ability to reconfigure the terms of development through their negotiations with the realities of power, capital and nation-building.

While highlighting the agency and power of pastoral women in their responses to social and economic change, these studies do not explicitly focus on pastoral women's social ties to one another. As Dahl (1987: 167) stressed in her review of the scholarship on pastoral women over three decades ago: "The networking of women, working in patterns of daily cooperation with other women, is as important to social cohesion and to the recreation of social life as the male-dominated, politico-jural sphere." The centrality of women's networks to their lives and the lives of their pastoral communities has long been recognized by scholars, making the dearth of academic research on the topic all the more conspicuous.¹ I seek to address this gap

¹ Pastoral women's social ties have been, to some degree, explored by studies that re-visited Evans Pritchard's famous discussion of Nuer kinship. For example, Gough (1971) describes

in research by showing how Maasai women drew on their social ties to one another to address the inequalities they faced with men and in development processes that aimed to better their lives. These social ties, I contend, provided them with resources, particularly money, and the ability to act on their aspirations for development.

1.2.3 The Pragmatics of Money

In order to understand money in the context of Maasai women's lives, I draw on what Maurer (2006) describes as a 'pragmatic' approach to studying money. This approach is guided by his anthropological review of money, where he surveys the many different qualities of money that are accounted for in anthropological discussions of the topic. He notes that while anthropology has contributed to finely grained, historized accounts of the impact of modern money, many accounts of cash in different cultural contexts share the same common narrative: money is often depicted as 'baaaaaad' – that is, as having a dehumanizing and homogenizing effect on social and cultural life. In discussing this narrative, Maurer draws on the analogy presented in the "Great Transformation" postulated by Polanyi (1944), wherein monetary incursions into so-called traditional societies disrupt and replace socially embedded goods and objects. Money, from this perspective, enters into traditional economies as a dis-embedded currency that potentially corrupts social and economic norms. Maurer argues that anthropologists should shift their focus from looking at what money *is* to looking at what money *does*. This requires moving away from exploring the meaning of cash to considering the trajectories, flows and circuits of money in different social contexts.

the importance of a Nuer woman's hearth in forging social relationships. Rather than being places where people are simply fed, hearths are locales according to Gough where women have the power to create their own social and political affiliations. Hutchinson (2008) also discusses serving food among Nuer women as a means of forging 'relatedness.' Unlike these studies, however, I concentrate on the networks Maasai women created that sometimes fell outside what was defined as kinship.

One study that exemplifies Maurer's critique is Comaroff and Comaroff's (1990) description of the meaning of money among the Tswana in Botswana. Money, as the authors describe, has replaced cattle as the main source of income as a result of state-building processes of colonial and Apartheid rule. These related processes have forced Tswana men to participate in the wage labour economy. While livestock remain the main symbol of wealth and source of value in Tswana communities despite a growing dependency of money, only a minuscule number of middle-class men could afford to purchase cattle: for the majority of community members, owning cattle "became the stuff of an idealized, bygone age" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1990: 209). Money in this context is viewed by the Tswana as being symbolic of the movement away from their traditional livelihood, which was once focused on raising cattle. Therefore, money was symbolic of their alienation from their customary livelihoods and sources of wealth.

This account of money highlights the continued value assigned to livestock despite incursions from the market economy, which I observed in Oltepesi where both Maasai women and men valued livestock (and livestock products) and land above money. However, by focusing on money as a symbol of change, the Comaroffs (1990) do not reveal how money can be valued differently, depending on the context in which it is exchanged. Sharon Hutchinson's (1996: 73) study of social change among the Nuer in Southern Sudan, who, unlike the Tswana, still depend on livestock as their main source of source of income, shows how objects are not "things in themselves." Instead, both money and livestock are relationally defined and imbued with different values depending on the context in which they are received and exchanged. As she writes, the Nuer 'cattlelize' money by creating different categories of wealth. The four main categories are: the "cattle of girls," the "money of cattle," the "cattle of money" and the "money of work." These different categories of wealth have become convertible, but not equivalent. For example, the "cattle of girls" cannot be exchanged for the

“money of work”, since cattle that is secured through bridewealth payments are barred from being sold. The inability to sell livestock secured through marriage is understood by Hutchinson as exemplifying the different hierarchies of wealth that exist in Nuer contexts where money is not valued compared to livestock. According to Nuer men and women, unlike cattle, money has ‘no blood’ – blood being the life force of social reproduction – and therefore cannot be used to build social bonds.

Similar to Hutchinson, James Ferguson (1992) highlights the continued importance of livestock in relation to money in Lesotho communities by discussing the cultural barriers placed on the sale of cattle. Through this discussion, he also highlights the generational and gender dynamics around money in Lesotho communities. As he describes, this cultural barrier provides elderly men with power over younger men, whose ability to earn money as migrant labourers does not provide them with cultural prestige in their communities. As one example of this, younger men still depend on older men to access cattle that can be used in bridewealth payments. Younger men, nevertheless, use the one-way cultural barrier against the sale of livestock to their advantage as well. As Ferguson describes, migrant labourers purchase cattle to gain financial and social security in their communities. Livestock purchased with money cannot be used to secure marriage, but nevertheless acts as a secure ‘retirement fund’ thanks to the cultural barriers placed on its sale. Furthermore, the physicality of livestock means that migrants maintain a visible presence in a community, which as Ferguson (1985: 663) states, is something that “a secret Maseru bank account could never do.” The association of livestock with male control, combined with the interdiction against the sale of cattle, means that Lesotho women are unable to access significant stores of wealth associated with their households. Women therefore make every attempt to break down the one-way barrier on selling cattle in order to access more perishable sources of wealth. As Ferguson (1985: 663) states:

Where men build up the mystique of livestock-owning, women tear it down; where men protect their stored assets for the future, women lay siege to them with claims for the present. It is not that women have no concern for the future, only that they are occupied most immediately with the real and often pressing needs of the present.

In describing the social dynamics around money and livestock across generations and between genders, Ferguson highlights the limits of money for migrant men in providing them with wealth, security and social capital.

These accounts of money, in varied ways, reflect some of my observations in Oltepesi, where money had multiple meanings depending on the context it was used and where women had less control over livestock than they did over cash. However, they do not fully capture the social dynamics around money that existed between Maasai women who materialized money through their labour and then saved and accessed money in women's groups. These groups had anywhere between four to 20 members who came together to save and access cash in the form of credit, not unlike the groups mentioned above in Green et al.'s (2012) discussion of development. This dissertation follows the 'social life' (Appadurai 1986) of money both within and outside of these groups to show how women used cash as a means to accumulate wealth, expand their social ties to one another and act on their development aspirations. Money was, as I contend, an important commodity that allowed Maasai women to gain autonomy from Maasai men and development professionals who had the power to define how they participated in development.

1.3 Oltepesi

Oltepesi is located in Kajiado County, which was formally Kajiado North District until 2010 when the Kenyan Constitution was changed to create a county government system

throughout the country.² The environment in Oltepesi is semi-arid with acacia trees and bushes that dot the landscape. The environment there was hot and dry throughout most of the year, except during two rainy seasons that allowed green grasses to grow, making it unsuitable for agricultural production. The entire area of Oltepesi was rural, with only a handful of small shops that mainly lined the tarmac road that led from Kiserian, 50 Km north of Oltepesi, the closest town, to the border with Tanzania in the south. There was a bustling livestock market and auction in Kiserian, along with small shops, cafes and a vibrant open-air market where people sold household goods and agricultural products. Many Maasai men travelled to Kiserian at least weekly, but sometimes daily, in order to socialize, earn money through the livestock auction and spend money on a variety of different goods. Maasai women also frequently visited Kiserian, albeit far less so than men.

The majority of people who lived in Oltepesi were Maasai pastoralists who historically managed large herds of cows, sheep and goats as their main source of income and subsistence. Families changed their previously migratory settlement patterns over time, however, particularly when the Loodariak Group Ranch, in which Oltepesi was located, was created in 1979. The group ranch, not unlike other group ranches in Southern Kenya, was established in order to encourage residents of the ranch to settle and intensify livestock production. When land within the group ranch became subdivided in the late 1980s, many residents of Oltepesi were left landless as a result of land being transferred to outsiders. This

² The county system of government aimed to de-centralize power at the county level, thereby replacing district level administrative institutions. During the time of my research in Kenya, county governments were still being created and formed. Therefore, this administrative restructuring had little effect on development plans and state interventions that would have affected Maasai women. Nevertheless, in this dissertation, I draw on both the terms ‘county’ and ‘district’ to refer to the government administrative boundaries and institutions in order to reflect the hybrid system of governance that existed in Oltepesi. I often refer to Kajiado County as a ‘county’ when discussing official laws and policies, yet use the term district officials when referring to government representatives, since this is how the individuals were referred to by Maasai men and women in Oltepesi.

was particularly the case for Maasai women, whose names were not even initially included in the list of individuals eligible for claiming rights to land. As a result, they were excluded from being able to legally manage or own land in their communities.

Like families in many areas throughout Southern Kenya where group ranches were established, people settled in Oltepesi in the late 1970s and early 1980s induced by the perceived benefits of living in one place year-round. These benefits included access to formal education, land rights and public services. In settling year-round, families continued to rely on pastoralism as their main source of income, and migrated their cows, sheep and goats during the dry season. In addition to this more traditional work, men also earned cash by working as wage labourers and security guards in Nairobi or by buying, fattening and selling livestock in Kiserian. Maasai women had different strategies for earning cash such as selling firewood, beadwork and their labour close to their homes, which I describe further in Chapter One of this dissertation.

In Oltepesi, I lived with a Maasai family in a small village³ of around 400 people, where the residents lived in close proximity to a tarmac road that connected the community to other areas villages and towns. Like in other villages, this village had a school, two churches, a small shop (*duka*) and two very small dams that were built in the 1990s. Most families in the village sent their children to primary school and attended one of the two different Christian churches. While not all Maasai men attended church, almost every woman I met in Oltepesi were devoutly Christian. This gender dynamic is extensively captured by Hodgson (2005) in her discussion of Christianity in Maasai communities in Tanzania. Like in Tanzania, in Kenya church teachings had a significant influence on women's understandings of so-called proper family life, their diets and a number of other issues that this dissertation

³ I purposely do not name the village in this dissertation in order to ensure confidentiality with the individuals discussed in this dissertation.

discusses. For example, women formed ‘church groups’ that they organised in order to discuss religious teachings. They did not use these groups, however, to circulate, save and lend money to one another in idioms of development, which is why I do not discuss them in this dissertation. Through my experiences living with family and in a small village in Oltepesi, I was able to capture the detailed dynamics around gender, social change, development and money that this dissertation describes in depth.

1.4 Methods

The field research for this was carried out during two longer periods and one shorter period of research in Oltepesi: from July 2010-June 2011 and September-December 2012, a total of 15 months. I also conducted follow-up research for one week in October 2014. I drew on participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, household inventories and financial diaries to explore topics related to development, social change, women’s groups, gender relations, social networks and money. Two research assistants worked with me at different periods to explore these topics. In the initial six weeks I was in Oltepesi, I worked with a man named Tino who was 40 years old. He introduced me to community leaders (who were often men), in order to gain permission to do research. Participant observation with him allowed me to better understand the gender dynamics between women and men in Maasai communities, compared to if I had just worked with women. With him, I visited livestock auctions in Kiserian, drank tea at cafés in town and spent time socializing with his friends, often by a small shop (*duka*) on the side of the road in Oltepesi in the early evenings. By spending time with Tino in his social milieu, I was also able to gain a sense of the social boundaries that were maintained between Maasai men and women through the norms of respect (*enkanyit*).

Respect is the over-arching principle that structured all social interactions in Maasai communities. Learning the norms of respect was important for participating in daily life. From a very young age, Maasai girls and boys were taught how to act respectfully by adopting a number of habitual practices that directed their ways of greeting and interacting with others, including ways of speaking and eating. These ways of showing respect were structured along gender and generational lines that made it inappropriate for women, particularly when in groups, to socialize at length with men. Given my research interests, I started working with Namunyak, a woman who was 24 years old and the mother of an eight-month-old daughter at the time of my initial field research. My research drastically changed by working more closely with her. Participant observation with Namunyak involved, for example, visiting a woman's house in the morning to drink tea, then later travelling to gather water, firewood, grass and to attend a meeting for a women's groups. I also followed women in their efforts to earn cash, which largely involved re-purposing their daily labour into profitable activities.

Understanding Maasai women's social networks and access to resources was a critical focus of the methods that I applied during my research. Drawing on participant observation, but also what Appadurai (1986) calls 'methodological fetishism', I looked at the circulation of goods that Maasai women controlled in their households. To do so, I kept 'financial diaries' with four women, including Lankenua with whom I lived, Mabe, Nola and Nataana. I chose to work with Lankenua, Nola, Mabe and Nataana because they lived in households with different levels of wealth and different means of generating an income that reflected the variations in Maasai women's economic circumstances in Oltepesi. I borrowed the idea of keeping 'diaries' with them from Collins's et al. (2009) work on the "Portfolios of the Poor," where financial diaries were used to track, penny-by-penny, how specific households managed their money and made decisions of how to afford a home, schooling for children

and food for daily subsistence, for example. The authors found that families employed financial tools to manage their limited means, including relying on informal networks and family ties to access resources.

With these four women, I tracked the inflow and outflow of goods from their houses by visiting them twice a week to record what they did during the day and to whom they lent and from whom they borrowed goods. Unlike a survey, questionnaire or interview, which asked Maasai women to abstract answers from their daily lives, the journal entries required Lankenua, Nola, Mabe and Nataana to recount – almost in real time – what they did and whom they interacted with on a day-to-day basis. This approach to capturing social networks helped to correct what Bourdieu (1977) calls ‘synoptic illusions’ that result from research that freezes dynamic interactions into diagrammatic representations of social life. Moreover, in meeting with Lankenua, Nola, Mabe and Nataana regularly, I was drawn into dozens of conversations with them about how they managed their household resources in relation to their social obligations to one another. These conversations critically informed my observations of women’s groups and the daily exchanges of food, money and labour that I had observed by participating in their daily routines.

I also participated in many dozens of meetings for women’s groups that Maasai women attended regularly in Oltepesi as part of their daily and weekly routines. To understand the dynamics of these groups, I administered questionnaires with 20 members. These questionnaires asked Maasai women how many groups they participated in at once, how they managed their money both within and outside of these groups and their social networks of exchange. I also conducted household inventories with six Maasai women’s houses, which involved seeing whether the goods in their houses were purchased with the money that they earned and saved in groups or the items they owned were simply given to them as gifts. These varied methods helped me to understanding the social life of money in

women's groups, but also how they were connected to Maasai women's changing material realities.

I also conducted many dozens of interviews with women and men in Oltepesi, neighbouring areas and in Nairobi, in order to understand the power dynamics of development initiatives that affected Maasai women's lives. In Oltepesi, I interviewed many women of different ages and men to understand their experiences of and perspective on development interventions that specifically aimed to improve women's lives over time. I also interviewed employees of local and national NGOs, micro-finance institutions and humanitarian aid organizations in Oltepesi in order to learn about their programs. I sometimes followed them on their daily, work routines, such as their monitoring and evaluation visits to projects, allowing me to gain insights into some of the ideological, bureaucratic and institutional norms of development interventions that targeted Maasai women. To better understand the history of these norms, I conducted archival research in the Kenyan National Archives for one week, where I looked at development interventions that specifically focused on Maasai women in Kenya during the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Language was an important research issue that sometimes remained a challenge until the end of my fieldwork. Before moving to Oltepesi in September 2010, I had become conversant in Swahili and learned key words and phrases in Maa, but I was not able to fully communicate in the language. With the help of Tino and Namunyak, I conducted interviews in both Swahili and Maa, and then translated and transcribed the interviews from Maa twice – once with Namunyak and once with a professional translator. In day-to-day conversations, I spoke Swahili. While I was able to carry-on conversations with most of the people I spoke to daily, my inability to speak Maa posed a challenge in women's groups where there were sometimes multiple conversations in Maa occurring at once. Namunyak and Lankenua helped to translate the conversations and goings-on in these meetings. I also recorded and transcribed

conversations in order to better understand the nuances of what was being discussed. While language posed a limitation, I am nevertheless confident in the soundness of the findings reported in this dissertation and the accuracy of details reported.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation has seven chapters in total, including the introduction and conclusion. In each of the chapters, I have tried to avoid generalizations that claim some sort of universal, women's experience by referring to the specific experiences of Maasai women and men. To do so, I have used pseudonyms throughout this dissertation that are in the form of Maa and Christian names. The selection of these names aims to reflect the diversity of ways people were referred to in Oltepesi.

Chapter two discusses a development intervention that Maasai women in Oltepesi described as having the greatest impact on their conceptualizations of themselves as agents of development. This intervention was led by Maendeleo Ya Wanawake (MYWO), which was an organization in Kenya that encouraged Kenyan women to create 'women's groups,' beginning in the 1950s, in idioms of development. In the 1980s, after becoming closely tied to the Kenyan state, MYWO began providing training programs to women in Oltepesi that encouraged them to learn new home-making skills and to advocate for their rights to resources by forming women's groups. Never before had a development project focused on Maasai women's social networks as being an avenue for improving their lives. However, participating in women's groups brought Maasai women into unequal relationships with Maasai men who controlled the terms and conditions under which they could secure money. Despite experiences of powerlessness in this project, Maasai women continued to form thousands of women's groups that were autonomously run by group members. These newer groups focused on saving and managing money, which, as I show, provided Maasai women

with the means to accumulate wealth independently of their husbands, the state and any development organization.

Chapter three focuses on the women's groups that Maasai women independently created and describes how they operated in Oltepesi within the wider financial landscape where banks, NGOs and micro-finance institutions provided them with similar financial services. In order to explain why most Maasai women did not participate in groups run by external organizations, I draw on the literature on debt in anthropology. In the context of women's groups, debt was a social and financial relationship that extended the number of social ties they had to one another across many households, communities and villages. By contrast, relationships of debt in groups that were run by micro-finance organizations were strictly financial, being managed by a number of regulatory rules and disciplinary norms that representatives (often men) of these organizations implemented. As a result, the power dynamics between individuals who ran these groups and Maasai women were unequal. Women's efforts to access cash and credit almost exclusively through women's groups, rather than through micro-finance institutions, allowed them to control the terms of their debts and define the ways in which they participated in development.

Chapter four focuses on the house as a material symbol of development that Maasai women wanted to purchase with their cash-savings. While I contend that Maasai women's desire for new houses was connected to their role and identities as home-builders in their communities, increasingly Maasai men also wanted to build these new homes with their income-earnings. Maasai men's interest in building new houses represented a shift in gender norms that provided Maasai women with power over their domestic spaces. However, in discussing the social and gender dynamics around both traditional and mabati houses, I show that the binaries between women/men, power/powerlessness do not hold when describing development in this context. Rather, men's interests in building these new houses reflected the

many different expressions of masculinity that existed in Maasai communities (Hodgson 1999). Whether and how men provided material resources to women was one of the many expressions of their masculinity, particularly their willingness to support Maasai women's desire for new houses. Money played a role in this process as being a medium of exchange that allowed men to explore new patterns of consumption that supported, rather than challenged, Maasai women's development goals.

Chapter five shifts the focus slightly towards food in order to further explore how Maasai women used their social ties to one another in order to access resources. Food security in Oltepesi was a major concern for Maasai women who managed their household's food supplies. Increasingly these supplies of food included agricultural products that were purchased with money, highlighting the growing intersection between food and money in pastoral communities in East Africa (Holtzman 2009). While being convertible, money and certain types of food were not interchangeable. Women created different commodity pathways (Appadurai 1986) for food by straddling moral and market forms of exchange. In doing so, they created and sustained social networks and ties that were activated to manage risk and insecurity both in the immediate present and long-term future. For both relatively poorer and wealthier women, connecting to one another through receiving and giving food contributed to sustaining the well-being of each other's families, which was essential to Maasai women's efforts to secure futures premised on improvement.

Chapter six explores Maasai women's efforts to claim their rights to land. Most Maasai women did not own land in Oltepesi, but many Maasai women nevertheless aspired to one day be land-owners. In 2010, after years of collective advocacy by feminist lawyers and women's rights organizations, women in Kenya gained stronger legal rights to land through the country's new constitution. Despite changes to the law, titling processes and efforts to claim land continued to entrench inequalities between Maasai women and men.

Representatives and civil servants from the state worked with men rather than women in land titling processes. Furthermore, securing legal land rights privileged a set of bureaucratic and legal processes that Maasai men could navigate more readily than Maasai women, thereby making it difficult for them to act independently in their efforts to secure land. Nevertheless, changes in the law spurred discussions and efforts between Maasai women, particularly in women's groups, over how to act on their aspirations to become land-owners. These discussions and nascent actions, combined with changes in the law, offered a possible pathway towards future changes defining who owns land.

Collectively, as the conclusion further outlines, these chapters make the case that development cannot be simply understood as an 'anti-politics machine' (Ferguson 1990) or as a form of governmental control (Agrawal 2005). By emphasizing the role government agents in creating and leading change, these critiques of development fail to fully capture the complexity of local transformations and social changes that occur as a result of people's efforts to improve their lives according to their cultural and social values. Without dismissing the powerful role that government agents played in development, this dissertation focuses on the initiatives that individuals and groups of people create for themselves to improve their lives through the example of Maasai women. By focusing on their efforts to act on their aspirations for development and not just the role of the state and external development institutions in Oltepesi, I show that many development initiatives were being led by Maasai women. This dissertation therefore contributes to anthropological discussions of development by highlighting how processes are being driven by local actors who have agency and the ability to improve their lives outside of state and development institutions and systems.

Chapter 2 – Women for Development: Women’s Groups in Oltepesi

2.1 ‘Before the time of development’

Namunyak and I sat inside a dark house that was vaguely lit by a dim, smoking fire with Nasa, a woman in her late seventies, who sat hunched over, stoking the fire with a stick. Her back was so weak that she sat at a ninety-degree angle with her head tilted towards the ground. Nasa pulled a plastic container towards her that was filled with rice, and then motioned to the other side of the fire where there were a few onions and tomatoes in a bowl for Namunyak and me to cut. Namunyak grabbed the onions and tomatoes, along with two plates and two knives. She handed me one of the plates and a dull knife to dice the tomatoes, while she cut the onions with a short sharp blade. We chopped the vegetables while Nasa continued to stoke the fire, by blowing on the charcoal embers through a metal pipe with as much force as she could muster. Smoke billowed from the edges of the fire into the small room and the fire gradually lit.

Nasa then placed a thin, metal pot over the fire, lumping spoons of vegetable lard that immediately sizzled. Like a choreographed dance, each of us took turns bending forward to add the tomatoes, onions, salt, rice and water to the pot. Nasa did not measure a thing. The smell of rice and onions escaped from under the lid. “It smells good,” I told her, explaining that I could not cook rice without a measuring the water and rice. She nodded her head in agreement and said: “I didn’t always know how to cook rice. The first time I cooked rice, I didn’t add any water. The rice turned into black and hard little pieces, like little stones, in the bottom of the pot.” Laughing Nasa continued by saying “that was before women came here to teach us how to cook foods like rice and chapatti. Before Maendeleo.”

In referring to the time ‘before Maendeleo’, Nasa was speaking specifically about a period of time prior to the 1990s when Maendeleo ya Wanawake (MYWO), meaning Women

for Development, encouraged Maasai women in Oltepesi to mobilize their social networks to create women's groups. MYWO started under the colonial government's Department of Community Development and Rehabilitation (CDR) in the early 1950s with a mandate to promote "the advancement of Africa women" (Wipper 1975: 99). The groups that MYWO encouraged Kenyan women to create offered a platform to teach them new skills on a variety of topics related to home-making, ranging from cooking, cleaning, income-generation and child-care. Kenyan women also used these groups to collectively articulate and advocate for their rights to resources and public services, particularly after 1963 when Kenya became independent from British colonial rule.

MYWO only later encouraged Maasai women in Oltepesi to form groups in the 1990s, when MYWO began working very closely with the Kenyan state, then led by Daniel Arap Moi (Aubrey 1997). The close connection between MYWO and Moi's government affected how women's groups operated in Oltepesi. Originally, these had between 30 to 40 members who came together to learn new skills, like cooking, as Nasa's comments suggests. Maasai women were also encouraged to advocate for resource rights, particularly land, but also access to schools for their children and healthcare centers at community events and political rallies. However, the success of these groups in accessing resources depended on the decisions of Maasai men, who acted as intermediaries between women's groups and the state. These men did not have women's rights and gender equality as their primary objective when engaging with women's groups. As a result, only some Maasai women in Oltepesi received any direct material benefits from participating in groups.

Maasai women created groups that operated independently from MYWO, beginning in the early 1990s. These newer women's groups in Oltepesi were Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs). ROSCAs exist globally and are meant to help members save and access cash (Burman 1995; Burman and Lembete 1995; Geertz 1962). Members save

money by giving a certain amount of money each week to the host of a group meeting, known as the ‘merry-go-round.’ Each member takes turns (rotates) hosting the group’s meeting so that everyone in the group receives the same amount of money over time. ROSCAs also have money reserved for credit, which members borrow and then return with a small amount of interest.

In looking at the trajectory of Maasai women’s participation in these two different types of groups, I rely on a Bebbington’s (2000) understanding of development as being an encounter that is determined by the material interests of development subjects. His understanding of development as being an encounter differs from anthropological theories of development as being driven by the state’s efforts to impose plans on populations of people (Ferguson 1990; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Li 2007). As Bebbington contends, individuals who are subjected to development interventions strategically adopt and reject certain aspects of projects according to their desire to control their livelihoods and their means of earning an income. In doing so, the so-called recipients of projects change the course of development interventions in their local contexts. This understanding of development is helpful to explaining the dynamics of women’s groups in Oltepesi. MYWO groups introduced Maasai women to the idea that by forming groups, they could secure resources. Maasai women took this idea forward to create ROSCAs, which operated autonomously from any external organization. In doing so, Maasai women created a field of development where they had greater control over their efforts to improve their lives.

2.2 Mobilizing Women for Development: State-building in Kenya

Encouraging women to form groups⁴ in idioms of development was central to state and nation building in Kenya, beginning in the 1950s (Aubrey 1997; Wipper 1975). During this time, MYWO was formed by British women who were settlers, the wives of administrators, missionaries and technical advisors. Women from British high society, including the wives of Lords and Governors, also supported the MYWO. As Wipper (1975: 100) notes, these women felt it was their duty to improve the lives of so-called “backward people.” To quote a public address by the president of the East African’s Women’s League: “Care for the backward people is still an outstanding feature of our lives and work...Throughout the Colony in almost every branch our members are working for the Africans, particularly the women and children” (Wipper 1975:100). Women’s groups were an avenue for MYWO to provide African women with so-called forms of ‘care’ by, to quote MYWO’s original constitution “bringing women together, encouraging neighborliness and cooperation and education” (in Aubrey 1997: 47).

The forms of care that MYWO originally offered to Kenyan women were training programs that were saturated with British bourgeois ideals. For example, MYWO groups were first modeled after English tea clubs. In these clubs, Kenyan women were instructed on how to serve and host English high tea (Aubrey 1997). Quickly, however, MYWO groups covered a broader range of topics that addressed diet, health and hygiene and child-care, but also entrepreneurship, traditional craftsmanship, women’s literacy and agriculture. The list below, taken from a MYWO leaflet in the 1950s, describes MYWO’s activities for weekly meetings over a three-month period (in Wipper 1975:100):

1. bathing a baby
2. health and hygiene in the home
3. agriculture – rotation of crops

⁴ MYWO referred to women’s groups as ‘clubs.’ Maasai women in Oltepesi referred to these organizations as groups, so this dissertation draws on this term for the sake of consistency.

4. children's play, training in character building
5. clothing – choice of suitable clothes for climate, etc.
6. how to build a mud stove (if the women have their own house)
7. child welfare
8. hygiene and health in the home
9. recipes or cooking demonstration
10. agriculture – compost and compost pits
11. handwork or needlework demonstration
12. tea party and concert
13. talk on current affairs
14. literacy classes should be held in addition to the club meeting

As the list details, Kenyan women were trained on many, diverse topics, including how to do needlework, but also on how to compost, rotate crops and build mud stoves. MYWO also taught literacy and entrepreneurship classes and began producing a monthly newspaper that was translated into four languages – Swahili, Kikuyu, Kamba and Luo - with a distribution of 23,000 copies by 1956 (Wipper 1975). The idea behind these groups was that by working together, Kenyan women could learn new skills, secure resources and become politically engaged in local and national politics.

Kenyan women enthusiastically joined these groups. In 1952, there were only 172 groups in Kenya and by 1954 there were more than 300 groups with 37,000 members (Wipper 1975). As the 1954 annual report of the Federation of Social Services stated: “The work has gained great momentum to an extent undreamed of by many and at present is as much as we can do to keep pace – indeed in some places, we cannot keep pace with the number of villages who wish to start MYW[O] groups” (in Wipper 1975: 101). Indeed, only six months later in 1955, there were 602 groups who hosted 40,690 members. To quote Nancy Shepard, who led MYW[O] in the 1950s (in Wipper 1975: 101): “There are at least nine clubs going well in this area [Central Nyanza], all of which have a trained woman or girl in charge. Some take up to three or four clubs a week in their location, travelling by bicycle up to distances of 12 miles.” As this quote details, Kenyan women eagerly created and

participated in women's groups, often taking their own initiative to form these associations in their communities.

As more Kenyan women became involved with MYWO, the relationship between the organization and the colonial state also changed. By 1961, MYWO became staffed by Kenyan women who voted out the leaders of the organization who were British (Aubrey 1997). Phoebe Asiyo replaced Nancy Shepard, for example. As Asiyo described, Kenyan women joined MYWO with the intention of eventually leading the organization (in Aubrey 1997: 52):

When I joined Maendeleo in 1956, it was after fruitless efforts to set up our own indigenous African controlled national women's organization. We failed because of lack of woman power and financial problems. Still when we joined Maendeleo, our clear intention was to take over its leadership gradually because as African women, we understood our problems better. Things like queen cake baking and other European dishes which provided the bulk of Maendeleo clubs' syllabus were not the answers to our problems. African children still had less than enough to eat.

In response to this shift in leadership and agenda, the colonial government broke off ties to the organization by no longer allowing MYWO staff to use government office buildings and by withdrawing funding to support their work (Aubrey 1997).

After Kenya's independence in 1963, MYWO continued to operate separately from newly elected, President Jomo Kenyatta's government, but nevertheless supported government campaigns to promote development in Kenya. During this time, President Jomo Kenyatta initiated a nation-building strategy under the slogan *Haarambee*. Haraambee, meaning 'to push or pull together' in Swahili, was the official motto of newly independent Kenya. The government drew on this concept in order to encourage communities to work together to raise funds for a variety of local projects, mainly around education, which the state would support by pledging the start-up costs. MYWO fit within this movement as the

largest network of self-led groups in the country that operated thousands of groups in local communities. As Kenyatta (in Wipper 1975: 111) stated: “every encouragement will be given Maendeleo ya Wanawake and to voluntary bodies generally to ensure that our women participate fully and carry out the vital task which can be theirs.”

The leadership of MYWO’s encouraged MYWO groups in rural areas to cooperate with the government after independence (Aubrey 1997). Women’s groups visibly supported the Kenyatta government by dancing at political rallies and *harambee* fundraising events, turning their women’s groups into dance troupes in order to express their political affiliations (Brownhill 2009). MYWO’s leadership also supported the new government by participating in policy-making meetings and advising the state on how to deliver social services (Aubrey 1997). MYWO leaders hoped that by supporting the government, they would receive financial and logistical support from the state to expand MYWO’s operations. As Aubrey (1997) notes, however, the Kenyatta government failed to provide MYWO with the expected financial and administrative resources, choosing to instead support to men’s organizations in rural areas. MYWO continued to support the government nevertheless, but operated as an independent NGO.

The relationship between MYWO and the state become more formalized, yet again, from the mid-1970s onwards. At this time, governments, donors, international organizations and philanthropic institutions were adopting policies to support women in the Global South. MYWO’s work on women’s development and rights aligned with donor interests, leading to an influx of aid for the organization’s work. MYWO received financial support from international funders like OXFAM, the World Bank, USAID, NORAD and numerous private foundations in the 1970s and 1980s, which affected MYWO’s growth (Aubrey 1997). Some of these donors provided funding for large-scale programs on maternal health, nutrition, income generation and women’s leadership. In order to implement these programs at scale,

MYWO formed partnerships with relevant government ministries. As Aubrey (1997) describes, some of these partnerships were originally informal, often involving working with government staff or using regional offices. However, by 1987 MYWO became very closely tied to the central government, led then by President Daniel Arab Moi and his party - Kanu.

Moi ran a single party state for 24 years by dismantling democratic processes and civic debate. His government also began controlling MYWO's operations, leadership, funding and agenda in order to access donor aid and foreign support, beginning in the late 1980s. MYWO, in turn, began implementing a significant number of development programs for women that were available at that time in coordination with government officials and civil servants (Wipper 1975). The close connection between MYWO and Moi's government was clear in how these groups operated in Oltepesi, where groups were formed to both promote women's development and to support local political campaigns.

Groups in Oltepesi were, in part, leveraged by Maasai men to support Moi's political campaigns in response to changes in national politics. In the early 1990s, Moi was campaigning for re-election in 1992. This campaign was the result of pressure placed on his government both internally and from foreign heads of state for failing to follow by democratic norms and ideals. Maasai men, with the support of MYWO, mobilized women's groups to initially support Dr. George Saitoti's re-election. Saitoti was the MP for the area between 1988 and 2007 and Kenya's Vice President for 13 years, between 1989-2002. Part of his re-election strategy was to highlight his purported dual heritage as a Kikuyu and Maasai man (Galaty 2005). Having Maasai communities, including Maasai women, visibly support him through public performances and by attending rallies was critical to securing votes from minority groups in his constituency. Maasai men, including members of the previous Loodariak group ranch committee, worked with MYWO to form women's groups in Oltepesi in order to support the central government's political interests. These men controlled the

types of material resources that women's groups could access and control, thereby extenuating rather than correcting existing gender inequalities that MYWO sought to correct.

2.3 Participating in Development: Gender, Power and Autonomy

In Kenya, participating in development through self-help groups, most significantly through MYWO and the Harambee movement, formed part of the fabric of nation-building and development after independence in 1963 (Hill 1991; Moskowitz 2019; Thomas-Slayter 1985). As the example of MYWO shows, however, the degree to which development was self-led and directed by and for Kenyan women depended, in part, on the autonomy of the organization. As Molyneux (2001: 6) defines, an autonomous organization is when “women organize on the basis of self-activity, set their own goals and decide their own forms of organization and forms of struggle.” She continues by describing how operating autonomously means not being tied to the wills or demands of external institutions, including other political agencies. Drawing on this definition of autonomy, one can see that MYWO, while initiating a number of self-led and self-help groups throughout the country, was not always operating as an autonomous organization. Instead, MYWO was connected and subjected to the wills of the Kenyan state to varying degrees throughout the organization's history, in turn, affecting the activities and political dynamics of MYWO women's groups.

Maasai women's response to the gender dynamics of MYWO groups highlights an important aspect of their broader engagements with development projects in Oltepesi. As mentioned in the introduction, Maasai women were both accepting and critical of the ideas and political dynamics of development initiatives that were introduced to them by external organizations. For example, Nasa's understanding of cooking rice was emblematic of how many Maasai women readily adopted and incorporated different ideals, practices, tastes and patterns of consumption into their daily routines in idioms of development that were first

introduced to them by organizations, like MYWO. However, these very same women also rejected many of the social and political dynamics that were involved in participating in programs. In both accepting and rejecting different ideas and dynamics introduced to them by MYWO, Maasai women formed part of a constellation of development actors that affected how the program of creating women's groups unfolded in Oltepesi. Specifically, women's material interest in controlling how they earned money led them to stop working with MYWO (and by extension Maasai men), even though MYWO continued to operate in Kenya.

Bebbington's (2000) approach to understanding development processes in the Andes helps to understand how Maasai women's economic interests affected the trajectory of women's groups in Oltepesi. He argues that development encounters are significantly affected by the recipients of development programs. Bebbington makes this point by describing a development project that attempts to transform small scale peasant farming into commercially viable agricultural production. Bebbington shows that there are very different livelihood strategies that individuals adopt in development processes in order to expand the degree of control over the social and economic development processes that unfold. The processes he refers to unfold at various levels: the body (how people move, dress and speak), the locality (ways of building houses or making money), and the microregion (forms of governance). As he (2000: 510) explains:

People encounter development from their mundane, daily concerns to build and improve their livelihoods, to build places they enjoy being in, to give meaning to their lives through these livelihoods and places, and to maintain and, as far as possible, to extend the degree to which they can exercise control over the conditions of existence. The encounter can sometimes seem like resistance, sometimes like accumulation, and sometimes like self-interest. But first and foremost, people encounter development in the process of trying to building something of their own.

He suggests the value of looking at peasant cultural politics — that is, the ways in which people make a living — when exploring development encounters between external organizations and so-called ‘development subjects.’ Individuals and groups who are subjected to development interventions in the Andes, he contends, are primarily focused on finding viable ways of guaranteeing the material basis of their livelihood and, at the same time, building something of their own. People pursue these dual concerns simultaneously when engaging in development processes. In doing so, as Bebbington 2000: 499) explains: “Poor” people may be discursively constructed as objects of development (or even as subaltern subjects of resistance), but they also act individually and collectively, creating their own room for maneuver within and beyond any constraints these categories may place on them.” In making this point, Bebbington highlights that development processes shift and change in ways that cannot be conceived straightforwardly as either resistance or accommodation by the targets of these interventions. Instead, rather than driven by ideological battles, individuals are mainly concerned with gaining material security and autonomy over the social and economic conditions of their lives. This can be done through a development project or independently from a development organization.

Bebbington’s (2000) understanding of development as an encounter determined, in part, by the material interests of recipients is particularly important to consider when looking at Maasai women’s engagements with MYWO. As I show below, their focus on earning money both changed and challenged the course of MYWO’s efforts to mobilize Maasai women in Oltepesi into groups. Maasai women withdrew their support from MYWO in Oltepesi after they did not receive payments for participating in political rallies as dancers. As a result, MYWO groups disbanded. Maasai women’s groups, however, were not solely determined by the efforts of MYWO in Oltepesi. Maasai women later began earning cash through their physical labour in order to participate in women’s groups that operated as

ROSCAs. While adding to their labour burden, earning money independently from Maasai men and from MYWO provided Maasai women with more control over the conditions in which they secured an income and acted on their aspirations for development.

2.4 Women's Groups in Oltepesi

From the perspective of many Maasai women I spoke to, MYWO groups were originally created to teach them about very broad ideas about development. For example, in describing these groups Nasa, the woman introduced in the opening vignette, discussed her connection to ideas of development:

I heard people talking about a meeting in Kajiado for women. The meeting was about maendeleo and it was organized to teach women how to cook food, clean, and how to earn money from beadwork...MYWO and politicians came to us and told us that women should form groups to help themselves. We were told that by forming groups, women could create their own development. So, they asked a few women to go to training sessions.

As Nasa's words suggest, Maasai women were encouraged to form groups in order to 'create their own development' based on the understanding that, once formalized, their social ties could provide an avenue to learn new skills and to 'help themselves.' Some of these skills involved ways of earning cash, like selling beadwork. However, earning money was not the primary activity of these groups. Instead, trainings focused on a broad set of issues, including for example, how to advocate for rights to resources like land. By covering a broad range of topics, groups were ambitious in their agendas and initiatives.

As many other women recounted to me, four women in Oltepesi helped to found MYWO groups. These four women were recruited by MYWO and male leaders to attend training sessions in Kajiado town, Ngong and Naivasha, which were regional urban centers in Southern Kenya. At these sessions, they were educated on how to organize groups of women.

I spoke to two of these women, Lena and Joy, who attended the trainings and later worked as volunteers for MYWO. Both women were in their early 70s and owned land. They were both unique compared to other Maasai women in the area because they ran their own households, had title deeds and did not have, for different reasons, husbands during much of their adult lives. Their lack of attachment to a male household head allowed them the freedom to travel and attend MYWO trainings.

Lena was the first of these two women to be recruited by MYWO during a time in her life when she was working closely with Maasai men as a member of a local school committee:

When schools were being built in this area, my daughter was in school. I became a member of the school committee. Some of the members of the committee were asked to travel to visit other schools and speak to other committees, sometimes with children. I was selected to travel with children and with the leaders. After that, a member of the [Loodariak] Group Ranch Committee asked if I would attend a meeting for MYWO.

As this quote suggests, Lena was recruited by local male leaders because of her existing involvement with a school committee. Joy was, in turn, recruited by Lena to help her form groups in Oltepesi. As Joy explained to me: “I knew Lena, we both sold beadwork in Kiserian. She was already involved with the government.... She told me that if I helped form a group with other women that we would be supported by the government, so we formed a group with 30 other women.” Joy lived in a community 15 kilometers north of Oltepesi, where she had a small plot of land to grow maize and to raise goats. Her main source of income, however, was from selling beadwork. To send her children to school she regularly travelled to Mombasa on the Kenyan coastline. There, she explained, “I would dress-up in all my beadwork in my traditional clothes and sell necklaces and belts to tourists.” The profits she earned from these trips paid for her children’s school fees, food during the dry season, seeds for planting maize and building materials for her home. Both Lena and Joy were

experienced entrepreneurs and had participated in local committees, making them suitable leaders for MYWO groups from the perspective of MYWO and Maasai men.

MYWO in Oltepesi, like in many other parts of Kenya as described above, provided Maasai women with a space to learn new skills and to share knowledge. For example, one of the first MYWO groups these two women created in the early 1990s was *Enkakenya* meaning “Morning.” This group was similar to other MYWO groups in the area, with 30 to 40 members. In explaining the significance of the group’s name, Joy said: “just like the morning, we saw these groups as providing women with a new beginning.” In Enkakenya, members were taught how to cook rice, Indian flat breads (*chapatti*), deep-fried dough (*mandazi*), along with rice, cabbage and beans - “everything we eat today” as Joy proudly explained. Maasai women also were instructed on hygiene and health, such as the importance of boiling milk and water against bacteria and how to wash clothing using plastic basins and soap. Groups like Enkakenya brought women into a social space where they understood themselves as agents of development, with the ability to learn and practice everyday activities that they saw as improving their lives.

According to Joy, while many of the members’ husbands were initially resistant to their wives participating in MYWO groups like Enkakenya, they eventually were supportive of their initiative because they saw these new skills as being beneficial to their own interests. As Joy explained:

Men were not happy at first about their wives leaving their houses for the day to attend training sessions for MYWO groups. But they began to see that their wives were learning about development. If their wives could clean clothes, they too would have clean clothes. If a woman knows how to clean, her family stays clean, so men and women develop together.

According to Joy, participants of MYWO groups were learning and adopting new skills that were also perceived by men as improvements to their traditional living conditions.

Importantly, the focus on home-making was only one element of MYWO's efforts to 'improve' Maasai women's lives through groups like Enkakenya. In addition to learning matters of hygiene and cooking, women were also encouraged to participate in state-politics leading up to the 1992 elections. In this regard they were told by MYWO staff, according to Lena, to stand 'on their own' as citizens who could vote and become political leaders. Re-iterating Lena's point, Eunice, an elderly woman who I spoke to about the days she participated in MYWO groups, vividly remembered being told by group leaders that women could be leaders just like men. As she said to me:

We were taught how to stand-up in meetings and speak our needs and our problems, and even when there is politics (*siasa*), we can talk about maendeleo. When a councillor is needed in the area, they told us women that we could also be voted for and if it's a chief that's needed, a woman can also stand and be voted for the position of chief. I never imagined a woman being a chief.

While encouraged to act as individual leaders who could be chiefs and elected officials, in practice women only worked to secure political and economic resources and power through the platform of MYWO groups. These groups petitioned local politicians for resources and to discuss their 'visions' (*induaat*) for development in public meetings. As women shared with me, their 'visions' for a better life included having rights to land, access to health centers and schools for their children. These concerns were re-iterated repeatedly by all the women I spoke to – they had a clear and shared understanding of what development looked like for them and their communities, which were centered on accessing public services and land rights rather than just domestic work. Groups fostered Maasai women's collective 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai 2004) by providing a social platform to articulate their desire for rights, access to resources and work towards social change.

Some of these groups were successful in their efforts to secure resources from the government. Local politicians provided groups with buildings in town centers to meet and plots of land in town to develop businesses. Two former MYWO groups were also allocated legal rights and title deeds to portions of the Loodariak Group Ranch during the initial titling process in the 1990s under the group's name. This meant that the land they owned could not be purchased, sold or transferred without the entire group's consent, thereby safeguarding it against being appropriated by external actors or sold by a member's husband. Accessing and having power over land through the context of groups was considered by Maasai women as being a significant achievement for them, since very, very few individual women were allotted title deeds during the process of subdividing the land. While acknowledged by many Maasai women I spoke to as being an achievement of some MYWO groups in Oltepesi, the vast majority of Maasai women did not receive rights to land or any other public provision from the state by working with MYWO.

2.5 Women's Groups, Politics and Money

As mentioned above, the local male-leaders who worked with MYWO to create groups in Oltepesi were supporters of Moi and by extension Saitoti, the local Parliamentary representative. One of these men was known locally as the 'chief,' although he did not hold an official position within the government. However, he was a former member of Loodariak's Group Ranch Committee and worked closely with Saitoti during his 1992 election campaigns. The chief explained how he began working with MYWO to create groups in Oltepesi:

MYWO came and told us that women in the area should form groups to help themselves and to improve themselves. The aim of the groups was for women to work together for development...we went around telling women to form groups. There were large groups with 40 members or so in

each community: Oltinga, Oltepesi, Loodariak, and Kisames. These groups were big. There were around 40 members in each.

As this quote suggests, MYWO first approached Maasai men to mobilize women into forming groups. From the chief's perspective, these groups were not only created for 'women's development,' but also to support his political interests. As he continued to explain: "We organized women into groups to help with the political campaigns. So, for example, if Moi himself called me and asked me to bring a group of women to his home, I would call one of their leaders and a group of women would be ready to go." Maasai men, like the chief, began to mobilize MYWO groups to support Moi and his re-election. Some of the former members of MYWO groups even travelled with Moi during his political campaigns in order to 'educate' other Kenyan women on development. As one elderly woman told me: "we travelled way north to visit Samburu who don't dress like us. We taught them how to cook and how to wash their clothes, like we were taught before." Lena also told me a similar story. She joined a MYWO group of Maasai women who travelled to attend a political campaign for Moi in the Northern part of Kenya, where other pastoral communities, like the Samburu, lived. There, as Lena explained to me, "we came across women who did not even wear clothes. They still wore leather. We also taught them how to dress in clothes like the ones you see me in today," pointing to her cloth shuka.

These two women recounted fond memories about travelling with the then President to meet pastoral women in other parts of the country. They both saw themselves as leaders in educating other women about development. The vast majority of women in Oltepesi, however, only travelled within Kajiado County as dancers at George Saitoti's campaign events. Lankenua's neighbour, a woman in her mid-seventies named Nina, explained the dynamics of dancing at these events:

Whenever Saitoti went somewhere to campaign or to give a talk, we were told to go meet in Kisames and to wear Maasai clothes and beads. We would leave our homes and meet at Kisames, where there was transport waiting for us. We would travel together and sing and dance at the campaigns, then return at the end of the day. They were long and tiring days.

In asking why they danced at these campaigns, Maasai women did not describe their desire to politically support Moi or Saitoti. Unlike women in other parts of Kenya who dance to express their politics (Brownhill 2009), in Maasai areas, dancing was not customarily used to communicate one's political alliances. Instead, Maasai women were dancing at political events in order to earn money that was promised to them by male, Maasai leaders, like the chief. In doing so, however, many Maasai women, particularly elderly women, found themselves transgressing the norms of respect between themselves and younger men, which also provided them with power.

As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, the norms of respect created social and physical boundaries between women and men and between different generations. Both these gender and generational social norms and boundaries between women and men were crossed at these political rallies. The elderly women I spoke to, including Nina quoted above, saw their role as dancers at political rallies as akin to when they danced with young warriors (*ilmurran*) as unmarried women. During these dances, young women and men danced with one another to flirt. Dancing in such a way as an older woman, however, crossed the boundaries of respect that women earn as they grew older. As Nola's mother-in-law described to me: "I had to stop attending those rallies because I would see my son-in-laws there. It wasn't right for me to be dancing for politicians with my son-in-laws present. I was dancing like I did when I was an *esiankiki* (unmarried woman)." There were, as Nola's mother-in-law's description suggests, sexual politics at play during these events that placed women in the marginalizing space of these events, rather than in the center as vocal leaders.

The sexual politics of these events, while informing Maasai women's experiences, were only part of the grievances that Maasai women felt towards MYWO and local politicians. Their main complaint was around cash. While Maasai women were promised money to attend political rallies by Maasai men, they were rarely given the amount that they were owed. As the former chief explained to me:

There was money set-aside to give to women's groups who performed, but at the time there were many members in these groups. So, by the time we paid for their transport and by the time they divided the money we gave them amongst themselves, women left with very little money.

I also spoke to one elderly Maasai man who worked on mobilizing groups to attend political rallies and events. He was in charge of paying MYWO groups. Referring to the smallest denomination of banknotes in Kenya (50 Ksh), he said, "I would go to the bank the morning before a political fundraiser and get brand-new 50 shillings bills." Making a fist with his hand, he continued, "then I would roll the bills to make it look like I was handing over a large-sum of money to groups, but it was hardly any money at all."

While most of the women I spoke to did not gain rights to land or a political platform at rallies, the lack of earnings they received formed the catalyst through which Maasai women decided to withdraw their support from both local politicians and from MYWO. Almost every woman I spoke to about MYWO explained that they stopped associating with the organization because they were not paid to dance. As Nasa explained: "We wanted to go to rallies to talk, but also to earn money. So, when we left with just a few bills, we decided that's enough. We will no longer support these leaders or MYWO." Thinking back on the days when she danced at campaigns, Joy told me: "There is no way they can use us like the way they did before. Before we were young and we didn't know much. We didn't know what we were doing, but now we have learned." Nasa similarly mentioned that women were: "treated like goats, being herded around by men."

As these comments suggest, Maasai women saw themselves as being akin to domesticated livestock who had little control. The impetus to quit working in MYWO groups as a result of their experiences highlights what Bebbington describes as being peasant politics: a desire to maintain a sense of control over their livelihoods and material assets. In the case of MYWO, women initially joined groups to gain control over resources, including land. Earning money was also an objective of these groups. Unlike the potential promise of land or state services, money addressed women's immediate needs and concerns. Furthermore, cash was a source of wealth they had greater control over in their households compared to livestock. Yet, their efforts to earn money as members of MYWO groups dissuaded them from continuing to work with the organization. While being an initiative that did not last, MYWO's efforts continued to influence Maasai women's motivation to act on their aspirations for development through their social ties to one another.

2.6 Making Money: Development led by Maasai Women

Women began to create their own women's groups, independently from MYWO, immediately after the 1992 elections in Kenya. In explaining the history of these newer women's groups, the vast majority of Maasai women attributed their origins to MYWO. Only some women said that the 'Kikuyus' introduced them to forming these newer groups, with 'Kikuyu' being a generic term that Maasai men and women sometimes used to describe all Kenyans who are not Maasai. I suspect that Maasai women saw ROSCAs as being linked to MYWO groups because they both involved mobilizing their social ties for the same aim: 'women's development.' However, the women's groups that Maasai women created after the dissolution of MYWO groups were very different – they operated independently of any specific organization, had far fewer members and were focused on saving and accessing cash.

ROSCAs relied on the pressure of the group to encourage members to save and manage their money. The principle of these groups was seemingly simple, but in practice women's groups were very complicated. This is how they worked in Oltepesi: At every meeting all the women in attendance, including the host of the meeting, offered a small amount of money 400 Ksh (4.70 Cad), which, once collected, was offered to the host of the meeting. The host could then use the money she received from the group to spend on a number of household supplies or to pay off debts that she had with other groups. This rotating system of saving money was merry-go-round, as mentioned above. Much like an ante in gambling, all participants displayed their money on the table in order to "play" the next round. The next round in Oltepesi consisted of two sorts of loans. Short term loans, with high interest that members had to pay back quickly, usually within one month, and longer-terms loans with lower interest and a longer pay-back period. Women verbally requested borrowing money from the group through these two different forms of credit, often by enumerating their monetary needs. The group, not unlike a bank, would review the requests based on whether the members had outstanding debts or problems with previous payments. The money given away as loans came from these very same loans – from members paying back the group with small amounts of interest. In this way, the money continued to circulate and even grow within the group.

This written description of a ROSCA above purposely holds the frame “still” (Clifford 1986: 10) in order to make them legible to the reader. In reality, though, groups were organized in a variety of ways and evolved fluidly overtime, with members introducing new rules, new members and new mechanisms for managing money along the way. Maasai women, through trial and error, tested the group dynamics; built relationships of trust and created norms and rules for saving, circulating and accessing cash. Women set interest rates on the loans, fines for late payments and penalties for failing to fully participate as a member

of the group, such as by not attending meetings regularly. In doing so, they created a social calculus around money that guarded cash from being spent on daily household expenditures, in turn leveraging money towards a future goal.

Women in Oltepesi viewed these efforts to manage money in groups as being primarily for their ‘development.’ As Lankenua explained to me while walking to a women’s group:

Maasai women have not gone to school and so cannot work outside of their homes like women do in offices in Nairobi. Instead, we participate in women’s groups. I keep a calendar for each meeting and write down how much money I owe to each group. It’s work, but it’s work that I know how to do, and it’s bringing development to my family.

Lankenua was, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, the woman with whom I lived with during most of my time in Oltepesi. She was in her 30s, had six children and was married to a man named Joseph who worked as a civil servant in Nairobi, where he lived during the week. She was able to join many groups at once because Joseph, unlike many men in Maasai communities, provided her with money on a weekly basis to manage their household costs. Lankenua was a member of ten different women’s groups, which meant that she participated in multiple meetings during a single week. Many other Maasai women commented similarly about these groups as Lankenua, viewing their participation as enabling them to bring development to their families. Nola, for example, Lankenua’s neighbour, a woman in her 40s, described her motivations for participating in women’s groups: “We can’t just sit around all day and not do anything. We need to work to make our houses better, to pay for school fees. We want development. Without women’s groups, our money would disappear.” For Nola, participating in women’s groups meant earning cash and relying on the support of the group in order to save money. Nola and Lankenua’s comments suggest that these groups were the only avenues for them to act on their aspirations for development,

however this was not the case. In the following chapter of this dissertation, I discuss how these groups were situated in a financial landscape where there were many development institutions that offered Maasai women similar opportunities to save and access cash. Furthermore, Maasai women from different classes, including Maasai women who worked as teachers or NGO workers, participated in women's groups. Regardless of their class and the resources they had at their disposal, Maasai women saw groups as being avenues to strengthen their social networks, to discuss their development aspirations and to act on their desire to improve their lives.

To participate in these groups, Maasai women needed to earn money. Maasai women have long worked as traders by participating in extensive trade-networks with agricultural groups including the Kikuyu, Kamba, Kipsigis, Luo, and Gusi (Talle 1988). In Tanzania, women from Maasai communities also traded with Arusha, Chagga, and Taveta groups, all of whom occupied the border of Kenya and Tanzania (Hodgson 2001b). The main products they bartered were cows, goat, and sheep along with livestock-products, such as skins, milk, and ghee in exchange for grain, calabashes, tobacco, metal-ware, honey and ivory to meet their family's needs (Hodgson 2001b; Talle 1988). Maasai women continued to sell goods in local markets in Oltepesi, including their beadwork, milk and grass. These activities were not distinct from the income generating activities that Maasai women did in other areas of East Africa. For example, in Northern Tanzania women are cutting trees and grass to sell, grinding maize, raising chickens, selling eggs and hens and making beaded jewelry and clothing to sell (Smith 2015). Brockington (2001) similarly describes Maasai women in Tanzania who sell milk, firewood and herbal medicine. These studies of Maasai women's income-generating activities attribute Maasai women's efforts to earn cash as a response to poverty and commodification.

In Oltepesi, Maasai women were likewise earning money in order to cope to pay for goods and services that required cash. At times women needed to pay for food in emergencies or hospital bills for undernourished children. These costs were increasing as they became settled and more dependent on the cash economy. By and large, however, Maasai women earned cash to participate in women's groups. Below is an excerpt from Nola and Mabe's financial diaries. Nola and Mabe, like almost every woman I met in Oltepesi, worked every day to earn cash, which they often later used to in order to participate in women's groups:

Nola:

4:30-5:30 am: I woke-up and went to milk the goats; then I boiled the milk and made tea for my children. I helped them get ready for school.

5:30-10:30 am: I milked the cows and then separated the young calves from their mothers. I did the same for the goats and their kids. The herders then left with the goats and I went in the house to boil milk for tea. I then cut cabbages and made ugali (maize meal, mixed with water). After, I washed clothes and swept my house.

10:30-12:30 pm: I went to gather firewood for Lankenua to earn money and then I went to gather firewood with Sarah (*her co-wife*) for cooking dinner.

12:30pm – 2:00: I went to go check on the goats who were herding close-by and then came home to rest. It was getting dark. Noel (*her neighbour*) stopped by and we sat inside my house, talking.

3:00-5:00pm: I left to go to a woman's meeting for one of the savings groups. It was nearby, in the homestead where Nancy lives. I had to pay the group 350.00 Ksh.

5:00pm-7:00pm: I boiled some tea for my children who were coming home from school. My husband came home as well and had tea. Then I went and milked the cows after they came back from pasture. Then I started preparing dinner.

7:00pm-9pm: My children and I ate dinner. I had my daughter clean the dishes and I went straight to bed.

Mabe:

5am-6am: I boiled tea and then went outside to clean the cow kraal. I dragged the cow dung from the cow-kraal to the area outside of our homestead to dry. I'm building a pile to sell to agriculturalists.

6am-10:30: I went to a nearby dam to collect water and then came home to make

maize meal with water and salt. I ate and then cleaned the dishes.

10:30-12:30: I went to church to do beadwork to sell to a woman in Nairobi. I'm sewing beading into bags.

12:30-3:30: I went to go gather firewood for cooking and then I went to gather grass to sell to the charcoal burners. They layer grass on top of their piles of burning wood.

3:00-6:00 pm: I went to a meeting at the school to pay the school fees for Mike (*her oldest son*). I owed 300 Ksh.

6pm-9pm: I helped Jane (*her mother-in-law*) milk her cows, while my daughter milked her goats. She was sick and in bed early for the evening. Then I cooked dinner and went to bed.

These journal entries show how both earning and circulating money formed part of these women's day-to-day lives.

As mentioned above, Bebbington (2000) describes development processes as occurring at various levels, including the body, locality and microregion. In the case of Maasai women, they drew on their physical labour (body) and skills in order to transform their everyday tasks into profitable ventures, like selling firewood for a profit on the side of the road to passengers in cars or to neighbours. Selling firewood was how most Maasai women earned money in Oltepesi. Maasai women collected dead wood almost daily, fallen from trees, to cook with throughout the day, burning it almost immediately after it was gathered. Collecting dead wood to sell required women to walk long distances to find dried branches and trees. Here they cut wood, tying it together into bundles and carrying it past their homes and to the side of the paved road where it was neatly stacked into piles. These piles were, at least initially, tiny – barely noticeable amongst the herds of livestock that passed by, but eventually grew, and over time, they became a pyramid of potential cash earnings. In transforming their everyday routines into a money-making activity, Maasai women were engaging in what Green et al. (2012) describe as being 'future-making' tasks through their embodied labour.

Most of Maasai women's work to earn cash occurred in and around their homesteads (*enkang*), whereas Maasai men earned money further afield in Kiserian or Nairobi. Maasai homesteads were a physical space where pastoralists used to settle for as little as three to six months and sometimes for many years, depending on whether they needed to migrate their livestock close by or to distant locations where they would move to access pasture and water. Historically, a single homestead housed up to 300 people who were socially connected as extended kin, members of the same clans, age-sets or as friends who would share land and resources in the area around the *enkang*. To create the homestead, groups of families, friends, neighbours and clan-mates would build a thorn fence that acted as a perimeter. Inside the fence, each woman would build a house close to their family's kraals for livestock. While men spent time in *enkangs*, most often they left during the day to manage their herds of livestock, to participate in the wage labour economy and to visit friends and acquaintances in town centres. As a result, Maasai women were often left in the company of their young children and other women during the day, providing them with control over their daily movements, including their labour routines and efforts to earn money.

In the last 50 years, the spatial dynamics of these homesteads have changed, but Maasai women continued to pool and divide their labour in Oltepesi. In response to land tenure reforms and family planning programs (Archambault 2010; Talle 1988), Maasai families throughout Southern Kenya were settling with three to four other families who were related through patrilineal kinship ties, often as brothers. This trend marked a shift from when hundreds of people used to live in one, shared communal space. Maasai families in Oltepesi settled in separate *enkangs* as land became divided, but these *enkangs* were geographically close to one another, making it possible for women to organize their labour in order to manage their multiple, household tasks, alongside their efforts to earn money.

In Nkiborra's enkang, for example, there were five women who each took turns herding their family's goats and taking care of each other's children. Nkiborra had two adopted daughters and was married to a man from Oltepesi who worked as a security guard in Nairobi during the week. The five women she lived with were her step mother and the spouses of her husband's four brothers. I briefly lived with Nkiborra in the initial six weeks of my time in Oltepesi. As I observed, two women from the homestead would often leave in the morning together, while the three other women took care of their children. In Lankenua's enkang, Nataana, who was her sister-in-law, often left for the day searching for water with her friend named Noel from a neighbouring enkang. Noel would arrive in the morning, passing through our enkang to pick-up Nataana, and the two would travel together. Nataana's children would stay home for the day with her elderly mother-in-law who was unable to walk very far beyond the perimeter of the enkang. These patterns of sharing work also applied when women were earning cash. Elderly women would stay at home with their grandchildren while one of their daughters-in-law would travel to look for firewood or grass to cut and sell. Sometimes more than one woman from the same enkang would travel together to keep each other company, depending on their individual schedules. These forms of social support allowed Maasai women to manage their daily household immediate needs, alongside their efforts to earn and save cash.

There were no customary institutions that guided or dictated how work was divided, shared or organized between Maasai women. The lack of formality around pooling their labour was distinct to other women's experiences in Kenya, where work was regularly shared by women who formed groups. In Kikuyu communities, the largest ethnic community in Kenya, women historically created 'work-groups' in order to support a new mother or to complete a number of agricultural tasks, for example (Brownhill 2009). To create these groups, they would recruit kin, neighbours and friends, then divide a number of tasks they

needed to complete, including clearing land for agriculture and planting crops. Since these tasks were part of their daily lives, work-groups were a common feature of how Kikuyu women organized themselves economically and socially. In Maasai contexts, however, women did not form work groups, per se. They only collectivized their labour when needed for a special event, such as building a house for a new bride, a process that I describe in more depth in Chapter four of this dissertation. In daily life, however, they depended on relatively informal arrangements for sharing their daily labour routines.

Women's groups formalized these very same women's social ties in idioms of development by requiring women to join and commit to consistently participating in groups. The meetings for these groups were also located in Maasai homesteads, specifically the house of the host who was receiving the savings collected through the merry-go-round. Often five to as many as 15 women would arrive, drink tea around the fire and huddle together, sitting on cow hide beds that were propped up by sticks and poles. If the house was too small for the meeting, they would sit underneath the shade of a tree outside the *enkan*. The payment provided to the woman hosting the meeting was referred to as the 'money for the house.' The 'money for the house' was synonymous to the money for the woman who lived inside, highlighting the close connection between Maasai women's economic resources and their houses that Talle (1988) described in her study of processes of commodification.

In creating and participating in these groups, Maasai women were influencing what Bebbington (2000) calls the microregional dynamics of development in their communities. Development in Oltepesi was controlled, to a certain degree, by organizations that had the power to determine what sorts of resources Maasai women could acquire. The state, NGOs and Maasai men, in particular, influenced whether Maasai women could access to livestock, cash and land, all of which were important economic resources in their households.

Women's groups did not necessarily provide Maasai women with the power to control

livestock or land. Nor did Maasai women always use these groups as a political platform to advocate for rights from local elite and political leaders, like they once did in MYWO groups. Nevertheless, these groups were an integral part of Maasai women's daily efforts to improve their lives. There were many hundreds, if not thousands, of these groups that brought women together into relationships around money. These social ties were relatively egalitarian compared to those they had with Maasai men and the state, thereby providing Maasai women with more power over how they participated in development. As discussed above, participating in development occurred daily, in part, through their efforts to earn, care for and control cash.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, development in anthropology has often been conceived as a set of institutional practices that seek to transform people's lives through a set of regulatory and disciplinary norms (Agrawal 2005; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990; Li 2007). In these formulations of development, states and governments are often conceived as the main drivers of social change. However, there are a constellation of actors that participate in development initiatives that have different degrees of power over how projects unfold (Bebbington 2000; Olivier de Sardan 2005). Looking at the history of MYWO and how the organization operated in Oltepesi, this latter reading of development holds true. MYWO worked with international donors, the state, Maasai men and women in Oltepesi, creating a configuration of actors and institutions working for 'women's development' with different intensions in mind. MYWO interest in working with Maasai women in Oltepesi marked a shift from previous development projects that worked almost exclusively with men. However, the success of the initiative in Oltepesi was, to a large degree, compromised by the organization's connections to the state and by Maasai men, who

sought to control women's groups for their own political ends. Maasai women responded by creating groups independently of MYWO. They did so through their social ties to one another, creatively adopting but also rejecting some of the institutional norms and messages first introduced to them by MYWO about development.

Chapter 3 – The Social Life of Debt among Maasai Women

3.1 Milking Money

Lankenua and I arrived at her neighbour's house, who was a woman in her mid-forties named Nainyiti. Nainyiti was hosting this month's meeting and was receiving the lump sum of the money that the group had collectively saved. When we arrived, Nainyiti was cooking in her traditional house with smoke billowing out from the front door, while her tin-sided home next door stood vacant. Lankenua and I entered the smoky house, hunching over to fit through the short entranceway to reach the centre room where she was stirring a large pot of boiling tea. Lankenua grabbed and steadied a thermos on the uneven ground beside the pot, while Nainyiti poured the tea into it.

We heard the rumbling sound of a pick-up truck driving on the rocky path towards Nainyiti's house and stepped outside. There were 13 women piled into the back of the truck who had travelled from a neighbouring community. Others were walking in a group along the path to the front gate. Twenty of the 22 members of the group had arrived, from different villages, different generations, different clans and families, and from varying degrees of wealth, but none were particularly poor. They filtered into the living room in Nainyiti's tin-sided house, where there were two small, overstuffed couches, a coffee table and one large chair. Some women were leaning against armrests, others were squeezed into spots on the couches, and some resigned themselves to sitting on the floor. The guests continued talking, asking each other about their children and discussing the impending dry season and their families' livestock. Nainyiti came into the room with cups and thermoses full of tea, and then dashed back into the smoky kitchen where she continued to cook. As the women got settled, a tall woman in her mid-thirties, carrying a notepad, placed a stool behind the end of the long rectangular coffee table. Lankenua, the 'chairlady' of the group, joined her at the head of the table. The two women seated at the end of the coffee table called the room to order, jokingly

threatening the members of the group with ten-shilling fines if they raised their voices.

Lankenua had a dramatic voice and relayed messages from the secretary who was flipping through her book to record the names of women who were present. First, they collected the money for the merry-go-round and then they collected the money for advances and loans. Some women quietly handed the secretary their cash with a straight face, while others scurried to ask close friends to borrow money. I privately lent one woman 3000 Ksh (40 Cad). It was hectic, with money being transferred from different hands, finally landing on the table where it was stacked in individual piles. Most women paid the merry-go-round, while other women made excuses as to why their money was late. The secretary tried her best to record who paid the 'house' and who still owed money. There was 18,000 Ksh (210 Cad) on the table for the host. The cash for the merry-go-round had been collected.

The women paused and bowed their heads to pray for the group. The meeting then continued. The advances and loans were collected from members who had debts that needed to be redistributed as credit to the other women in the group. The secretary collected the money from women who had advances from last month's meeting and then collected the money from women who were repaying their loans in installments. There is 20,000 Ksh (233 Cad) on the table that could now be loaned to other members of the group as credit. Five women raised their hands to ask for advances, while another five asked for loans. Some of these women described their pressing demands for money, while Lankenua intently listened as the acting chairlady. The piles of money on the table were re-divided amongst a handful of selected members. I felt a tap on my lower arm as the woman who owed me money slipped 3000 Ksh (35 Cad) she had just received as an advance into the palm of my hand. Money moved in three waves outwards from the group and to individual members: in the first wave it circulated through the merry-go-round and in the second and third wave through two different funds for credit. Then after a while, it circulated back into the group. Each wave had

its own rules that connected women together through relationships of debt.

The description above was from a day I visited a meeting for a woman's groups named Nalepo. Nalepo means milking, a process that women entirely control in Maasai communities and which is strongly associated with prosperity, longevity and growth (Århem 1989). Nalepo was trying to build prosperity and wealth for its members by helping them save and accumulate cash through rotating systems of savings and credit. The rules of Nalepo were established so that money circulated across the merry-go-round system of saving money and through a pool of money that was provided to members as credit. Through these systems of saving and accessing money, and accompanying rules, women's groups encouraged members to discipline their spending, budget their earnings and manage their financial responsibilities to other members of the group. Like Lankenua, women in Oltepesi participated in multiple groups at once, as many as 5-10 simultaneously, under the logic that these groups helped them 'boost' their savings and earn them 'profits,' as members often told me. In fact, members of these groups received the same amount of money they contributed to the merry-go-round. While not earning women profits per se, women's groups did provide a mechanism for members to accumulate cash that would otherwise be spent on their households' immediate needs or taken and spent by their husbands.

As Ardener (1995) points out, ROSCAs have been the template for the growing micro-finance industry since the 1970s. Micro-finance is an umbrella term that describes a range of financial services that have diversified over time. These financial services were development in order to address women's needs in the Global South. Today, however, the term is more widely known for financial services that provide individuals with credit through group-based loans. These groups are also known as 'peer' or 'solidarity' lending associations. Group-based loaning is when a group, normally of four or more women, registers with a micro-finance institution in order to take out a loan without needing to provide collateral. The

group then guarantees the loan of its members. For example, if a member fails to repay a loan, the micro-finance institution denies the other members in the group access to further credit and can hold them liable for the outstanding balance on the loan. Similar to individual loans, if the group loan is repaid on time, the group qualified for larger amounts of credit. The group therefore replaces the function of collateral that is often required at banks in order to access loans from banks, thereby offering women, who have few assets, access to credit from a financial institution (Karim 2008; 2011; Mayoux 1999; Rankin 2001)⁵.

International development organizations and donors have focused on women as the main recipients of micro-finance services based on a number of gendered assumptions. For example, they assume that women spend more of their incomes on household welfare than men and typically have higher rates of repayment on loans and lower default rates. As described in a World Bank publication entitled ‘Enhancing women’s participation in economic Development,’ the Bank asserts that: “Investing in women is critical for poverty reduction. It speeds economic development by raising productivity and promoting the more efficient use of resources” (1994: 22). The underlying assumption behind this message is that women are less egotistical, less irresponsible and more altruistic and self-sacrificing than men. Under this logic, financial opportunities provided to them have the potential to support their families and wider communities.

⁵ The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh was established in 1976 and was considered the ‘brainchild’ of micro-finance, offering an international model for poverty alleviation strategy for women. Grameen Bank comes from the Bengali terms for ‘rural’ or ‘village’ bank, and was founded on the principle that loans are more effective than charity in interrupting cycles of rural poverty (Ardener 1995). Through loans, it is assumed that a woman can start a business or improve agricultural production, which in turn provides them with earnings and enables them to repay their debts. The Grameen bank also does not use legal instruments, such as written contracts, when providing loans. Instead, the bank relies on trust between members, but also monitoring visits from field officers who train women on financial accountability and how to budget and save money. Often, groups are required to meet regularly either weekly or monthly with their field officers, as part of their monitoring visits, in order to ensure that they are on schedule for repaying their loan.

These gendered messages about women circulated in Kenya, where the State promoted micro-finance to help address problems associated with structural adjustments in the country—including food insecurity, wage-cuts and currency devaluations—since the 1990s (Lairap-Fonderson 2002; Mayoux 1999). As a reporter for the *The Telegraph* describes: “Money is a female thing in Kenya. At least it is among the vast number of poor-rural and urban – who make up the majority of this country’s 40 million population” (Reece 2011). The newspaper article continues by claiming that women in Kenya are “far more effective in managing both family and village finances compared to men” (Reece 2011). Like in many other countries in Africa, gender lobbies within the Kenyan State and aid agencies in the 1980s tried to increase women’s access to credit and savings based on this logic (Lairap-Fonderson 2002; Mayoux 1999). As a result of the growing micro-finance sector in the country, Maasai women in Oltepesi had many opportunities to join micro-finance groups that were run by NGOs and banks. These groups were managed, regulated and controlled by external institutions, who often sent fieldworkers to monitor how they were run.

Debt was central to how both of these different types of groups worked. In looking at credit-debt relationships between women, I draw on Gustav Peeble’s (2010) discussion of the topic. Since the 1980s, anthropological representations of debt depict the creditor and debtor through different idioms: the creditor is often described as being in a position of power, while the debtor is understood as imprisoned by their debts. Peebles challenges the notion of credit-debt relationships as necessarily being hierarchical by arguing that credit/debt is actually a relational unit that remains active and open to new ways of connecting individuals both financially and socially. Building on this insight, I argue that by joining and participating in women’s groups, Maasai women entered into multiple relationships and layers of indebtedness that were relatively egalitarian. At times a woman was owed money, whereas at other moments they were in debt. Most often, though, regardless of a woman’s social or

economic status, they were in a position of being creditor and debtor simultaneously. Having a shared experience of debt, from both these perspectives, created a sense of social and financial obligation that ran across a wide network of women in Oltepesi.

These relationships of credit/debt were distinct from those that existed in groups that were managed by micro-finance institutions and NGOs. Micro-finance groups connected women to the disciplinary norms of micro-finance institutions that ran groups, and indirectly to the state and to donor regulations. The relationships of debt in these groups were hierarchical, since members of these groups had little control over how their debts were managed. In order to control what Bourdieu (1977) terms the ‘tempo-of-exchange’ - that is – the interval of time between when money is owed and returned, Maasai women preferred to join women’s groups that they created without the support of external organizations. In doing so, they extended their social networks, creating bonds of indebtedness and built relationships of trust with one another in idioms of development.

3.2 The Social Productivity of Debt

Debt is a social relationship that involves at least two individuals: one who is a creditor and the other who is a debtor. In many ways, this relationship is a temporal bond (Peebles 2010); The creditor relies on the debtor for their future well-being in the form of a return, while the debtor owes their present security to the creditor which, in turn, their future actions must address. As Ardener (1995) points out in her discussion of merry-go-rounds in West Africa, debt is a central part of how these associations work. Just like in the case of Maasai women’s groups, the first member to receive the group’s accumulated savings becomes a debtor to the remaining members of the group and remains one until the last contribution has been made. Conversely, the last member to receive their savings becomes a creditor to all the other members of the group until the cycle is complete. The other members

move, in turn, from being creditors and debtors until the full rotation of the merry-go-round is completed and everyone is back in a neutral position. As well (and more obviously) Maasai women took out loans of money from groups, which they had to pay back at a later point in time with interest.

Anthropologists have explored the relationships between creditors and debtors by looking at the social dimensions of indebtedness. These analyses have often invoked Mauss's (1925) famous discussion of *The Gift* to highlight the disguised forms of debt that emerge in seemingly altruistic forms of exchange. In *The Gift*, Mauss asserts that credit and debt contribute to building hierarchy, dominance and social solidarity. Mauss's work builds on Malinowski's (1922) evidence that handing one's wealth over to another person is an expression of superiority of the giver over the recipient. Bourdieu (1977) makes a similar point in his discussion of Kabyle marriages. In Kabyle marriages, a groom's family receives a wife through a bridewealth payments that can never fully cover the costs of giving up a daughter. Counter-prestations are used by a groom's family to remain in good social standing with the family that has 'gifted' a bride, but do not nullify longstanding hierarchies that are created through debts established through marriage. The tempo-of-exchange is an important element of Bourdieu's (1977) argument about how social hierarchy is maintained. He suggests that counter-prestations of gifts must be offered at different intervals of time by the groom's family to their in-laws. Failure to do so creates social tensions and intensify existing inequalities between families.

These different analyses of debt support Peebles's (2010) argument that anthropologists view the relationship through the lens of social hierarchy. As he describes in his anthropological review of debt (Peebles 210: 226):

When one surveys decades of anthropological literature on credit and debt, an astonishing consistency shines through much of the ethnographic data. Seemingly everywhere credit and debt are discussed, we find many

informants who enunciate a moral stance that credit is considered beneficial and liberating, whereas indebtedness is more likely to be seen as burdensome and imprisoning for the debtor.

These dichotomies between debtor/creditor help to explain Maasai women's interactions with micro-finance institutions that control the rules, tempo-of-exchange and social norms of debt in micro-finance groups. However, understanding debt through the lens of social hierarchy alone does not fully capture the relationships in the women's groups that were self-led by Maasai women. In these latter groups, Maasai women had complicated and layered forms of debt with other women in their efforts to save and manage money together. By joining many groups at once and managing their payments to groups, Maasai women were often creditors and debtors simultaneously, alternating between owing money to a group and being owed cash at a later date. These relationships of debt were managed through a group's rules, not unlike what one finds in micro-finance groups, but also through relationships of trust⁶. Trusting relationships existed between members of their groups, but also towards the group as a whole.

Understanding these relationships of trust is important to considering what Sandra Burman and Nozipho Lembete (1995) suggest as being the social element of ROSCAs. Drawing on the example of these groups in urban South Africa, the authors describe how members socialize and create relationships with one another in the context of group meetings. In doing so, members of ROSCAs in South African create a social element to groups that "sugars the pill of crude economic materialism" that can potentially characterize these

⁶ Trust is a concept in anthropology that has been used to understand and encapsulate the many different types of social sentiments attached to different forms of economic and social exchange, including indebtedness (Shipton 2007). Trust, as Simmel (1900) writes in his discussion of modern money, conveys a sense of certainty that what one does or gives away will be reciprocated in the future. Rather than being solely enforced by legalistic rules, trust is something that is fostered through one's experiences with others and institutions, while also being a quasi-faith or belief that an individual will act according to how you expect them to act in the future.

groups. The money, time and energy spent socializing in the ROSCS, far from being ‘wasteful’ or ‘uneconomic’, as the authors describe it, may be an essential requirement for justifying membership and securing the financial viability of the group. By highlighting the social qualities of ROSCAs, these author’s highlight an important point I make when I compare Maasai women’s groups to those that were run by micro-finance groups. While in some instances, the circulation of money created debts that were indeed a hierarchical relationship that bound women to institutions and individuals of power, in the context of women’s groups, debt was a socially productive relationship that was layered, interconnected and best thought of as debt/credit – a dyadic unit (Peebles 2010) – that cannot be so easily untangled.

Understanding the social and economic norms that existed around debt in these two different types of groups is important to considering how Maasai women defined the terms and conditions in which they participated in development. While in micro-finance groups, debt was controlled by a set of disciplinary norms, in women’s groups, debt was managed through rules, but also through relationships of trust that were forged through member’s personal histories and relationships to one another.

3.3 Money and Credit/Debt Relationships

Women’s groups had the unique capacity to bring women together into relationships around cash that would otherwise not exist in Oltepesi where money was not widely circulated, borrowed or loaned outside of women’s groups. In fact, Maasai women were far less comfortable asking for loans of money from one another compared to loans of food, reciprocal help collecting firewood or support taking care of each other’s children. These goods and services circulated under generalized patterns of reciprocity, whereas loans of money created debts between women. The term debt in Maa – *sile* – communicated a moral

failure on the part of the person who was in debt. As many Maasai women explained to me, being in debt meant that an individual had not fulfilled their promise and obligation to another individual. With regards to money, specifically, being in debt was viewed as the inability to discipline one's personal spending. For fear of personal failure, Maasai women were far less willing to borrow from and loan money to one another compared to other commodities and goods that were in constant circulation in Oltepesi.

The distinct terms of exchange in which money circulated, compared to other goods, was made apparent to me in the financial diaries I created with women, including Nola. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, I went to Nola's house twice a week to track the inflow and outflows of resources (money, food, labour) from her house. Below are excerpts from Nola's diary that detailed the different terms of exchange for money and for food.

October 8th, 2012

Julia: What did you do yesterday?

Nola: I woke up and cooked tea for my children before they went to school. After they left I milked the cows, washed the utensils from the night before, swept my house, and left to go to church to do beadwork. I came back at 5 pm to milk the goats. After I cooked supper and went to bed.

Julia: How much money did you earn from beadwork?

Nola: 130 Ksh.

Julia: Did you borrow money from anyone yesterday?

Nola: No.

Julia: Did you lend money to anyone yesterday?

Nola: Yes, I gave Nkiborra 200 Ksh.

Me: Does she have to pay you back?

Nola: Yes, she'll pay me back on the 15th of October. I am hosting a woman's meeting, so she'll pay me back then.

Me: What about food, did you borrow or lend food to anyone?

Nola: No, but I gave Nalep a bottle of milk.

October 10, 2012

Nola: I woke up at sunrise and milked the cows and cooked tea, and then went to get water. I left for Josephine's to help her cook food for her fundraiser in the middle of the morning.

Julia: What did you give her?

Nola: I gave her cups for her new cabinet.

Julia: Where did you get the money to buy the cups?

Nola: I borrowed 200 Ksh from Jacinda.

Julia: Why did you ask Jacinda?

Nola: Because she had the money to give. She just received her savings from a woman's group.

Julia: Did anyone ask to borrow money from you?

Nola: Christine and Richard did, but I had no money to give them.

Julia: What about food?

Nola: Christine asked for food and I gave her 1 kilogram of maize meal and a small bag of sugar.

Julia: What about milk?

Nola: I gave Nalep some milk in the morning.

Julia: Will you pay back Jacinda?

Nola: Yes, I have to settle all my debts after I host the next women's meeting.

In Nola's diary there were many other entries like the above ones in which milk and food, but not cash, were the only goods that were noted as having circulated in and out of her house. The main feature worth highlighting of these representative entries was how the tempo-of-exchange around money, even outside of groups, was determined by the dates of meetings where women took out loans and deposited cash. Nola knew when she could repay

her debts and conversely, when she would be repaid by another woman, based on the schedule for group meetings. Nola lent money to Nkiborra, who was her close friend, and she knew the exact date on which she would be repaid. Similarly, in the second entry, Nola borrowed money from Jacinda, who was her neighbour, knowing the date in advance when she would settle her debts. Compared to cash, milk and maize meal were given away and received relatively freely without any immediate demand for repayment. These two different terms of exchange created separate commodity paths for food and money, with money creating credit/debt relationships as it circulated across Maasai women's networks of exchange.

Social tensions arose between Maasai women in the absence of clear understandings for when money will be paid back and in full. These tensions were made clear to me when Nola asked for a loan of 300 Ksh (3.5 Cad) to buy a plastic tarp for her co-wife's house that had a leaking roof. I gave her the money and told her she did not have to pay me back. The 300 Ksh was a gift. The week following this exchange, Nola consistently avoided me in public. She would not approach me to say hello and she did not make eye contact when I spoke to her. When I asked her why, she explained that she did not have the 300 Ksh I lent her, but was working diligently to earn money in order to pay me back. During this second interaction with her, I further explained that the money I gave her was not unlike a loan of food that did not need to be repaid. Through this analogy, Nola understood the terms of exchange between us over the 300 Ksh.

I suspect that money created debts when borrowed and loaned because it was difficult to earn and associated with personal wealth, rather than being a commodity that was customarily used to solidify social bonds. Joseph, the man with whom I lived during most of my fieldwork, highlighted the specific and unique qualities of money by describing it as being analogous to modern, romantic love. He made this comparison while we were sitting in

a traffic jam on our way to Nairobi. Bored and with nothing to say to each another, I had turned on the radio. “It’s Maini in the morning,” yelled the radio announcer, who told stories about salacious scandals between couples in the city. A woman called in to describe her husband’s affair with a neighbour. “What’s happening to Kenyan men today?,” yelled Maini in response. Joseph sighed with frustration and turned the radio off. “Marriage today,” Joseph said in broken English, “is just like money. So many young people in Kenya marry out of their love. Love and money are the same thing.” In explicating what he meant, Joseph described modern love and money as corrupting and finite because both were centered around individual choice. As he explained:

When young people marry out of love they marry out of romance. They choose anyone they want. Romantic marriages are not Maasai marriages. We rely on our parents and families. Our marriages bring people together. It’s selfish to choose who you will marry. Money is just like the marriages that young people want today. It never lasts and it’s just for yourself.

I read Joseph’s analogy between modern marriages and money as highlighting a quality of how cash was viewed in Oltepesi. Both women and men valued cash as a means to access a myriad of goods and services that their households desired and needed. In efforts to guard and direct their money towards a good or service that was materially desired, Maasai women did not readily share cash with their neighbours, friends and kin outside of women’s groups. Men also did not share cash with their extended kin and friends. The lack of social and moral norms around sharing cash led many Maasai women and men to discuss cash as being a currency that reflected and encouraged selfishness. As a result, many Maasai women and men even described money as being bad (*torrono*) through stories about cash being used in situations where it was culturally inappropriate. In these stories, as well, people stole cash or failed to fulfill their economic obligations to others as a result of their desire for money.

Nola's mother-in-law named Naramal was often a subject of stories about economic immorality. Naramal was in her late 70s and lived with her two sons and their families. The eldest of her sons was in his mid-40s with visible burn marks down the right side of his body from a fire he fell into as a young child. Many women, including Naramal herself, linked the boy's accident to an incident she had on a bus involving money. In this story, Naramal picked up 300 Ksh on the floor of a bus while travelling to Kiserian and hid the money in her purse. The woman on the bus realized she lost her money, and before leaving asked the other passengers if they had seen her 300 Ksh. Naramal felt too embarrassed to admit she had stolen the woman's money, so kept it for herself. According to Naramal, she condemned her son to fall into the fire by failing to return the cash to the woman on the bus. In re-telling this story, Naramal was communicating to me her understanding of fate. Specifically, how her actions towards another woman directly resulted into a serious incident for her child. Many Maasai women similarly told me stories about how their actions towards other women directly affected their children's well-being in the future, highlighting how they identified themselves as being connected as mothers. In this example, Naramal attributed her behavior as being out of character and linked to her desire to have money to spend in the market that day. Money, as she explained to me, brings out 'greediness' (*lubo*) in people.

While the example of Naramal shows that women were not immune to being corrupted by the temptations of money, men in Oltepesi were more often the subjects of negative stories about money that involved selfishness. For example, as many men told me, despite their best attempts, they could not discipline their spending enough to form ROSCAs. In re-telling stories of failed attempts to operate these types of groups, they explained that many members spent their cash-earnings on their personal needs, rather than waiting to deposit their money into the merry-go-round. The lack of money that consistently flowed into accounts of men's groups meant that some members were consistently in debt to other members of the group. Often these

groups dissolved as a result of the distrust members felt towards one another. There were also frequent stories about men who failed to pay their herders the cash owed to them for their work or used cash in exchanges that customarily should have involved livestock. In these stories, the consequences of these actions led to the loss of entire herds of goats and sheep.

While these stories of money circulated in Oltepesi, they did not capture the multiple meanings Maasai women and men assign to money. In her book entitled 'The Social Meaning of Money,' Zelizer (1994) discusses how cash can have multiple meanings at once, depending on the context in which it was given, received and returned. Specifically, she examines three different uses of money in the United States: the domestic use of money for household expenditures; money used to purchase gifts; and money used as charity and to address problems of poverty. Zelizer (1994: 18) draws on the term 'earmarking' to communicate the idea that money has "no single uniform, generalized meaning". Zelizer's idea of earmarking is relevant to the different meanings associated with money in Oltepesi. While in many social contexts, often involving men, money was viewed as being a potentially socially and morally corrupting force, in other settings money was visibly celebrated. For example, in community fundraisers (harambees), both Maasai men and women gathered together to give donations of cash to a person in need or to a cause, like building a new church for a community. During these events, an emcee collected money from guests, waving banknotes in the air and calling out the amount of money individuals donated over a loud speaker to a cheering audience. Women's groups and men, who represented families and different social associations, sometimes donated to the cause as a group. After men and women provided donations, the emcee of the event stacked and presented bank notes as a symbol of what people could collectively do by 'working together' - the very meaning of harambee.

Similarly, in women's groups, money was counted, stacked and displayed. Women also prayed on stacks of cash, thanking God for the money received. In both these social settings, money was earmarked as being a vehicle for development, but also social solidarity. Cash circulated across women's social networks through rotating systems of savings and credit, creating debts that ensured money was returned to every individual in the group. By circulating money across their networks, women transformed cash from being for personal use, to being a currency for development that was connected to the norms of social solidarity.

3.4 Women's Groups and Credit/Debt Relationships

When I asked Maasai women why they joined many different women's groups at once, almost every person I spoke to said that groups allow them to 'boost' their cash-earnings and earn 'profits.' As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, in strictly financial terms, women did not earn any profits from these groups. I explained this to Nainyiti, whom I had previously conversed with many times about the profits she made from her store. In these conversations, we were both referring to the same phenomena—the ability to earn *more* money from a series of transactions than the amount invested in the exchange. In talking to her about women's groups, I wondered whether women were using the English term 'profit' in a different way than I understood the term to mean. Nainyiti considered my comment concerning the flows of money in and out of these groups for a few minutes and agreed with me that groups did not earn members profits, but was not overly concerned with the point I made.

I suspect my observation mattered little to Nainyiti because profit in the contexts of women's groups were conceptualized in different terms than Nainyiti and I had used when discussing her business. Namely, when speaking about her business, we were discussing the additional earnings she made from her business. In the context of women's groups, however,

the money women secured exceeded what they could have saved on their own and accumulated in their households where men have power. These groups sheltered women's cash earnings from their husband's demands, but also provided the needed mechanisms that encouraged members to defer their spending until a later date. In the meantime, Maasai women increased their savings by handing their money over to other members of the group, which in their view, 'boosted' their income earnings.

Women had different capacities for participating in groups that were primarily dictated by their relative access to cash. For example, throughout much of my time in Oltepesi, Mabe, the woman mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, was not a member of any women's groups. She could not save money because of the cash-demands of her family. However, towards the end of my stay in Oltepesi, she eventually gained some economic security by working as a labourer on a nearby farm, allowing her to join a group. The group she joined had five members from her family and operated a merry-go-round. The amount of money the group saved was only 200 Ksh (2 Cad) a month, a relatively small amount compared to other groups; indeed, the comparatively low barrier to entry was what allowed her to join. By contrast, Lankenua had enough money to be a member of seven to ten groups at any one time. Some of the groups that Lankenua joined had only five to six members who shared her same socio-economic status. These groups saved considerably more money than the group Mabe joined, around 1000 Ksh (12 Cad) a month. The other groups Lankenua participated in were created through family ties, neighborhood connections and clan affiliations. In these latter groups, members were both young and old, had different levels of education and were spread across the socio-economic ladder.

A member's age and level of education also determined their social standing within their savings groups. In particular, women who were young and educated implement and perform the bureaucratic norms of these groups, such as roll call, counting cash and enforcing

the group rules. As a result of this role, they were often the unofficial leaders of groups. Older women who were not fully familiar with the rules and norms of the group were, by contrast, dependent on these women when they participated in meetings. This dynamic between older and younger women in the context of women's groups reversed the power dynamics that normally existed between women in other social spheres in which age commanded respect and authority. For example, outside of women's groups, younger wives were submissive to their mother-in-laws, but in groups, I often saw this dynamic reversed.

Groups in Oltepesi also helped to equalize the unequal power dynamics women faced in their households between women and their husbands over money. Money in Oltepesi, not unlike what Ferguson (1985: 656) describes in Lesotho households, was a "domain of contestation." As briefly mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, in James Ferguson's discussion of wealth in Lesotho, he describes the dynamics between men and women in relation to land, cattle and cash-earners from wage-labour. Money, unlike livestock and land, was less associated with male-power. Similarly, in Oltepesi, men had control over decisions over land and livestock, but their power over money was slightly less clear. Some Maasai women had husbands who did not make claims on their earnings, while other women constantly had to hide their money from their husbands. There were no cultural or social rules on how and whether Maasai men could use their wife's cash. Instead, men relied on their power in other areas of social and economic life to confiscate their wife's money without any promise of repayment in the immediate or even distant future.

For this reason, Maasai women did not trust men with loans of cash and even tried to hide their money from their spouses by tucking it away in tins or behind their beaded cuffs, for example. Doing so avoided the risk that their husbands would use the cash they saved or borrowed in women's groups for their own use. Take the example of Christine. Christine was a woman in her early thirties and the mother of five children. Christine was saving money for

a tin (mabati) house during most of my time in Oltepesi. To build her house she drew on money she saved and accessed in women's groups. Stan used the loan Christine borrowed from a micro-finance group to buy young goats and calves, which he planned to fatten and sell to earn a profit. With the profits, he promised to repay Christine's loan. Meanwhile, Christine started a women's group with six women she met in Kiserian in order to access more money for her house. She saved 5000 Ksh (58 Cad) in this group, which she then used to purchase tin-sheets. She also held a fundraiser in her old home. Women in Oltepesi attended and gave her 70,000 Ksh (813 Cad) in total—a remarkable amount of money considering the meager earnings that most women had at their disposal.

For the second time, her husband took a portion of the money she earned through fundraising to pay-off the original loan he had borrowed from Christine that was from the micro-finance group. With the remaining money, Christine purchased timber for her new house. To pay the cost of labour to build the house, she received a 6,000 Ksh (70 Cad) loan from another women's group to which she belonged. Eventually she was able to access enough money to buy a new house. The example of Christine highlights how money circulated across groups and later within a woman's household where men had power. The movement of money from women to men, unlike what one finds between women, did not create debts. Rather, money taken by men was subject to male-control and as a result was often lost to their wives.

In discussing this example with Lankenua, I asked her why any of the women's groups did not intervene as a collective to stop Christine's husband from taking and using her money. I was particularly curious since a portion of the money he took originated from women's groups. Lankenua shrugged, explaining that women's groups had little power over what happens in a woman's household, particularly when men get involved. As she told me: "We cannot control Stan. We don't have power to tell him what to do." While having little

power to directly control men's behaviour, these groups nevertheless did protect women's earnings from Maasai men, since most husbands did not know that their wives participated in multiple groups at once. Their lack of knowledge can be attributed to a concerted effort by women to keep these groups a secret from men.

The importance of privacy was made apparent to me when I attended a meeting for a group with Tino. Sensing the meeting was unusually quiet, I asked Christine at the end of the meeting whether it was okay for Tino to accompany me, to which Christine responded 'no.' "There are secrets in these groups; we don't want our husbands to know how much money we have." Later when I attending a meeting for this same group with Namunyak, one woman in the group said: "now we can actually talk, we couldn't tell you much when you were with Tino." This comment expresses the social divisions that existed between women and men in Oltepesi, but also the heightened importance of secrecy in women's groups. By hiding their cash-incomes from their husbands in groups, Maasai women mitigated the power imbalances they faced in their households over money. In the process of doing so, they also created and expanding their social ties to one another.

3.5 Establishing Rules and Building Trust

A member's commitment to these groups was long, creating credit/debt relationships that were relatively open. For example, most women were committed to a group for at least one year. In order to ensure that members stayed financially committed to the group, women relied on the rules that they developed over time. The first rules groups implement were often around setting fines for late payments. But women also created rules around how to participate in the groups. Women were not allowed, for example, to bring money from men into the meetings, since this would provide them with less control over whether they could make their payments on time and in full. There were also, in some groups, fines for skipping

or for arriving late to meetings. The leaders of these groups, such as the chair, secretary or treasurer played an important role in implementing these rules, as highlighted in the opening vignette above.

As I observed, rules played an important role in equalizing the social hierarchies between members. Every member of the group, regardless of their social, financial and symbolic capital, paid the same amount of cash to the group and faced the same deadlines. Therefore, the rules applied to every member of the group, including young educated women who ran these groups and held official posts. Humour was also used as a means of dissolving power dynamics. Take the example of Christine, the woman mentioned above. She could not read or write. Nevertheless, in meetings, she sometimes tried to implement the formal bureaucratic norms of groups, including by attempting to do roll call and write down the names of the members in attendance, which often resembled scribbles. Women would tease her in jest, while she too laughed at her frequent attempts to lead the group. She was central to the comedy, but nevertheless asserted herself in the group context. Conversely, women who often led these groups and implemented the rules would, to different degrees, jokingly threaten members with fines for talking too much or speaking out of turn. I never once witnessed these rules being enforced, but they nevertheless were raised half-heartedly in order to control the conversation in a humorous way that did not seriously threaten the social dynamics of the group.

These social dynamics were far more important to creating the norms of women's groups than the set of disciplinary rules that Maasai women implemented overtime as suggested by Burman and Lembete's (1995) example of ROSCAs in South Africa. In meetings, the relationships between women of different ages, socio-economic backgrounds and levels of education were fostered through conversation. Some of these women were close friends, neighbours and kin, while others were merely acquaintances who would otherwise

not interact with one another regularly. Women's groups, while being explicitly about saving and managing cash, were also what Moodie (2008) describes in her description of micro-credit groups in Rajasthan as 'platforms of articulation.' Moodie looks at the relationships between women in micro-credit groups in order to consider their social dynamics. She argues that micro-credit groups were not unlike many other social and cultural institutions in the communities where she studied, where women discuss caste inequalities, the future of their families and particularly the futures of their daughters. By looking at these groups as communicative platforms, Moodie approaches these institutions as being "not just an 'economic' arrangement but also, and maybe primarily, as a social project" (2008: 455). Similar to what Moodie describes, women's groups in Oltepesi were important social platforms where women debated the merits of birth control, circulated stories about their children, complained about their husbands, discussed housing designs and a plethora of other topics, often for an entire afternoon. In meeting to socialize, members built social bonds and strengthened their existing social ties with one another to create groups that had economic goals, but which also acted as 'platforms of articulation.'

The ability of women from across the socio-economic spectrum and with different levels of education and financial literacy to join and participate in these groups can be attributed to how women's groups were formed. As previously mentioned, rather than using a pre-defined template, groups were often spontaneously created based on members' needs. Importantly as well, though, women – across the socio-economic spectrum - did not want to save large amounts of money in newer groups before first building relationships of trust with other members. As a result, women sometimes formed groups that initially only had a merry-go-round. The good that circulated in the merry-go-round was not always money, but could be as simple as a pile of firewood or a mug. Using something other than money allowed women to participate and build trust between one another with minimal risk. Almost always, though,

groups eventually began saving money together as a merry-go-round. These groups also, often, evolved to incorporate an account for loans as part of their operation. Accounts for loans were created when individual participants made a one-off payment to the group, but the sums eventually grew as loans are returned with interest. By investing more money into the group, members were cementing their relationships and financial responsibilities to one another.

Most of these groups evolved over the course of three to five years to become more and more sophisticated in the methods used for saving and accessing money. For example, the first women's group meeting I attended was for a group called Mamasita, also the name of the clan of the group's members. The eight members of this group came together through a merry-go-round to address their specific need for each to buy a large pot. During the first rotation of the merry-go-round, each member took turns receiving a large pot. Once this need was met and trust was established between members, the women in the group continued to meet to save money. During the second rotation of the merry-go-round, the members contributed 250 Ksh (3 Cad) but increased the amount to 500 Ksh (6 Cad) during the third rotation, and then 550Ksh during the fourth cycle. During the 18 months after initially forming the group, members also created a fund for loans by paying a registration fee to the group. The money acquired through this fee was later loaned to members. Mamasita began to resemble Nalepo, the group mentioned in this chapter's opening vignette, with two different streams of money entering the group and growing incrementally over time.

Nalepo, as well, became more complex over the course of 20 years as members explained to me. The group was originally created by five women in the early 1990s, but grew to include 23 members who managed three distinct flows of money: 1) the merry-go-round system for saving money; 2) short-term loans with relatively high interest rates; 3) long-term loans with lower interest rates. The five women who started the group began to

save money together through the merry-go-round system. By the time I was present at a group meeting in 2011, members of Nalepo were contributing 1000 Ksh (12 Cad) monthly, meaning that Nainyiti, the host of the meeting mentioned above, received 23,000 Ksh (267 Cad) when it was her turn to host. This was a considerable amount of money for women to save in Oltepesi, but not unusual for women's groups that had been operating for many years. Many others groups in Oltepesi also began with the merry-go-round system to save money, as was the case with Mamasita, but then expanded to manage different funds for credit.

To meet the deadlines and demands of these groups, women engaged in a number of transactions outside of women's groups that further entangle them in relationships of credit/debt with one another. Take the example of Nola, who had earned 300 Ksh (3.5 Cad) cutting fuel wood for Lankenua. She then borrowed an additional 200 Ksh (2 Cad) from Jacinda, which she promised to pay back in two weeks. She then used the full 500 Ksh (6 Cad) as her contribution to her women's group, from which she received a loan of 1500 Ksh (17 Cad). She then lent 500 Ksh (6 Cad) of the money she received to Noel, another member of the group. Noel then used this money to contribute to another women's group where she too received a loan, which she used to pay back Nola. Nola then used the rest of the money to pay for the costs of hosting a meeting and to repay Jacinda, from whom she had borrowed 200 Ksh (33 Cad) the week before. From Nola's series of financial transactions, we see money circulating across a number of connections—between her and Lankenua, her neighbour Jacinda, a women's group with 12 members, Noel, another women's group with 18 members, and then back again to Nola. The circulation of money between these women and across groups further cemented their financial obligations to one another for pre-determined periods of time, tying women together but also, indirectly, bringing different groups into relationships of credit/debt.

Nola was certainly not the only women to use loans from other women to manage her

payments to women's groups. Recall for example when Jane borrowed 300 Ksh (3.5 Cad) from me to pay the merry-go-round at Nainyiti's house. By paying the merry-go-round, Jane remained in good standing with the group. She then asked for an advance of 5000 Ksh (58 Cad), which she received in the same meeting. With the money from the advance, she repaid the 3000 Ksh ((35 Cad) I lent her. In borrowing money from me, even temporarily, then from the group to pay me back, Jane was managing her financial responsibilities to the group, while also attending to her own monetary needs.

At times, women could not manage their multiple financial responsibilities to groups due to a number of factors, such as time or financial constraints. For example, in any given week, Lankenua attended two to four meetings for groups in the afternoons. This schedule took her away for hours at a time from her household where she too had responsibilities, such as caring for her mother-in-law and managing her family's herd of livestock while Joseph worked in Nairobi. In addition to managing her time, Lankenua also had to carefully budget her money and discipline her spending in order to reserve her cash for groups. To better manage multiple factors (her time, energy and money), she tried to quit a group that she had been a member of for four years. During the group's monthly meeting, Lankenua explained that she was a member of too many groups at once and had to leave the group. In response, the women in the meeting refused to accept her reasoning. With her head down, Lankenua repeatedly told them about the difficulties she was facing managing her membership to 10 groups. After almost an hour of debate, Nola bitterly told her: "You can stop being a member of this group, but every time you use your new pot and every time rain falls through the gutters of your house, remember us - you didn't buy them alone."

While money was considered a good for personal expenditure and use, the commodities that women's groups allowed members to purchase became emblematic of the group's ability to improve their lives, as Nola's comment suggests. The strong association

between one's personal property and women's groups was also made apparent to me when I conducted household inventories with Maasai women. Many women described an item, like a pot, blanket, or tin sheets for their roof, as being from a specific women's groups. The association between one's property and women's groups highlighted a major feature of these groups. Namely, their ability to collectivize individual needs and interests by encouraging women to save and manage money together. In doing so, women accumulated individual wealth, built credit/debt relationships and materialized goods that they viewed as being indicative of their ability to improve their lives.

3.6 Micro-Finance Groups and Credit/Debt Relationships

Micro-finance institutions, banks and NGOs encouraged Maasai women to join similar associations for saving and accessing cash through advertisements and outreach programs. On the side of the road in Kiserian, for example, there were signs and billboards that were filled with images of smiling Kenyan women and slogans that promote women's empowerment and financial independence. The billboards advertised the services provided to Kenyan women by these institutions and underscored a widespread understanding that, by borrowing money, a woman could support her family through sound financial management practices. Maasai women were also given posters and calendars to hang in their houses that advertised the services provided by NGOs, banks and micro-finance institutions. Only a few Maasai women I met, however, participated in these programs, opting instead to join many different women's groups at once.

Maasai women's reluctance to participate in groups run by the micro-finance sector can be explained by power dynamics that operated at different levels. The micro-finance sector of Kenya was regulated directly or indirectly by the state and donors that provided funding to banks, NGOs and micro-finance institutions that targeted Kenyan women as

recipients of their services (Lairap-Fonderson 2002). Below is a chart that details the financial landscape that women's groups in Oltepesi existed within, with the degrees to which these institutions were directly regulated by the state.

Degrees of State Regulation	
Regulated	Banks; Micro-Finance institutions; Non-Bank financial Institutions (ex: NGOs) were all examples of the types of institutions that ran groups, such as <i>K-Rep</i> , <i>Kenyan Women Finance Trust (KWFT)</i> , <i>Care International</i> .
Regulated (but not directly)	Women's groups registered with the Ministry of Health's Gender, Children, and Social Development. These groups could conduct business in their own names, own property and apply for loans from banks and micro-finance institutions. <i>Institutions: Any Self-Help Group, including ROSCAs</i>
Not-Regulated	Women's groups existed independently of these institutions and organizations. They were not legally registered, regulated or monitored by the state and other micro-finance institutions. <i>Institutions: Nalepo, Enkakenya, Mamasita</i>

The first tier of institutions included formal banks, but also micro-finance institutions that were monitored by the Central Bank. These include, for example, K-Rep, Kenyan Women Finance Trust (KWFT) and Care International. These organizations were large micro-finance institutions and NGOs that had micro-finance programs in Kenya, with local offices in Kiserian. The second-tier groups had ten or more members. To register with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, these groups had to have by-laws or a constitution that guided their activities and specified the group's membership and objectives. Once a group paid a registration fee of 1,000 Ksh (12 Cad) to the Ministry, they became legal entities under the state law, capable of taking out loans and buying land and property as a

group. Only a small number of women's groups in Oltepesi were registered as legal entities with the state through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development. Most women's groups functioned independently of state regulations, donor support and formal financial markets.

State-regulations and formal finance affected how micro-finance groups work. As Lairap-Fonderson (2002) suggests, micro-finance institutions in Kenya work around two different poles of power. The first pole of power is exerted by the state and donors who have control over micro-finance institutions. The second pole of power is described by Lairap-Fonderson (2002) as the micro-finance institution's control over group dynamics. She uses the example of KWFT to explain her point. KWFT was established one year after Kenya's first structural adjustment program took effect in 1981. During the early 1980s time, KWFT repayment rates fell as a result of micro-finance groups defaulting on their loans. This drop in repayments led to a loss of donor funding until 1991, when KWFT had to adjust their services to women in order to ensure debts were repaid. To avoid having groups continue to default on their loans, KWFT created a number of mechanisms for monitoring the financial performance of groups. For example, members of KWFT groups had to attend weekly meetings to demonstrate their ability to save a proportion of their loans. During these meetings, employees of KWFT monitored how these groups worked.

Lairap-Fonderson's (2002) analyses of micro-finance groups relies heavily on Foucault's (1991) notion of disciplinary power in his discussion of governmentality. Foucault draws attention to all the processes by which the conduct of a population is governed, shedding light on the variety of institutions and agencies, including the state, that use different techniques of power to control and discipline people. In delineating this argument, Foucault highlights how power can be understood as top-down, state power, but most importantly, also everyday techniques of self-discipline and self-regulation that individuals

engage in. Power, as understood by Foucault, therefore operates at the most micro-levels of social relations. Applied to micro-finance groups, one can see how on the one hand, as Lairap-Fonderson (2002) describes, different institutions render women as being economic subjects in order to ensure their debts are paid. To achieve this end, women are encouraged to act according to a set of disciplinary norms that control their spending, their social relations and their behaviours in the context of groups.

In Oltepesi, there were stark differences between the power dynamics of women's groups. The groups that Maasai women ran in Oltepesi were vibrant, social, platforms of articulation where meetings were very loosely managed by a set of rules and social rituals. Women brought their young children to these meetings, for example, stayed for extended periods of time talking and drinking tea, while simultaneously circulating money through the different systems for accumulating savings and distributing loans. As mentioned above, while women sometimes threaten their friends, often in jest, with fines for talking too loudly or too much, groups were lively social spaces where women come together to connect. Contrasting these dynamics, groups run by micro-finance institutions drew on an extensive set of rules that required women to strictly control their social behaviours. The field officers who ran these groups played a strong role in instilling these norms, unlike in women's groups where power was distributed relatively equally among members.

For example, I joined a meeting for a micro-finance group that was run by an NGO. The group was an Accumulating Savings and Credit Association (ASCA). ASCAs followed the same principles as ROSCAs – they aimed to provide a platform where women could save money and access credit. Members had to deposit savings into their own accounts, which were managed by the micro-finance institution. As well, members of the ASCA could borrow money from the ASCA, which they had to return with interest. The interest earned from these loans was then distributed across the group at the end of one year. To ensure that women

saved money and returned their loans, the NGO drew on a number of rules that women agreed to follow when they joined the group, such as fines for late payments and for failing to attend meetings.

To enforce these rules, two field officers from ASCA led the meeting in a primary school classroom. The women in the group squeezed behind school desks that were made for small children. The first field officer was a man whom the women referred to as ‘teacher’ (*mwalimu*), while the second officer was a woman who members referred to as the ‘secretary.’ She sat at the front of the classroom in front of a blackboard, taking notes, while the teacher stood at the front of the classroom during the meeting, occasionally sitting down to read his notes. Upon arriving, the group members signed an attendance sheet that circulated across the classroom, while settling into the room. Since most Maasai women could not read or write, they scribbled their signatures beside their account numbers, not able to recognize their written-out names. Their names, however, were irrelevant since their account numbers were main form of identification in these groups. For example, when the teacher called a woman forward to deposit her saving, he called out her account number. She then needed to present an identity card that the NGO provided to each member of the group.

In addition to being reduced to account numbers as the primary mode of identification in the group, women were also not allowed to talk during these meetings. When entering the room, women only greeted one another with a nod or whisper ‘hello’ (*sopa*). If a member had a question, they had to raise their hand and wait for the teacher to give them permission to speak. If their cell-phones rang, they were also fined 50 Ksh (0.60 Cad). Similarly, if their children cried during the meeting, they were asked by the teacher to leave the room until they were silent. As a result of these different ways of controlling women’s behaviour, meetings for this ASCA were often silent.

There were other methods of surveillance and control that micro-finance institutions

drew on to control the circulation of money and power dynamics in these groups. For example, I frequently travelled with staff from a nearby NGO, which provided women's groups with loans to invest in businesses, on their monitoring visits to group meetings. During these meetings with groups, representatives from the NGO recorded how women managed the loan by asking a series of standardized questions. Members of these groups answered by describing their business ventures of selling food from shops or buying and fattening livestock. The members of the NGOs would then check a series of boxes on a form. Sometimes the questions women answered were about climate change, for example, having little direct connection to their groups' primary objectives. Answering questions about climate change, however, helped the NGO respond to one of their external donors that provided money to the organization for climate change programs. The NGO's continued ability to receive funding depended on being able to demonstrate the impact of the donor's grant with the data collected they extracted from Maasai women through regular monitoring visits.

These visits invoked what Ferguson and Gupta (2002) call horizontal 'encompassment,' wherein institutions of governance produce spatial and scalar hierarchies through mundane bureaucratic procedures. Drawing on the example of a health project in India, Ferguson and Gupta explain how field visits by NGOs to donor funded projects that operate at the local level instill disciplinary power. These techniques of power, as the authors further explain (2002: 989), encourage the "responsibilization" of subjects who are increasingly "empowered" to discipline themselves." Ferguson and Gupta's description of how NGOs operate as governing institutions in India resonates with what I observed in Oltepesi with different women's groups. Visits by NGOs to these groups instilled political and social hierarchies with external organizations. For example, rather than being primarily socially and financially responsible to one another, members of these groups become

accountable to external donors. Being accountable meant responding to donor needs and objectives, including reframing efforts to save and manage money according to a set of objectives that are defined by external institutions, such as climate change as mentioned above.

Most Maasai women avoided joining women's groups run by micro-finance institutions and NGOs for a number of reasons. For example, some women did not want to commit to the time and costs associated with travelling outside of their villages in order to participate in groups that met in town centers or in schools. As well, many women felt intimidated by the rules they needed to follow in the context of group meetings. More often than not, however, Maasai women told me stories of situations where members defaulted on their loans and had to pay collateral to banks when responding to my question of 'why' they do not join groups run by micro-credit institutions. In these stories, there were incidents where micro-finance groups tore down a woman's tin-sided house as collateral on an unpaid loan. Other stories involved examples where they took a woman's or family's livestock. Whether these stories of women were true or not, they circulated widely in Oltepesi as warnings against indebtedness to external development organizations. Being indebted to external organizations for Maasai women also meant losing control over the tempo-of-exchange and the conditions of their debts. Indeed, women felt as though they had little influence over when they could repay their debts to external institutions and how these groups were run.

Feminist scholars of micro-finance echo the critiques voiced by Maasai women. Micro-finance has been widely critiqued for entrapping women into relationships of debt with external institutions (Beck 2017; Isserles 2003; Mayoux 2010, 1999; Rankin 2001). For example, Linda Mayoux's study (1999) draws on examples throughout Africa to question the assumption that access to micro-credit necessarily helps women. She discusses the constraints

women face in trying to control money within their households. Robin Isserles (2003) also critiques micro-finance for failing to adequately address the difficulties women face in earning and income and paying back their debts by drawing on examples from Bangladesh. Bangladeshi women bind themselves to credit and debt relationships with micro-finance institutions and face pressures from their male-relatives to hand over their loans, leaving them in a position of vulnerability with external institutions. Aminur Rahman (1999) also provides examples from Bangladesh and India where women have accrued additional debts from money-lenders at high interest rates in order to make timely payments to micro-finance groups. In her discussion of micro-finance, she describes women who were not empowered as drivers of development, but rather are subject to endless indebtedness as a result of defaulting on their loans.

During my time in Oltepesi, I was familiar with these critiques of micro-finance and often wondered if Maasai women experienced similar struggles with debt. I was particularly curious because, despite women's best efforts, in lieu of having groups of their own, men would occasionally join the women's groups that Maasai women ran by giving money to their wives to participate on their behalf. In this scenario, women attended group meetings, deposited cash and took out loans, but the money they saved and borrowed was returned to their husbands. This allowed women to capitalize on the social elements of the group, while providing men with an opportunity to save and access low-interest loans. While members of women's groups in Oltepesi avoided this scenario as much as possible, sometimes Maasai women were willing to join groups that were run by micro-finance institutions on their husband's behalf. For example, Kevin, Nataana's husband, asked her to join a group led by KWFT so that he could access credit to buy livestock to raise, fatten and later sell. He gave her money to cover the costs of attending meetings, including transport to Kiserian. I asked Nataana if she worried about whether Kevin would repay the loan, thereby putting her in a

vulnerable position with KWFT. Surprisingly, to me, Nataana was extremely amenable to joining the group on behalf of Kevin, since she was able to travel to town to socialize, buy food and network with other women. As she told me:

Nataana: I don't mind going to meetings in town, so long as Kevin pays his debts on time.

Me: Do you ever worry that he might not be able to pay back his loans?

Nataana: No, there is nothing I can do, because it's his responsibility. If he goes into debt, it's his debts, not mine.

In this scenario, Kevin was not indebted to Nataana, but to KWFT, an organization that had more power over Kevin than did Nataana. KWFT, according to Nataana, could collect his livestock as collateral, thereby encouraging him to repay his loan. The added pressure placed on Kevin to repay the loan by an external institution provided Nataana with the security to join the group using her husband's money. According to Nataana's explanation, the power of micro-finance organizations to exert control over one's spending extended to men in Oltepesi. Indeed, Maasai men, as I observed, were far more willing to repay loans to micro-finance organizations than they were to women's groups.

Women's groups, unlike micro-finance groups, did not threaten to confiscate member's personal property. Instead, members of groups waited for debts to be repaid. This quality of women's groups was made apparent to me in a conversation I had with Lankenua about whether she had ever lost money from participating in a group. In our conversation, she explained that sometimes members did not always pay back a group on time. In asking her what measures a group will take, she told me:

Lankenua: "If a woman pays a group back – fine (*sawa*), if not, it's also fine.

Me: “What if you absolutely needed the money. What do you do?”

Lankenua: “Nothing, just wait.”

Many other women commented similarly to Lankenua by explaining that they waited for outstanding debts for up to three to twelve months. There were many reasons why women had to wait for their debts to be repaid that were linked to circumstances that women could not fully control, for example:

- Drought, causing women to spend their cash earnings on their household food supplies for periods of two to three months.
- Pregnancy and child birth, requiring women to rest rather than earn money for at least three months after giving birth.
- Death of a loved one, causing extra expenses in their households for hosting visitors and guests that women needed to contribute towards.
- Cooptation of cash from husbands who took their wives' money.
- Crisis in the family, such as a child falling ill, requiring a woman to pay for related medical expenses.

Maasai women's ability to wait for their money was what Clara Han (2012: 31) describes as being a 'modality of care' that emerges between neighbours, peers, friends and relatives who are in debt. In her ethnography of debt in Chile, Clara Han describes the various governmental technologies of debt that formal banking systems use to ensure low-income residents of Santiago's peripheral neighbourhoods repaid their monetary debts on time. Juxtaposed to these debts, she describes how kin, neighbours and friends provide one another material and social support under conditions of precarious employment and fragile health systems. Within this context of economic precariousness in Santiago, waiting was the manifestation of one's desire to be infinitely responsive, realized through domestic relations and credit. As Han (2012: 31) states, “waiting reveals how domestic relations with neighbors and institutions of credit both mesh with and create cuts in intimate relations. It helps flesh

out the problem of responsibility for kin.” In Oltepesi, a woman’s willingness to wait for loans of cash communicated how their level of trust to members of the group, but also towards the group. Rather than dissolving their membership, groups often engaged in different modalities of care, such as waiting. In doing so, they ensured the well-being of group members and the ongoing activities of the group itself.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how Maasai women’s groups operated in a wider social and financial landscape where Maasai women were offered opportunities to join micro-finance groups that were run by external development organizations. In order to describe both the internal dynamics of these groups and how they were situated in Oltepesi, I drew on anthropological discussions of credit and debt. While in anthropology, being a creditor and being in debt are often described as being two distinct, hierarchical social positions (Peebles 2010), this understanding of debt does not capture the relationships between Maasai women. Maasai women were in multiple credit/debt relationships at once, involving multiple transactions with one another and across many women’s groups. In creating these relationships of credit/debt, a woman would be straddled between the positions of a creditor and debtor simultaneously, making it impossible to separate the credit/debt unit that Peebles describes. I have contrasted these relationships of credit/debt between Maasai women to show how they were relatively egalitarian compared credit/debt relationships that Maasai women had with micro-finance institutions and with men. As I explained through these comparisons, women’s groups provided members with an avenue to act on their aspirations for development independently of any external organization and without the interference of Maasai men, who had the power to control their cash-incomes. By participating in these groups, therefore, Maasai women gained the power and control over how to manage their

incomes and generated wealth. In the process of doing so, they also extended and strengthened their social ties to one another. These social ties were critical avenues of support for Maasai women whose development aspirations included being able to leverage their cash-earnings towards material goods that they understood as being signs of improvement.

Chapter 4 – Gender and Housing: Building a Future Premised on Improvement

4.1 Working Together

Thirty women, all from the same family, sat under the shade of acacia trees in the middle of a hot afternoon to support Mary, a woman in her late fifties, whose daughter was getting married next month and needed household supplies. Nainyiti, who was co-hosting the event, led the group in a prayer, and then invited the elderly women in the family to speak first. Four elderly women addressed the younger women in the audience. They each delivered the same resounding message: the importance of supporting one another. “We are powerless alone,” one woman in her late seventies said, “but together we can do anything.” Pointing to a nearby house, she continued: “look at these houses...we can even build houses when we work together.” Another woman stood up to say: “today it is Mary’s daughter who needs help, but tomorrow it will be your daughter. Remember this day.” The younger women nodded their heads in agreement, occasionally clapping enthusiastically in support of the different speakers. While a variety of idioms were invoked to emphasize the importance of women working together, many of these women used the house – an oval structure made of grass and cow dung – to convey their message.

Nainyiti then invited the younger generation of women to speak. Five women between the ages of 35 and 50 proposed forming a women’s group for when a woman, like Mary, needed extra support for an important event or emergency. While some women in the audience expressed reservations about joining such a large women’s group, Nainyiti, who was one of the lead proponents of the idea, highlighted the importance of their family ties: “We are family. We trust one another.” Another woman added: “We used to run large groups...We can still run them today.” The group of 30 women discussed the logistical challenges of forming a women’s groups, then finally decided – after two hours of debate - to

start a merry-go-round. To close the conversation, a final call went out to the audience for anyone who wanted to speak. There is a pause, followed by silence. The women then turned their heads to look to see if anyone had any final words. One young woman, who is under 30 years old, quietly raised her hand to say: “I think it’s a good idea to form of a merry-go-round because I want to buy a mabati house.” Laughter erupted in the audience, and tired faces brightened. The meeting was over.

The young woman in the vignette above voiced a desire that every single woman in that meeting shared – to build a tin-sided house with her cash savings – which is why, I suspect, that the other women in attendance erupted in laughter. While Maasai women used the term development to describe many different activities, goods and services, mabati houses were *the* material good that they wanted to purchase with their cash-savings. Maasai women universally considered mabati houses to be a definitive sign of a person’s ability to improve their life. As such, Maasai women in Oltepesi discussed these houses endlessly with one another by, for example, describing the décor of different houses they visited in areas further north of Oltepesi, where families were more settled. They also debated the different merits and demerits of interior lay-outs and architectural designs of tin houses. On trips back from Kiserian, as well, women would recall the various colours and designs of fabrics, cushions and furniture they saw and wanted for their future homes that were being sold in the market.

While I contend that Maasai women’s desires for a *mabati* house was connected to a set of symbolic and embodied connections they had with their traditional homes, mabati houses represented something new – development. Maasai men increasingly viewed these houses as signs of development and emblematic of modern forms of living. As a result, they were beginning to financially invest in building these houses, marking a shift in customary gender roles that traditionally provided women with power and authority in their homesteads. Scholars that have observed similar changes in how houses are built in semi-nomadic

communities in Kenya, view the introduction of tin houses as indicative of men's increasing economic and political power (Straight 2007; Moore 1986; Talle 1988). While Maasai men have certainly gained power in their households over time (Hodgson 2001b; Talle 1988), I discuss the changing patterns of building houses in Oltepesi by moving away from the binaries of power/powerlessness, men/women that have occupied discussions of development in pastoral contexts. I do so by drawing on theories of gendered identities as always changing (Butler 2004; Gurel 2009; Hodgson 1999; Pink 2020), including in Maasai contexts where multiple masculinities have emerged as a result of Maasai men's ongoing engagements with state-building and development.

Understanding how Maasai men expressed and performed different masculinities is important to considering the power dynamics between Maasai women and men in their households, particularly over money. Maasai men, who were spending money on tin houses, were challenging normative gender norms by participating in what has hitherto been an exclusively female activity. While, in the process, Maasai women lost a degree of social control over their houses, they nonetheless gained a sense of accomplishment in being able to realize their aspirations for development. In describing these dynamics, I provide an example of how gender roles were, in some instances, coalescing between Maasai women and Maasai men in their efforts to improve their lives. Money played a role in this process as a currency that Maasai men could use to express their changing ideas of what it means to be a Maasai man.

4.2 Gender and the House

Scholarship that explores the architectural changes occurring in rural areas of Kenya has tended to view the introduction of modern housing as indicative of male and state power. For example, Aude Talle (1988) describes mabati houses in Maasai communities as being a

symbol of men's ability to control resources in their communities, including over the resources that are typically assigned to a woman's house. According to Talle, the house is an economic unit that once symbolized Maasai women's power. As she states: "livestock property belonging to the agnatic groups is inherited from father to son mainly through the institution of the house" (Talle 1988: 4). Men's ability and newfound interest in building houses with their cash-earnings represents just one extension of their increasing power over Maasai women's resources. For her, therefore, mabati houses were symbolic of men's ability to accumulate power and economic resources over time. In making this claim, Talle does not consider Maasai women's material desires and interests in these houses that I observed in Oltepesi.

Talle's interpretation of tin-houses as being a symbol of men's increasing power is shared by Henrietta Moore (1986) in her in-depth study of changing house-designs and material culture among the Endo in Marakwet, Kenya. Houses in Marakwet she explains, have long been viewed by the Kenyan state as "one of the biggest stumbling blocks to any future development" (Moore 1986: 130). Endo men and women also see their traditional houses as signs of poverty, distinct from modern houses. While much like in Maasai houses, the hearth functioned to signify a woman's position as 'creators, supporter, and provider,' in rectangular houses, the central hearth is removed, as are the central posts that signified men. Modern home interiors, as Moore explains, incorporate new symbols of value that are no longer linked to gendered dualisms that once reflected women's productive role in Endo economic and social life. Instead, the architectural styles and interior décor of houses in Marakwet reflect men's economic power and the values of the post-colonial Kenyan state.

Bilinda Straight (2007) also provides a symbolic analysis of mabati houses in Samburu. As she describes, tin-roofed houses in Samburu are seen as being "open-ended" symbols that remain "in the process of becoming" (Straight 2007: 57). In analysing the changes in the

architecture of the house, she first describes the traditional houses that women build as being distinctly feminine spaces. To explain this point, she (Straight 2007: 49) focuses on the central fire in a traditional house as the “sacred locus” of moral practices and reproduction. The lack of a central hearth in modern houses removes women from their houses where they used to cook. Guided by an understanding that daily practices imbue spaces with meaning, Straight suggests that modern houses are becoming re-gendered as tentatively masculine. In making this point, Straight, much like the other authors, view the introduction of modern houses as erasing the symbolic qualities of traditional houses that signified a woman’s power.

While the symbolic qualities of traditional houses highlight the power of women in many pastoral contexts in East Africa as these authors research describe, my approach to understanding Maasai houses draws on the idea that gender is practiced and performed. This approach to understanding gender moves away from the fixed binaries of male/female, power/powerlessness, masculine/feminine that have guided these author’s analysis above. Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of habitus, in particular, is useful for considering how one’s physical demeanor and movements around the house influence social actors’ perception themselves in relation to their physical surroundings. Habitus, as he explains, functions at every moment as a durable set of patterned dispositions which are deeply inculcated, and which reflect the social position of the individual. Drawing on the spatial patterns between women and men in the Kabyle house, he shows how men and women’s physical movements reflect a broader social logic that is built on a series of dualities, male/female, lightness/darkness, openness/closed. These dualities are observable, according to Bourdieu, when looking at when Kabyle women and men move in and out of their houses. In Bourdieu’s discussion of the house, one’s gendered habitus is central to the idea that social relations, identities and dynamics are formed through everyday practice, which is an important contribution to understandings of gender as being formed over time rather than

fixed at birth. However, Bourdieu's focus on a series of structural dualisms leads him to also rely too heavily on the idea that gender is a binary.

The gender binary assumes that being a man and a woman are fixed and opposing social categories. To understand gender as something that is 'made' and performed, and therefore also in the process of continual change, authors have drawn on discursive analyses of social life. Butler (2004, 1993, 1990), for example, argues that individuals perform their gender identities and subjectivities through speech acts and embodied practices. According to her, just like actors who perform a script, individuals refer to social norms when performing their genders. Repeated 'feminising' and 'masculinising' acts congeal overtime, making people falsely think that gender is something that is natural. However, according to Butler (1990: 178-179), gender only comes into being through a set of "stylized repetition of acts." Drawing on Derrida's concept of iteration and Foucault's notion of regulative practices, Butler argues that gender is not a stable, social identity, but instead a process of becoming that is always subject to failure. Butler's formulation of gender allows one to see that being a man or a woman is just a series of discursively constituted performances that are enacted overtime. As she (1990: 192) writes:

If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction.

Scholars have drawn on the idea of gender as performed to understand how men and women's gender roles and identities are formed and change in context of everyday home-making (Gurel 2009; Pink 2020). This research is useful for understanding how Maasai men and women's identities and roles in the household can change. For example, Gurel (2009)

applies Butler's notion of 'discourse in action' to her study of urban Turkish housewives at the end of the Cold War. As she describes, during the 1960s and 1970s, apartments were constructed as part of an attempt to modernize urban environments. Modernity in the Turkish context, during this time period, had a 'masculine' spatial and aesthetic prescription, characterized by austere finishings with linear, structural lines and minimal décor. This aesthetic prescription differed significantly from traditional Turkish houses that were heavily and ornately decorated with rugs and colourful fabrics. Within this context, Gurel asks: how do women make the masculine apartment into something that could work for women? By drawing on circulating discourses in public culture that glamourized feminine culture as being made through the house, Turkish women created domestic spaces of their own by decorating apartment interiors. Their material and personal investments in their houses allowed them to reclaim their identities as housewives and reinscribe feminine traits within the otherwise masculine aesthetic of modern Turkish apartments.

Sarah Pink (2020) similarly considers the house as being a sensory environment that contributes towards the recreation and extension of a gendered self. By tracing the various ways in which men and women move through their houses when completing everyday tasks, she shows how they transgress and challenge traditional feminine and masculine norms. For example, rather than seeing housework as necessarily means of gender oppression, Pink describes household tasks as instances where men and women can assert their agency and re-create the spaces within their homes. Men, who were her informants, in particular, integrate activities that are traditionally coded as 'feminine' into their masculine identities, such as cleaning the dishes. Pink (2020: 39) also explores "laundry flows," involving cleaning and putting away clothes, as involving a set of gendered movements throughout the house. Completing everyday tasks, such as cleaning dishes and doing laundry, as Pink (2020: 39) describes: "invoked commentaries from participants about their memories, experiences,

values and practices.” For Pink, both the materiality of the house and the gendered identities of men and women who lived inside are formed through everyday household tasks.

In my discussion below of traditional and mabati houses, I draw on an understanding of gender as a created and re-created through daily practices around the built environment. This understanding of gender is important to consider in Oltepesi where the house is an important location where men and women’s gender identities and roles were formed, beginning at a very young age, but also into adulthood as they began to build, occupy, experiment and live in different types of houses. Maasai men were experimenting and engaging with new ideas of what it means to be a man through their financial investments in their wives’ houses, while Maasai women were drawing on customary gender norms to gain cultural capital as home-owners.

4.3 Houses and Hearths: Building a Traditional Maasai House

A dominant pattern among pastoralists throughout Africa is for each and every woman to have her own house or tent (Prussin 1995). In these spaces, pastoral women often exercise complete control over who enters, sleeps and eats inside. Women in many pastoral communities also control the property and possessions kept within their houses where they care for their children, guests, husbands and relatives through daily acts of cooking and cleaning. The political significance of female-headed houses in semi-nomadic and nomadic societies is further reinforced symbolically in a number of ways. For example, houses are sometimes named after their homeowners who are women (Prussin 1995). Houses are also often imbued with symbols and metaphors associated with women and their reproductive power, as Straight’s writing suggests. In Oltepesi, Maasai women’s power over their houses reflected these broader trends in other pastoral contexts.

As I observed by participating in the act of building houses, Maasai women typically

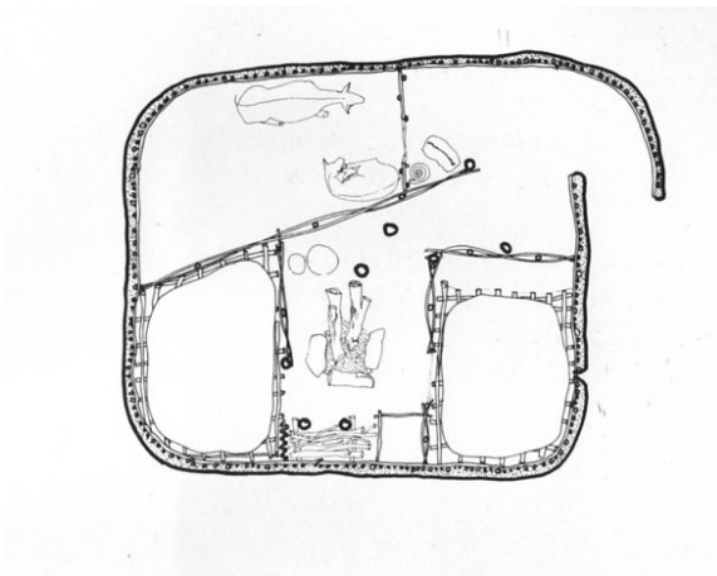
came together to build a house for a new bride after she had first lived for two to three months with her mother-in-law. The process of building a house was quite quick, taking as little as a few days, but nevertheless was an ongoing effort that depended on women's labour over the course of her life. The steps involved in building a house started after women organized themselves to come together, for one day, to build the exterior frame and interior walls of a new bride's house. This activity was done by weaving sticks and branches perpendicularly across two large wooden poles that were wedged into the ground, acting as the main structural supports. After building the exterior and interior walls, women would weave together sticks and grass to create a domed-like roof. Cow dung and layers of grass were then smeared above the sticks on every wall, covering the entire house. The end result was an oval shaped home where entire families slept. After this initial effort by a group of women, the owner of the house would continue to smear cow-dung on the exterior walls until they were thick and sturdy, and construct the interior beds using dried cow-hide.

While these houses were relatively sturdy, they nevertheless could quickly and easily fall into disrepair; the wind caused them to tilt to one side, they leaked because of the rains and cow dung crumbled in the dry heat, creating porous walls. As a result, women often repaired and rebuilt their houses continuously and often with each other's support in order to maintain a secure dwelling for their families.

While built collectively, every single woman in Maasai communities lived in their own house. Even women who were married to the same man built their own houses. In this scenario, each woman built their house around the central cow kraal on either side of the gate, which was the main entranceway into a Maasai homestead. Having one's own house was important to Maasai women, since it physically marked their place and power within their wider homesteads and communities.

All houses had a central cooking fire, which like in the Samburu houses that Straight

describes, was an important interior feature of a woman's house. Women prepared tea, boiled milk and cooked meals on the cooking fire, where people would often sit around on small benches while waiting to be served or simply to keep a woman company. While the hearth was the focal point of the house, there were other areas where both people and small animals slept. As depicted in the image below, most houses had at least two beds made of cow-hide stretched over sticks and a small room where they kept young goats and chickens.



(Andersen 1977: 181)

While built collectively and often uniformly, traditional houses nevertheless took on the personal choices of the woman who lived inside. A woman would often design her house in a way that suited her family – an extra bed for the children if she has many or, more recently, constructing houses in rectangular shapes to mimic the style of tin-sided houses. Whatever specific form these houses took; they always reflected the physical qualities of the builder. For example, just as Straight describes in Samburu communities, the height of the door and ceiling were only slightly greater than the height of the woman who lived inside. Moreover, the circumference of the interior, particularly around the central cooking fire, was often the

same distance as the woman's reach between the benches, fire and shelves that were located just behind the hearth.

Most women continued to live in their own houses until they died rather than move into another woman's house. To cope, younger women in their community provided them with their basic needs so that they could continue to live in their own houses. For example, Enkoko, the elderly woman with whom I lived in Joseph and Lankenua's homestead, was over 80 years old. She was blind and could barely walk. As a result, she depended on her daughters-in-laws and older granddaughters to fetch her firewood, cook her meals and clean her house. When I asked her why she did not want to live with Lankenua who owned a tin-sided house with multiple rooms, she replied that "she could never live in another woman's house." For Enkoko, living in her own house was more important than living with others despite being ill and frail.

Once a woman like Enkoko dies or leaves her community, her house was burnt or torn down. No matter how well constructed an abandoned house might be, it was never occupied by another Maasai woman. The practice of tearing or burning down a house once a woman dies or moves away is quite unlike the Zafimaniry houses in Madagascar that Bloch (1998) describes, which stand as monuments for deceased couple. Houses in Maasai communities were not monuments. Instead, they were lived-in structures that embodied a woman's labour, their identities and social relationships. In light of being inextricably connected to a woman's identity, burning or tearing down a house symbolically marked the end of their physical place in the wider community.

In sharp contrast to women, part of becoming a man in Maasai communities involved moving away and physically separating oneself from a woman's house. Young boys lived with their mothers until they were circumcised, which happened between the ages of 13-16, outside of their homesteads. Newly circumcised boys were then brought into their mother's

house to heal for one to two weeks. Afterwards, they moved out and joined their age-mates travelling from place to place, setting up homesteads separate from the domestic spaces of their mothers. However, there has been a significant shift in the last twenty years with the introduction of state education, as many men explained to me, that has changed their process of becoming a man with their age-mates. During my time in Oltepesi, for example, most young teenagers stayed in their own homesteads in order to continue to attend school rather than moving away with other young men their age. In order to accommodate this shift, Maasai women built separate houses for their teenage sons within their homesteads. By building a separate house, Maasai maintained a physical separation from their sons, which was essential to them becoming men.

Traditionally, when a man marries, he moved into his wife's house, but spent little time socializing or spending time indoors. Instead, most Maasai men typically left in the morning and returned in the evening, only occasionally staying inside the house during the day to rest, drink tea or to eat. When men did return home after leaving the homestead, they acted as guests and were treated as such by their wives. For example, men made an audible noise and even called out to their wives before entering their houses in order to make their presence known. Once inside, they did not interfere with the day-to-day activities that their wife's performed. For example, Maasai men did not freely help themselves to milk or to food, nor did they ask to be served. Even when they brought guests to their wife's house, they did not explicitly request her to prepare food or tea for them. Rather, out of respect, men waited for their wives to offer them food or milk. By embodying the role of a visitor, men showed respect for a woman's power and autonomy over their houses and the resources they controlled, while also upholding the masculine ideals that separated them from women and, by extension, their houses.

The physical space that was associated with men was the central cow kraal and front gate.

Each man in a Maasai community had their own entranceway into the interior space of their homestead. This meant that, for example, if three brothers settled in the same homestead, they each had their own entranceway. Within the homestead, Maasai women's houses lined the perimeter, while the central area was left open for livestock. Maasai men spent time in the cattle kraal at dawn before cows were taken out to pastures for the day and again at dusk when they returned. Men who did not travel during the day often sat under a shaded tree close to their gate. Rarely did men sit inside a woman's house when they were not eating, drinking tea or sleeping, whereas Maasai women frequently moved in and out of their houses throughout the day, socializing, drinking tea and resting in the comfort of their own houses.

4.4 Mabati Houses and Maendeleo

While learning language and doing research in Nairobi, I often found myself spending time with Kenya's growing, urban middle class. These Nairobians had very little contact with rural, pastoral communities in places like Oltepesi. As a result, the people I met always asked me questions about my experiences, particularly my housing situation, commenting on how 'crude' and 'primitive' the living conditions were in Maasai households. They wondered, for example, if I was able to cope with the number of livestock living close by and the smoke inside Maasai women's houses that filled the air as they cooked. I often explained that the smoke in houses rid interiors of flies that swarmed around because of the livestock, especially during the rainy season when there was an abundance of milk. There were many other practicalities to these houses that made them an appropriate technology for the climate, but, nevertheless, men and women in Nairobi saw these houses as being indicative of backwardness and extreme poverty.

Like in many other African contexts (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Gaitskell 1983; Hunt 1990), Maasai houses were the site of colonial interventions, particularly through initiatives

aiming to modernize pastoral communities. This process of modernization in Kenya has been carried out by encouraging pastoral families to settle into socially bounded households. To quote a 1931 Ministry of Health report, as an example:

Maasai live in crude huts surrounding their cattle with the ubiquitous cow dung and flies... Their nomadic habits are largely dictated by the pastoral conditions of their country and the shortage of water supplies. Danger from the wild animals and stock thieves has led them to surround their cattle with their own dwellings for nocturnal protection. Development, gradual progress and time with much patient pushing may bring the improved living conditions and greater hygiene necessary for their health, although it cannot be anticipated that their conservatism in this respect will be easily overcome.

As this quotation suggests, the Ministry of Health (1931) scrutinized pastoralists' houses for being 'crude' and located too close to 'animal dwellings.' To "improve" Maasai houses, in 1931 the Ministry of Health proposed constructing model villages in Narok and Kajiado counties. These villages were designed as permanent settlements with demarcated areas where animals and people could live in separate shelters made with cement, plaster, and wood. Cows would be kept in a 'cow house' and chickens in a 'chicken house.' These villages, however, were never built, and eventually the project was dropped.

Over the past 60 years, with the growing tourism sector, many model Maasai settlements have been constructed as tourist sites. These villages were located close to wildlife reserves and national parks, such as the Maasai Mara, where Kenyan and international tourists flocked every year. In the lulls of the afternoon when wildlife is not as active, tour companies brought tourists to these homesteads where they were greeted by women dressed elaborately in traditional Maasai attire and with beadwork for sale. Visiting these villages caters to what Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1994) describe, in their cultural analysis of eco-tourism in Kenya, as the 'imagination of others.' As they discuss through the example of Mayers Ranch, tourist experiences with the Maasai are purposely curated to recreate an 'imperialist

nostalgia' that plays on so-called savage/civilized, traditional/modern dichotomies. In most instances, young men dance to epitomize "the bravery of the Maasai warrior, the glorification of youth and maleness, Maasai as the 'Lord of East Africa', cattle raids, lion hunting, male circumcision, the diet of raw food (milk and blood), the primitive Maasai, the 'natural man,' and the affinity between tribesmen and wildlife" (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994: 435). Visiting houses offered a slightly different experience by allowing tourists to visit the spaces that women occupied, but houses in this context were nonetheless meant to project a stereotypical image of Maasai communities unchanged by modernity.

While tourist villages depicted Maasai homesteads as being frozen in time, in reality, housing has changed over time in Maasai areas in subtle ways as women have adapted and adopted new ideas about design and aesthetics. For example, while women continued to build traditional houses, some women in Oltepesi built them in a rectangular shape to resemble a mabati house. Inside these houses, there was often a seating area that looked like a corridor along which there was also a bench. The cooking fire was set off to one side and the beds to the other, leaving the main area for leisure. Most women also built traditional houses by using some purchased building materials, such as plastic tarps on the roof, in order to insulate their houses from the rain. Indeed, there were a multiplicity of house-plans that reflected Maasai women's ability to adopt and play with new architectural designs and materials to suit their needs and their desire for new types of houses.

Yet even with this greater variety, mabati houses were distinct and coveted. Unlike a traditional house, mabati houses stood above the tree line. The tin roofs glittered in the sunlight from views from the top of the Rift Valley, one of the very few markers that people were settled in Oltepesi from distant viewpoints. Upon entering a tin-made house, one was immediately in the living room area where there were typically two to three colourful and over-stuffed couches and chairs, along with a coffee table in the center of the room. The walls

of the room were often adorned with a plethora of décor, with layers of fabrics, posters, photos of kin and friends hanging high on the walls. One could see these images because the room was often illuminated by sunlight during the day that entered through small glass windows and sometimes by an electric light bulb at night that was powered by solar panels on roofs. Both the height of these houses and the interior light gave the living room a spacious feel compared to a traditional house where everyone sat close to the central cooking fire.

Unlike traditional Maasai houses as well, there was no kitchen inside a mabati house, meaning that there was no single central activity that occurred in the living room. Bedrooms in a mabati house were also separated from the living room area, located down a short hallway and away from guests. In fact, women often placed a curtain across the hallway to separate private and public spaces. Furthermore, animals were kept outside a mabati house, unlike in a traditional house where small goats and chickens slept indoors. Yet despite being architecturally distinct from a traditional house, Mabati houses were situated in the same place as a traditional house within the wider homestead. In a traditional homestead, a woman who was the first wife to her husband built her house to the right side of the gate, with subsequent wives alternating building houses on either side of the front entranceway. Mabati houses were built in this pattern as well.

While every woman I met wanted to own a mabati house, the costs of hiring labourers and purchasing building materials were prohibitively expensive for most women. As a result, they often needed the financial support of their male kin, who typically had more access to cash. For example, a very basic mabati house with three small rooms cost at least 100,000 Ksh (1,160 Cad), excluding the interior furnishings. This amount was equivalent to the value of three acres of land, three to four medium sized cows or 25 to 30 goats and sheep, a sum that was considerable in Oltepesi. Those who were able to pay for the construction of mabati houses were therefore most often men who earned regular wages in addition to owning a

substantial number of livestock. For a security guard, for example, the cost of a mabati house was equivalent to at least 10 months of work. Therefore, unsurprisingly, only a minority of families lived in mabati homes. In Kajiado County, 8% of families live in tin-sided houses according to Coast's (2001) research on Maasai demographics. However, I suspect this number was growing since the time of her research. In the village where I lived, for example, 25% of families lived in these houses when I conducted research in 2012.

While Maasai men and women have received various messages from development organizations and the state about their houses, to my knowledge, there was never a single initiative in Oltepesi that provided women with the building materials for a new house. As many women complained to me, development workers primarily visited their homesteads to promote veterinary products for their livestock, to educate them on health and hygiene and to introduce new foods, but never to provide them with the tin-sheets, cement and timber needed to build a new house. The lack of external support from NGOs and the state to improve Maasai housing was likely a result of the disproportionate focus of development programs on resources that men tended to control, especially livestock.

Some NGOs were also, I suspect, likely deterred by some of the impracticalities of a mabati house. Unlike traditional houses that were built with layers of materials and cow-dung, tin houses were not insulated from the extremes of weather. During the day they were very hot, and in the evenings they were cold. As mentioned above as well, mabati houses lacked functional kitchens. This limited use of mabati houses was observed by an NGO in Tanzania that flew housing specialists into communities to identify problems with traditional houses (Crewe and Axelby 2013). The NGO constructed houses made with tin-sheets and brick, but later came to find these houses were largely uninhabited. To understand why women and men nevertheless wanted new tin and brick houses, they conducted interviews. As one male respondent replied to the NGO worker: "We may be Maasai but we are modern

Maasai. Of course, we want modern houses” (Crewe and Axelby 2013: 143).

This gentleman’s sentiments reflect what Ferguson (2006) observed in Lesotho, where men and women wanted galvanized steel roofs and European style housing to replace traditional roundevaals. In coming to appreciate the Sesotho round houses as being a ‘suitable technology’ for the local climate, Ferguson asked an elderly man if he wanted a new house. The man replied by asking Ferguson to describe his family’s house. After explaining that he lived in a modern house with multiple rooms, the elderly man responded by saying: “that’s the direction we would like to move in” (Ferguson 2006: 18). Ferguson discusses the man’s desire for a European-style house as not being an act of copying, but a ‘shadowing.’ A shadow, as he details, is not a vacant outline but a shade that is filled with the aspirations of those who live within conditions of political and social inequality. By drawing on the metaphor of a shadow, he sees the elderly man’s comment as a desire for global belonging. As Ferguson argues, Africans’ yearnings for cultural convergence with an imagined global standard cannot be interpreted as simply mental colonization, but as an aspiration to overcome categorical subordination.

Ferguson’s interpretation of his interlocutor’s desires helps to situate Maasai men and women’s desire for a new mabati house as a desire and aspiration for belonging. As Maasai families began to settle, there were new possibilities for housing that reflected the norms of the wider population of Kenya, where many families have long lived in permanent houses. Mabati houses reflected these growing norms in housing. As many Maasai men who I spoke to explained to me, mabati houses were ‘better’, more ‘modern’ and ‘comfortable.’ Women also expressed these same sentiments, but often provided more elaborate explanations about the layout of the houses they would build and the different décor and furniture they would buy if they had a mabati house. For many Maasai men and women, these houses were symbolic of a future of being ‘modern pastoralists,’ settled and able to enjoy a shared

standard of living with other Kenyans that was epitomized by the house.

4.5 Moving: Traditional and Mabati Houses

In her discussion of space and gender in Markawet, Kenya, Henrietta Moore (1986) describes how the ethnographer's embodied experiences in space serves as an important means to understanding the gender norms of other cultures. As she (Moore 1986: XI) describes:

I learned the importance of the flowing world and of the difference between men and women's location on it by moving about with women and men and literally noticing the differences. This was a difference concretized and naturalized for all the Marakwet villagers I met, but I would never have had any real access to it without using my body as both a subject and object of knowledge. It was the way I was positioned in space that gave me access to the spatial understandings of Marakwet.

Much like Moore, I understood shifting gender norms between women and men in traditional and mabati houses through my own experiences living in both styles of dwelling. For the first six weeks of my fieldwork, I lived with Nkiborra who resided in a traditional house. Her husband, William, lived in Nairobi and worked as a security guard. He occasionally returned home on the weekends. While inside Nkiborra's house, I was almost exclusively in the company of other women except when Tino came by in the mornings to drink tea. Nkiborra lived with her youngest sister, who was a young teenager at the time, and a young girl whom she fostered. In the short time I was there, we would go through a set of daily routines together in the mornings and evenings: waking up in the morning to drink tea while huddled close to the warm fire, then often leaving during the day just after sunrise. Nkiborra would go outside to milk the cows, while her niece left for school and her younger daughter joined other children outside to play. Tino, my first research assistant, would arrive in the morning and we would leave shortly after, staying out until the late afternoon. On the

odd day that Tino and I did not leave, Nkiborra would cook us lunch before she left to gather firewood, attend a women's group or visit a friend, for example. When none of us were there, Nkiborra closed her house door to show that nobody was home. When we were at home, the passageway leading to the hearth in the center of the house provided us with privacy. Visitors had to carefully navigate their way in the dark before reaching the central room of the house where we were often sitting by the smoldering fire.

Men only stopped by occasionally to say hello. When they did visit, they needed to ask permission to come inside the house by calling out Nkiborra's name before entering. While this norm applied to some degree for women too, men were particularly beholden to maintaining physical boundaries around the house. As mentioned above, they would never ask for water, tea or something to eat. Instead, male visitors waited to be served. This dynamic barely changed when Nkiborra's husband William came home on the weekends: William slept at his step-mother's house instead of staying in Nkiborra's house, in order to accommodate me as a guest. While I offered to sleep elsewhere, Nkiborra insisted that I stay – a decision that was hers to make as the builder of her house. William slept at his step-mother's house, but would come visit in the mornings and in the evenings to drink tea and to eat. During these times, more men stopped by to see William, but they always maintained the norms of respect by treating Nkiborra as the owner of the house.

I left Nkiborra's house after six weeks, mainly because of familial stresses and strains in her household that made it difficult for me to stay. While it was widely known in the village that some members of Nkiborra's homestead were unwell, many community members, including William, assumed that my departure was a result of the condition of Nkiborra's house. Tin houses, as William mentioned to me after I told him that I was leaving, were 'better' and 'more suited to my needs.' William rightfully assumed that mabati houses were similar to the standards of living that I, as a woman from Canada, was accustomed to

enjoying. Therefore, he had deduced that my departure to Lankenua's house was largely motivated by my desire to improve the physical standards of my living conditions.

Though mabati houses still only represented a fraction of Maasai dwellings, their construction led to some changes in Maasai women's ability to maintain power over the interiors of their houses. This shift became clear to me when living in a mabati house with Lankenua, after I moved out of Nkiborra's house. Lankenua's mabati house had a main living room, with bedrooms down hallways that guests never visited. Inside the main living room were couches and chairs that lined the perimeter walls, with a coffee table at the center of the room, not unlike the typical mabati house I described above. The living room was elaborately decorated with pictures, posters and lace hung from all the walls. The house, unlike any traditional home, was also electrified with light bulbs dangling from the ceiling of every room. Joseph paid for most of these costs, including the interior furnishings, with the wages he made as a public servant in Nairobi. Lankenua also invested in her house by buying goods, like serving trays, cushions for couches and curtains with the money she saved in women's groups. While making the house more livable and aligned to her tastes, Lankenua's financial expenditures on her house were minor compared to Joseph's monetary contributions.

When Joseph was not at home during the week, the dynamics of Lankenua's household were similar to those of Nkiborra. During these periods, we spent most of our time together inside the living room. Her children – boys in their early teens – would come home from school and immediately change out of their school uniforms before preparing us tea. Susan, her youngest child (age 3), would play with her older brothers and the other children who lived in the homestead in the living room of the mabati house. When the cows came through the front gates at around 7 pm, Lankenua would go outside to milk them, and the older boys would go to the kitchen to start cooking dinner. I would either join them in the kitchen or would write in my journal while Lankenua finished milking. After an hour or so, Lankenua

and I would sit together again, talking and watching the younger children play in the living room until the teenage boys came inside to serve us food. Lankenua prided herself in her power and ability to make her teenage sons cook, since in most households, this was not the norm. As the owner of her house, she was able to direct her children's movements and activities, including those of her teenage sons whom she was trying to socialize to be men who did not strictly abide by the typical gendered divisions of labour.

Men would also stop by to see Lankenua, often commenting to me that she was the 'head of the household.' They even noted her stature as being 'large like a man's' and her voice being 'deep like a teenage boy's.' I suspect that these men used masculine traits to describe Lankenua's demeanor as a way to communicate her power in her mabati house when Joseph was not home. During these periods of time, Lankenua controlled who entered her house, including men who sometimes stopped by to drink tea. Most of the time, Lankenua readily invited them inside, however, she sometimes refused to let certain men enter when, for example, they were drunk or when she was too busy to entertain. She was, however, much more willing to allow women to sit in her living room and relax while she performed household tasks like sweeping the floor. Her relationships to these women in Oltepesi was more informal compared to her social ties to men, making it easier for her to entertain in her house, even when she was busy.

Lankenua's ability to dismiss certain men from entering her house, I suspect, was within her power as a Maasai woman, who still commanded authority over the interior spaces of her mabati house when Joseph was not home. The dynamics of Lankenua's household changed, however, when Joseph came home for visits on the weekends or for extended holidays. When he came home, Joseph first formally greeted Lankenua, myself, his young children and only then his teenage boys outside the house. After coming inside to drink tea, he would almost immediately change out of his pressed pants, coloured shirt and bomber jacket into a red,

traditional cloth sling (*shuka*) with a striking leopard print blanket draped over what he wore. He would then grab his walking stick, a sign of authority in Maasai areas, and leave the house to see his family's cows and to greet his brothers who lived in the same homestead. When Joseph was at home, particularly at nighttime, the social boundaries that were maintained between women and men in traditional houses shifted. Joseph commanded everyone's attention in the living room. He directed and even controlled the conversation by interrupting others who spoke, while being served tea, milk and food by either Lankenua or their children. Unlike in a traditional house, where women sat at the center of the room beside the hearth, in a mabati house everyone sat on couches around the perimeter of the room. In this arrangement, there was no central focal point that drew guests around the home-owner. Joseph nevertheless became the focus of everyone's attention because of his commanding authority, while Lankenua moved in and out of the room to prepare and serve tea and food, thereby removing herself from the conversation.

Joseph's physical and social demeanor was only one example of how he extended his presence inside the mabati house. Joseph also decorated the interior space of the house, thereby further inscribing his identity into the home itself. While often offered as gifts to Lankenua, the décor that he purchased included framed and printed pictures of his mother and father and of him as a young soldier. He also purchased posters in Nairobi that were written in English, a language that Lankenua did not speak. Joseph was, through the medium of money, participating in decorating the interior of Lankenua's house. In doing so, he was exploring new forays into worlds of consumption that did not typically align with normative understanding of men's gender roles in Maasai houses. Lankenua graciously received these gifts and had the power to decide where to hang Joseph's purchases alongside décor that she had also collected, such as calendars given to her by micro-finance institutions, lace curtains and wall hangings and pictures of her late mother and of her father. The mix of décor in the

house communicated the biographies of both Joseph and Lankenua – their tastes, backgrounds and orientations in the world. However, the aesthetic of the interior space of Lankenua's house was overwhelmingly feminine, not unlike what Gurel (2009) describes in Turkish apartments where interiors are decorated with colourful materials and various décor.

The greatest change in Lankenua's house, however, occurred when other men would stop by to visit Joseph. These men were often his brothers and men who were similar in age. While it was acceptable for Lankenua and myself to remain inside the living room when only a few men were visiting, we would leave when Joseph hosted a larger meeting in order to maintain the norms of respect that physically separated Maasai women and men. On these occasions, Lankenua and I moved to the kitchen, which was a traditional house that was located a few meters away, with her teenage sons, herders and young children. Lankenua cooked throughout the evening in the kitchen, while her teenage sons served plates of food and thermoses of tea to the men inside. Neither Lankenua nor I were permitted to enter the house while the men were still meeting.

The architecture of the house itself enabled these dynamics between Lankenua and male visitors. The lack of a dedicated cooking fire meant that there was no central activity occurring inside a mabati house. In C. Nadia Seremetakis's (1991) ethnography in Maani Greece, she describes cooking as being a 'task performance' that allows women to maintain their social and physical autonomy from men. As she writes: "The systematic pursuit of labour tasks, no matter how small, in almost any prolonged social encounter, generated a performative boundary and created interiors from which men were either excluded or had to think twice before entering" (Seremetakis 1991: 203). In Oltepesi, the act of cooking inside a house allowed women to control the interior spaces of their houses. Women even denied men permission to enter their houses by explaining that they were busy cooking. In my experiences, sometimes the women seated inside were not cooking, but simply enjoying the

privacy of socializing with one another outside of the earshot of men.

Despite the changes in how women occupied their houses, many Maasai women I spoke to who owned mabatii houses expressed few concerns about the possible diminishment of their role, identities and social autonomy as home-builders. Lankenua, for example, welcomed Joseph's willingness to financially invest in her house, even if it meant removing herself from the living room to cook on nights when he was home. As she explained to me:

[Joseph] can use the living room when he comes home from town and I don't mind because he paid for the tin, cement, and some of the timber. I know a lot of other women wished they had husbands like Joseph. You've noticed, Joseph's good because he sees the things that I need and works hard to make sure he has enough money to buy them. Just yesterday he brought me a poster for the wall. He spent money on this house, so he can also use it as he wants to.

As this quotation suggests, Lankenua saw Joseph's financial contributions as a reason to share the interior of her house. In fact, she eagerly wanted Joseph to both invest in and value their new house as something they shared. Other women expressed similar sentiments to Lankenua. They encouraged their husbands to spend money on their houses, and were more than willing to alter their patterns of behaviour in their shared space in exchange. However, these contributions, according to women, did not mean that men were the owners of the house since they did not traditionally build or maintain traditional houses.

For women, changes in how men and women occupied mabati houses were not significant disruptions to customary gender norms. Rather, many women I spoke to continue to see themselves as 'home-owners', referring themselves *enopeny enkaji*. *Enopeny* is the closest word in Maa to 'owner,' however not in the Euro-American sense of exclusive ownership. Rather, the term refers to a person's relative control over a good vis-à-vis others. As Lankenua explained to me: "it's still my house, men cannot own homes." Indeed, for her, financially investing in a house did not translate into her diminishment of power. Many

women commented similarly to Lankenua. As one elderly woman explained: “When you see a man sweeping their living rooms, then you can say they own mabati houses. But you will never see a man sweeping a living room.” As this quote suggests, Maasai men were not integrating new forms of domestic labour that were traditionally coded as ‘feminine’ into daily routines, such as cleaning the inside houses, unlike what Pink observed in her study. Rather, as the elderly women’s comment above suggests, women in mabati houses continued to view their ‘task performances,’ to use Seremetakis’s term once more, as providing them with a sense of power over their houses.

Gender norms were therefore bending in Oltepesi with the introduction of Mabati houses, but women did not see these changing norms as threatening their identities as homeowners. Instead, Maasai men’s investments and interest in spending time in these houses were indicative, for many Maasai women, of their willingness to support their material desires and aspirations. Therefore, they supported and even encouraged their spouses to invest in building homes, by for example, encouraging them to sell livestock in order to access the cash needed to purchase the labour, materials and furnishing for new houses.

4.6 Maasai Masculinities and Mabati Houses

Maasai men’s investments and ways of occupying mabati houses reflected broad shifts in masculinity that have long been occurring in Maasai areas. Maasai masculinity, as Hodgson (1999) writes, has been formed and re-formed over time through men and women’s ongoing engagements with the state, explorers, missionaries and development planners. Through these ongoing interactions, two different concepts of masculinity have emerged: a dominant, normative masculinity that is strongly associated with herding, being Maasai and tradition, which stands in contrast to *ormeek*. Based on historical analysis and 25 interviews with men, Hodgson traces the etymology of *ormeek* to the colonial period in Tanzania (1919-1964),

when the term referred to all non-Maasai Africans, particularly settled agriculturalists (Galaty 1977). However, the term later expanded to refer to those Africans who were educated, spoke Swahili, worked for the state, or who were baptized. These men were marked and mocked by less educated Maasai men for adopting the language, dress and occupations of men who were not Maasai. In particular, Maasai men who worked for the government and who collected taxes were considered *ormeek*. With time, the term broadened to include men who attended school and who became Christian. As Hodgson discusses, *ormeek* is an implicit critique of all that modernity represented to Maasai: education, institutionalized religion and even the political structures and language of the nation state.

Hodgson's discussion of *ormeek* resonates with what I observed in Oltepesi in the relations between men. In Oltepesi, there were men with a variety of different 'cultural styles,' to use Ferguson's (1999: 95) phrase in his discussion of men in Zambia's Copperbelt. Ferguson (1999: 95) defines cultural styles as a "series of practices that signify the differences between social categories." He draws on the concept of 'styles' to highlight how identities are self-consciously stylized and performed, rather than linked to a prior or given identity. The social categories that he refers to are those of Zambian men living in Copperbelt towns whose speech, manners and bodily comportment displayed their allegiances to either rural or urban environments. Men who are 'Localists' reference their traditional rural roots and men who are 'cosmopolitans' reference their urban lifestyles through acts of consumption. Similarly, in Oltepesi there were differences between men who were relatively well-educated, lived in town-centers and worked as wage labourers with men who were less formally educated and engaged exclusively in pastoralism. While these differences were not always understood through the derogatory frame of *ormeek*, they did affect how Maasai men viewed one another in certain aspects of social and cultural life, including their relationships to Maasai women's houses.

Joseph, for example, was caught between these two cultural styles. For him, investing in a house formed part of his identity as a ‘modern man’ who shared and addressed his wife’s needs. Yet in investing in a mabati house, Joseph was self-consciously aware that he was not fully abiding by gender norms that were inscribed into men’s habitus around their house, even though Lankenua did not mind him using her house as his own. Joseph’s self-consciousness was apparent to me the first time he hosted a meeting inside Lankenua’s house while I was living with them. In the morning he apologized to me for having his guests stay late into the night, which meant that Lankenua and I slept in the kitchen for part of the evening. I told him that he did not have to apologize since I was a guest in his house. Joseph quickly corrected me for referring to the house as ‘his’ and said: “Men do not own houses. Lankenua owns this house. I am her guest when I’m at home.” Joseph’s efforts to correct and educate me on Maasai gender norms signaled what Butler (2004) describes as a conscious attempt to cite normative understandings of maleness. While consciously identifying himself through normative masculine ideals, his actual behaviour in Lankenua’s house indicated otherwise.

While Joseph readily, albeit self-consciously, took over the interior space of the house, other men would not even enter Lankenua’s house because it was too unfamiliar from the built environment that they were accustomed to in traditional Maasai homesteads. These men were often elderly men from the community who would wait outside of Lankenua’s kitchen to visit her rather than going into the main house. The five herders from Tanzania who lived with us in the homestead also refused to come inside her house during the first three months of their stay, even to drink tea. These men referred to men like Joseph as being ormeek. As one of the young herders I spoke to explained in describing Joseph: “When I first arrived to the homestead, I saw the tin-house and was not sure why I was even there. I was hired to herd the cows and goats, but I thought that Joseph did not have any livestock. I

thought he just grew plants (laughing at himself).” This herder’s description of Joseph as a man who ‘grew plants’ was a derogatory comment that marked Joseph as being an agriculturalist rather than a pastoralist.

In describing Joseph in this way, the herder was marking Joseph as being distinct from the norms of masculinity he was accustomed to: ‘real’ men owned cattle and slept in traditional houses made by women with cow-dung and wood. By mocking Joseph, this young man was also asserting himself as being Maasai and being a man by initially refusing to enter into Lankenua’s house. These two identities, as Hodgson (1999) writes in her discussion of development and social change in Maasai communities, have become essentialized as one in the same thing over time. Importantly, however, gendered performances around the house are not fixed, but instead open to change (Butler 2004; Pink 2020). After only a few months, the herders did start to come sit inside the living room to drink tea in the early evening, staring at the walls, suffused with décor, while asking questions about my life in Canada to Lankenua who helped translate. Joseph’s herders, while originally unwilling to enter the mabati house, became comfortable sitting inside with me to talk about life in Canada. These herders’ curiosity and willingness to shift their habitus in the homestead highlights how they, like many Maasai men I came to know, were curious to understand new ways of living. Unlike these herders, however, Joseph had the financial capital to build a new house, which he came to occupy at times as his own.

While constructing and occupying mabati houses challenged the customary gender identities of Maasai men, this was not the case for Maasai women. The equivalent term for Maasai women to ormeek is *ermeeki*, which is the feminine form of the term (Hodgson 1999). Women did not use the term *ermeeki* in relation to the different material conditions of their houses since, regardless of their age, class and level of education, women all wanted to build a mabati house. The universal desire for these houses among Maasai women from

different social and economic backgrounds highlights the idea that aspirations and material desires are collectively shared (Appadurai 2004) and connected to a broader symbolic system (Gell 1988). By wanting new houses, women were extending their gendered identities into new material realities that were imagined through the physical dimensions of a new house.

Conclusion

This chapter described what Maasai women desired most to achieve with their cash-earnings: a mabati house made of tin and timber by hired labour. These mabati houses, as I have described, were *the* material good that most symbolized development for so many Maasai women. While I contend that women's desire for these houses was inextricably linked to their identities as home-owners and builders, the growing prevalence of mabati houses highlights a shift in gender dynamics in Maasai communities. Through the example of Nkiborra and Lankenua's houses, this chapter showed how the introduction of new houses provided men with more control over the interiors of their wife's houses. While one might read this shift as being yet another example of Maasai women being 'At a Loss' (Talle 1988), I have explained the phenomenon by moving away from the binaries of men/women, power/powerlessness, masculinity/femininity that sometimes frame discussions of social change in pastoral contexts. In doing so, I have shown that men's efforts to build new houses did not radically disrupt gender norms, even though the gender dynamics of mabati houses were distinct from those in traditional houses. Understanding these subtle changes in power and masculinity is important to considering Maasai women's access to resources in their houses, particularly money. In some instances, Maasai women and men's aspirations for development were shared and mutually supported by their combined efforts to improve their lives with the medium of money, as the example of the mabati house shows.

Chapter 5 – Uncertainty and Risk: Food and Relatedness between Maasai Women

5.1 Food Aid

It was a plus 40-degree day in November during an extended dry season in Oltepesi. The colours of the landscape drastically changed over the previous two months from dense layers of greens to hues of grayish brown and red. The canopy of acacia trees was barren of leaves from months without rainfall. From views looking across the Rift Valley, the reddish-brown earth below showed through the skeletal branches. The changing colours of the valley were matched by changing sounds and tastes around Lankenua's home. The cacophony of wailing goats in the morning was being replaced by the sounds of children playing. Tea turned from being almost white in colour to black from the lack of milk. Herders that once came and went from Lankenua's kitchen were also gone, having migrated with their cows and goats to greener pastures for the month.

After drinking black tea in Lankenua's kitchen, Namunyak arrived at 8am to tell me that there was a food aid delivery outside a primary school in Rian at 9am, a neighbouring village six kilometers away. We went outside to find that Nataana and Mary were quickly getting ready to leave. Nataana was pouring milk into a recycled water bottle to leave for her youngest son, while Mary was outside with an empty bag slung over her back. Lankenua decided to stay home while the four of us made our way to the truck, driving along the paved road towards Rian and picking up Nkiborra and a few other women along the way. We arrived to find 50 women of all ages already there, waiting, seated by the school on blankets laid under trees, beading leather bracelets. Some of the women were from nearby villages, while others were from communities further south. Hours passed as we sat, waiting for the food aid delivery to arrive.

At around noon, a small black truck and lorry approached the school. Two young men unpacked plastic pails individually filled with kilos of maize meal, vegetable lard, rice, tea, sugar, and beans from the lorry. Meanwhile, a middle-aged man wearing glasses, a dress shirt, and dress pants emerged from the truck and asked us to come closer to hear him talk. He introduced himself as a man representing a Christian aid organization that received food aid from the ‘Germans’ and distributed it to women in Oltepesi. His organization, he said, became concerned about food security in Kajiado after he saw a young boy walking along the road eating leaves rather than food. “From then on,” the man said, “I became aware that people in Kajiado needed our help.” Nataana turned to me to quietly say that he made the same speech during another food aid distribution last month.

After finishing his speech with a prayer, a young man from Rian called out the names of women to collect their pails of food. One by one, each woman carried their pails away before dispersing and making their way home. The 15 women from the village where I stayed paused beside the truck I drove, hoping for a ride back. Namunyak and I made two trips, first driving seven elderly women back, and then returning to drive the eight younger women to their houses. During the first trip with the elderly women, I asked how they coped, in the past, during the dry season and droughts when there was no food aid. Some women described collecting wild fruits, while others told me about the bark (*orpanti*, *olerai*) they collected and boiled to make tea, which curbed people’s appetites. Others described different uses of livestock products. Some told us about how they used to mix blood with soured milk and herbs to enhance the taste. Some roasted cow hides to eat, while others described the ways they preserved meat in animal fat. The diets they described derived largely from livestock, supplemented by wild herbs, fruits, and tea.

On the second trip with the younger women, I asked the same question. Nkiborra, Nataana, Mary and four other women gave drastically different answers than the elderly

women. They told us how they earned money to buy food by collecting firewood, cutting grass, and making beadwork when their household supplies fell short. Notably, not a single woman in the truck described boiling barks, collecting wild foods, or preserving meat.

Whereas women of the older generation dealt with hardship by using the surrounding natural resources, the younger generation turned to the cash economy and relied on purchased food.

While Maasai women earned money to buy food, they tried as much as possible to reserve their money for women's groups. By doing so, they respected the traditional division of labour and responsibilities between themselves and men, who were responsible for supplying sufficient amounts of food to the women in their families. While in the rainy season many women had enough food supplies to prepare two to three meals a day, during the dry season many households faced shortages in Oltepesi. During these periods, which could last between three to five months, Maasai women relied on their social networks more than any other resource to access food, including food aid deliveries. Their increasing reliance on purchased food, however, had the potential to change the norms of exchange by introducing new commodities into circulation. In this context, I ask: how did Maasai women sustain and nurture their relationships and networks that were created through food? I show that despite the introduction of purchased foods in Oltepesi and market norms of exchange, Maasai women continued to draw on the moral economy when managing their household food supplies. In doing so, they circulated food across one another's households, drawing on customary social and cultural values assigned to certain foods, to build close bonds of relatedness to one another.

In making this argument, I highlight an important attribute of women's efforts to act on their aspirations for the future through their social ties to one another. As this dissertation argues, Maasai women saw their ability to mobilize their networks, particularly around cash in women's groups, as emblematic of their ability to secure futures premised on

improvement. Improvement, however, was not only signified through the material and social goods that a Maasai woman purchased with money, such as mabati houses as discussed in the previous chapter, but also by their ability to act in ways that supported one another in times of need. Showing how they acted creatively to support one another in times of need, through the example of food, is critical to showing the underlying networks of exchange that proliferated in Oltepesi between women despite the incursion of market norms. These networks, as this chapter shows, created bonds that Maasai women understood as lasting long into the future, offering a sense of security and well-being in a context where they faced uncertainties and risks.

5.2 Food Security in Oltepesi

Maasai families faced many uncertainties— land loss from unscrupulous appropriation and sales, along with livestock diseases that could have decimated entire herds. However, the most frequent risk that women had to manage was ongoing and episodic food insecurity in their households. Incidences of drought and food insecurity increased over the past 30 years in Kajiado County. During this time, there were repeated food shortages, for example, in 1984, 1990–1992, 1996–1997, 2000–2001, 2004–2005, and 2008–2009 (Oiye et al. 2011). While pastoral households have always endured seasonal variations in their food supplies, the cycles of food insecurity have been shorter in recent decades, making it difficult for families to recover. The diminishing amount of land available to families to migrate livestock was also making it increasingly difficult to cope. Without enough livestock or cash for subsistence, many Maasai families faced food shortages annually.

Men and women had different responsibilities in supplying and managing household food provisions. Maasai women were primarily responsible for managing their house's day-to-day supplies of food. In theory, this responsibility was independent of other women, since every

woman in a Maasai community was given milking rights to a portion of the households' herd, as well as bundles of purchased food that were purchased by their husbands. This was even true of polygamous families. In this scenario, a man would give each of his wives their own cows, sheep, and goats to milk, and their own bundles of purchased foods to manage. In managing these supplies, women decided when to give food away and when to reserve it for their own house's consumption. Furthermore, when managing their allotment of milk, they had to balance the nutritional needs of calves with the immediate needs of their households. Their autonomy in making these decisions over their household food supplies was such that men were often unaware of how much food was available in their homes, not unlike what Holtzman (2009) describes in Samburu communities in Central and Northern Kenya.

To manage their household's demand for milk, women milked cows, goats and sheep twice daily when their livestock were not migrating: once at dawn and once at dusk, before and after the animals went out to pasture. During the dry season, women were not able to milk as regularly because of the limited supplies of milk produced by livestock. They could not milk at all if their livestock were migrating. In these periods of low milk supply, a woman relied more heavily on maize meal, rice, beans, lentils, green vegetables and vegetable fat. Of these many foods, maize meal was the most commonly consumed food in Maasai households particularly during periods of food insecurity (Oiyee et al. 2011). Maize meal was the least expensive purchased food and was extremely filling and easy to prepare. Women prepared maize meal almost daily by adding small amounts of boiling water, letting it expand and bubble until it became thick and heavy, forming a sort of cake. Women also cooked maize meal as a porridge with milk, when it was available, or with water, salt and vegetable oil.

While women managed food allocation and preparation, men were responsible for supplying their wives with food, which often involved managing their family's herd of livestock and their cash-incomes. Men typically purchased food once weekly, but during the

dry season their ability to buy food became strained for a number of reasons. Men spent more money during the dry season on their livestock. They hired more herders, paid for water and rights to graze their livestock on other people's land. Maasai men also earned far less money from selling livestock. While men could typically sell their livestock for cash, which in turn can be used to purchase food, the price of livestock relative to agricultural products was extremely unfavourable during the dry season. For example, during the 2009 dry season, lasting from June to November, the price for an average-sized cow dropped from 315,000 Ksh (\$375 Cad) to 840 Ksh (\$10 Cad), while the price for goats and sheep dropped from 4200 Ksh (\$50 Cad) to 672 Ksh (\$8 Cad). This staggering decline in value during the dry season came from the surplus of animals, which were often also underweight, on the market as families tried to sell livestock to avoid future losses caused by drought. At the same time, the price of grains increased significantly, making the costs associated with selling livestock for food considerable. As a result, many households in Oltepesi faced shortages of food during the dry season.

Food aid deliveries, such as the one described at the start of this chapter, did not provide women with a regular source of food. These deliveries were often distributed periodically in Oltepesi through local NGOs that received food aid from the state or directly from international donors. In the example above, a Christian aid group that was based out of Kiserian received food aid from a German NGO during the dry season of 2010, lasting from August to November. While easing some of the pressures placed on pastoral households during the dry season, food aid represented only 3.2% of household food supplies (Oiye et al. 2011). This figure is far higher than what I observed from September to January 2009. From surveys with 20 houses, I found that women on average received three food aid deliveries during a four-month period, amounting to less than around 2% of their household food supplies.

While women sometimes supplemented their household food supplies by purchasing food with the money they earned, they tried as much as possible to maintain the customary division of labour between themselves and their husbands, who were ultimately responsible for supplying their houses with food. To do so, like in many pastoralist contexts (Homewood 2008b; Homewood and Rodgers 1991), Maasai women in Oltepesi continually shared food with one another to supplement periodic deficits in their households, guided by moral norms of exchange.

5.3 The Moral Economy of Exchange

Sayer (2018, 2003) defines the ‘moral economy’ as being the concerns that underlay formal and informal norms, conventions, values, dispositions and commitments regarding what is just and what constitutes good behaviour in relation to others. The concept, he describes, implies certain broader conceptions of well-being. In anthropology, the concept of the moral economy similarly is used to describe how economic life is embedded within broader social and cultural norms and social institutions (Malinowski 1922; Mauss 1925; Sahlins 1972). Guided by Mauss’s (1925) discussion of the gift, Polanyi (1944) famously wrote that instead of thinking of economics in terms of market-driven concepts such as rational choice, self-interest and maximum utility, it is more appropriate to consider economic action as part of a wider process of provisioning – that is, how societies secure their material needs. To develop this argument, he drew a distinction between pre-industrial societies where goods were exchanged through patterns of reciprocity and redistribution, and industrial societies, where market-exchange was the dominant mode of accessing goods and services. Market exchange, Polanyi argued, dominated modern industrial societies and was driven by the principle of self-interest. By contrast, economic behavior in pre-capitalist

contexts was guided by broader set of social interests, including mutual obligations, shared values, traditions and needs.

These norms of reciprocity and redistribution outlined by Polanyi (1944) have influenced ideas about the moral economy in earlier scholarship on the topic. Most notably, E.P. Thompson (1963) discussed the moral economy of the poor in the context of widespread food riots in the English countryside in the late 18th century. According to Thompson, these riots were manifestations of an economic culture that was rooted in feudal rights, where it was widely believed that the price for essential goods should be stable, not dependent on the ‘invisible hand’ of market forces. The rioting peasants held that a traditional fair price was more important to the community than the free-market price set by larger farmers who sold their surpluses at a higher price outside of the village. Drawing on Thompson’s (1963) work, James C Scott (1976) used the term ‘moral economy’ to look at peasant struggles against the state in South East Asia during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Scott asserts that peasants organized themselves in rational ways to share resources through patterns of reciprocity and redistribution, what Scott refers to as the ‘Moral Economy of the Peasant.’ Guarding the ‘moral economy’ acted as a form of resistance against colonial rule, informing peasants’ notions of justice. What makes both these accounts distinct from Polanyi’s formulation of economic life and many earlier discussions of the gift and commodity-exchange, is their understanding of moral and market economies as sharing the same historical time.

While useful to understanding the co-existence of different economic norms, Thompson’s and Scott’s discussions of the moral economy treat the moral economy as a bounded social and economic system that is resistant to change. More recent theorizations of the moral economy describe it as an unfolding economic space, neither static nor independent of other social and cultural forces. Didier Fassin for example, defines the term as the

“production, distribution, circulation and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space” (2009: 1249). This definition considers the moral economy as an adjective rather than a noun that guides individual and institutional decision-making and therefore can constantly change. By looking at how humanitarian organizations make decisions around the misfortune and insecurity of others, he considers the ‘moral stakes’ involved in managing scarce resources. Fassin’s idea of moral stakes is helpful to understanding how decisions around goods and services have different moral weight, and what actors need to consider when resources are limited. From this perspective, the allocation of and decisions around scarce and essential resources are determined by the political, moral and economic decisions of individuals, rather than by static norms and rules.

Parry and Bloch’s (1989) discussion of ‘transactional orders’ in their edited volume on ‘Money and the Morality of Exchange’ also considers how individuals make decisions between moral and market norms in contexts of social and economic change. By drawing on a number of ethnographic examples, they find that commoditization does not necessarily disrupt the ‘morality of exchange’ insofar as, in the long run, moral orders maintain their durability in the face of short-term individual competition involving market-exchange. To make this argument, the authors discuss two different time-scales for monetary transactions: short-term gain and long-term transactional orders. As Parry and Bloch (1989: 2) write:

...the relationship between a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual – often acquisitive – activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order, and in each case the way in which the two are articulated turns out to be very similar.

Parry and Bloch contend, based on their readings of economic life in many, diverse social contexts, that short-term gain is generally morally permissible so long as it does not interfere with the long-term stability of social life. Rather than cause social ruin, money—the

currency of short-term exchange—does not disrupt moral order when transformed into goods that are recognized as morally and socially positive, such as food. This understanding of ‘money and the morality of exchange’ is helpful to considering when and where new forms of economic exchange are socially permissible.

Parry and Bloch’s (1989) argument relies heavily on Janet Carsten’s (1989) contribution to the volume, which discusses the intersection between money and food in Malay villages. Carsten’s research is particularly relevant to this chapter, as it shows how short-term transactions with cash are permissible so long as these short-term transactions do not undermine communal sharing and exchange. As she describes, fisherman in Langkawi willingly engage in commercial exchange to make money. The profit-driven exchanges in these contexts are incompatible with the moral bonds of kinship that exist in Malay villages and households. Malay fishermen symbolically transform the money they earn from a subversive and threatening force by giving it to their wives who purchase and cook food. In doing so, Malay women symbolically de-contaminate the money they receive, transforming it from being linked to individual gain to being morally permissible, since sharing food and eating with others is the strongest symbol of social solidarity in these Malay villages. As Carsten describes, by performing this transformation, women are simultaneously reproducing the household – they transform raw food into a cooked meal that can be shared within a household, thereby contributing to the long-term goals of social solidarity with others.

Maasai women also built social ties with other women through food. These networks between women, while nourishing the familial relationships within a household, extended far beyond one or even two families, allowing food and bonds of relatedness to be established between relatively wealthy and poor women who shared the same desire to form moral networks of exchange to mitigate risk and uncertainty in both the short-term and long-term

future. These moral networks of exchange were what Maasai women valued more so than any economic gain or profits that they could generate from selling food for cash.

5.4 Food Networks and Relatedness among Maasai Women

Sitting with Nkiborra by the cooking fire while she made tea, I asked her if she would give cash to someone who was looking for a loan of food. Expectantly she said no, “You can’t eat money.” Nkiborra’s answer to my inane question was in some ways obvious. You cannot eat money, yet money was being spent to purchase food. While intersecting, women did not treat these two goods as comparable commodities in their networks of exchange. Instead, they created social networks around food, which while overlapping, were distinct in certain respects to those they mobilized around cash.

Women asked for food through relatively informal norms of exchange compared to cash, which circulated through relatively formal rules, primarily in the context of groups, as discussed in Chapter two. The networks women nurtured through frequent exchanges of food under generalized patterns of reciprocity were relatively geographically bounded within a village with five to 20 households, mainly out of convenience. Often, a woman would go to a neighbor, relative or friend to ask for a portion or one kilogram bag of maize meal, for example, depending on their needs. Maasai women also asked for small portions of sugar and tea, two essentials that most households would not do without for even one day. Asking or giving loans of food was an integral part of giving and receiving in Maasai communities that was initiated by women who needed varying degrees of support.

A woman’s position in these networks of exchange depended, in large part, on the broader economic dynamics of their households, specifically their husband’s ability to supply them with sufficient food. In general, families with a stable and sufficient source of cash-income fared better during the dry season compared to most families, even families who were

considerably wealthier in livestock. Having an additional and secure source of cash allowed men to purchase food year-round to supplement the lack of milk provided by cows, goats, and sheep who were often migrating or often under-nourished. Women from these families were, to draw on Marilyn Strathern's (1988) discussion of the 'Gender of the Gift,' the agents in exchanges of food, since they were able to decide on whether to keep food for their households or to give it away to those in need. Women in need affected the actions of wealthier women by influencing their decisions. These relatively poorer women were often from families who lacked enough livestock to support their family's needs and whose husbands had little means of earning a regular cash income, such as Mabe. Women like Mabe actively sought out support from other Maasai women in order to cope with the risks associated of not having sufficient food in their households.

In order to understand women's ability to engage in the networks of exchange around food I kept financial diaries with four women – Lankenua, Nola, Nataana and Mabe - as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. Lankenua was from a very food secure household and had food year-round. In addition to Joseph's employment as a civil servant, he and Lankenua managed 45 cows and 60 goats to support their family, which was enough livestock to subsist from in addition to his cash-earnings. Nola's household was much wealthier in livestock, but not cash. They had 100 cows and 200 goats and sheep, which was a considerable number of livestock for one family in Oltepesi. When household food supplies ran short, her husband purchased food with the cash he made from selling goats and sheep in the local market. Nola nevertheless needed to borrow purchased food from women like Lankenua when her household supplies ran short. Unlike most women in the community, however, she had an abundance of milk during the rainy season, which she either sold or gave away to those in need.

Nataana's husband relied on both livestock and wage-labour to purchase food. They had 12 cows and 45 goats and sheep in total, which was a typical number of livestock to own in Oltepesi. Her husband made a small amount of money buying, fattening and selling livestock in local livestock markets. While Nataana's household was not considered particularly poor, she nevertheless faced hardship during the dry season. As a result, she too depended on receiving food from her friends, neighbours and kin who also, in turn, relied on her in times of need. During the wet season, she had enough milk for her household, but not enough to sell or give away frequently. Mabe's household was, by far, one of the most food insecure that I came across. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, her husband was one of the many young men who was landless and had lost all of his livestock. He also had few opportunities in the wage-labour market, working occasionally for wealthier relatives who needed help building fences and herding livestock. Much of the money he did earn was spent on drinking, causing significant emotional stress and strains on Mabe beyond simply household economics. Mabe worked for cash and used all her money to buy food for her children, who were visibly underweight, particularly during the dry season.

The chart below highlights the flows of different food from these four women's houses:

Household Food Security and Flows of Food between Maasai Women			
Household	Income	Level of food Security	Flows of Food
Lankenua	Secure cash income Cows: 17 Goats: 75	Secure	<i>Outwards:</i> Milk: Lankenua gave milk away during the rainy season. Purchased food: Lankenua gave purchased food away year-round.

Nola	Moderate cash income Cows: 100 Goats: 200	Secure	<i>Multi-Directional:</i> Milk: Nola gave milk away to women during the rainy season. Purchased food: Nola both loaned and borrowed purchased food, mainly during the dry season.
Nataana	Meager cash income Cows: 12 Goats: 45	Moderately Secure	<i>Multi-directional:</i> Milk: Nataana never gave milk away during the rainy season. Purchased food: Nataana borrowed and loaned purchased food year-round.
Mabe	Minimal cash income Cows: 0 Goats: 2	Insecure	<i>Inwards:</i> Milk and Purchased Food: Mabe only received milk and purchased food from other women. She never gave food away.

The chart above reflects the variation in flows of food in and out of these women's houses as they are determined, in part, by the broader economic conditions of their households. Many women, such as Nataana, relied on many different women for frequent loans of food, enabling her to access to food supplies throughout the year, but particularly during the dry season. Sometimes these loans of food were as small as some salt or a bag of maize, which she would return to friends or neighbours when they inevitably asked for food themselves when their weekly supplies ran short. These sporadic but frequent forms of

exchange form part of the tapestry of ‘gifting’ in Oltepesi that helped women manage when they did not have the quantity or types of food they needed.

While offering a critical source of support, these sporadic and often times reciprocal exchanges of food did not reflect the same system of dependencies that existed between women who were relatively wealthy and women who were poor. Lankenua and Mabe’s relationship, which I explain further below, exemplified how women from different households depended on one another. Similar to Lankenua and Mabe’s relationship, for example, Nola also gave food away, milk specifically, to Nalep who lived in a separate household. As in the case of Mabe, Nalep’s husband was not able to provide her with enough food to feed their children. Nalep and Mabe were therefore at the opposite end of the socio-economic spectrum from Lankenua and Nola, and actively forged relationships around food with these wealthier women through the idiom of *osotua*. *Osotua* translates to mean umbilical cord, with the cord acting as a powerful metaphor to describe a series of exchanges between *osotua* partners (*isotuatin*) that ‘enchain’ two individuals together for their lifetime (Cronk 2007). *Osotua* is also the Maasai term for kinship, but specifically refers to forms of relatedness that include non-blood relatives that are nurtured through exchange (Galaty 1977). Typically, *osotua* ties were initially created when a woman, in genuine need, asked for a limited and modest amount of support from a relatively wealthier woman in the community. The resulting relationships were, as women perceived, long-lasting and could even be passed down to one’s children.

Gifts given through *osotua* did not demand repayment. In fact, the word debt (*sile*) was inappropriate under the conditions of *osotua* relationships. *Osotua* relationships were instead understood within idioms of kinship, with partners using kinship terms to refer to one another, regardless of whether the women were biologically or formally related. Other times partners would refer to one another by the name of the good being gifted. For example, as

Galaty (1977) notes, when someone gives an animal, the giver and recipient may take on 'exchange names' using the term of the animals, whether 'my bull', 'my ox', 'my heifer', 'my ram' and so on. These are in fact not 'names' per se, as he describes, but reciprocal terms of address that are shared between two individuals. The underlying point he stresses is that by exchanging an animal, osotua partners begin to define their social relationship in kinship terms. While the examples he uses are livestock, osotua partnerships can be created through exchanging non-livestock goods as well, including food.

Oсотua was the overarching metaphor for all gift giving, however not all instances of giving and receiving food were defined by Maasai women in this way. There was no rule for how women created osotua bonds through gifts of food. For example, Nataana frequently asked for loans of food from her friend named Namelok who lived in a separate household. These two women had similar economic positions and frequently borrowed food from one another. Nataana and Namelok did not refer to one another through kinship or Osotua idioms even though their exchanges were guided by the overarching norms of gifting. Similarly, Lankenua gave food away to four to six women regularly. These women came to her house with requests for food and she responded with what she was willing to give away. While understood as gifts of food that did not need to be reciprocated, Lankenua never referred to these women using osotua terms, nor did she express special bonds with these women based on gifting food.

From what I observed, however, women's friendships to one another, kinship relationships, combined with the frequency of exchanges between them created kinship-like bonds. Furthermore, these bonds were also built on economic inequalities between women. For example, Nalep and Nola often socialized with one another during the day, organizing their labour in order to fetch firewood and water together. Nola's household had significantly more resources than Nalep's, particularly in livestock. Nalep's dependence on Nola for food

further solidified their existing bond, built on friendship and enabled by Nola's relative wealth and Nalep's relative poverty. Nola described Nalep as being 'like a sister,' reflecting a kinship-like bond that existed between these two women. Nola cared for Nalep in innumerable ways, including when her husband's family was in turmoil and she needed a place to stay outside of her household. Sharing food was an expression of their bond, which occurred on an almost daily basis, but was only one form of connection between these two women.

Similarly, Lankenua gave food away to many women, but Mabe was the one woman she likened to being her daughter, despite them being similar in age. These two women, as I observed, were friends, sharing each other's struggles and laughing at one another's humorous stories. Their relationship was nevertheless akin to a mother/child relationship in that Mabe was dependent on Lankenua for food. Lankenua gave Mabe kilos of foods purchased from the market in Kiserian on a weekly basis. In addition to this food, she provided Mabe with three goats to milk from her herd and 500 ml bottles of cow's milk during the rainy season daily. Mabe was the only woman she gave milk to on a daily basis. Otherwise, Lankenua reserved her milk supplies for her family and to sell in markets during the rainy season. Despite Lankenua's generous gifts of food, Mabe never repaid Lankenua. In fact, she even earned money from Lankenua by cleaning Lankenua's clothes and household. Gifts of food were not repaid through labour as I observed from living with Lankenua. Sometimes, Mabe would come to the house before an important event to help Lankenua clean and cook, but otherwise she relied on Lankenua's willingness to give food and milk away without any demands for repayment.

The kinship-like bond created by these one-way gifts of purchased food and milk was reflected in the terms Lankenua and Mabe used to refer to one another. Mabe called Lankenua *Mathe*, a slang term in Sheng that means 'mother,' while Lankenua called Mabe

Enkerai lai, the Maa term for ‘my child.’ In drawing on these names, Lankenua and Mabe were not only referring to the quality of their relationship that was initiated through the friendship and one-way exchange of milk and other foods, but also their relative relationship to the market, a physical place in Kiserian where food was purchased and sold. Mathe was a term frequently used in urban settings like Kiserian but not in Oltepesi. While Lankenua travelled to the market weekly to purchase food, Mabe was too poor to pay for the transport. By referring to Lankenua as ‘Mathe’ she was describing her relationship to Lankenua, while also highlighting her connection to urban centers where food was sold. As a result of her relationship to Lankenua, Mabe, while remaining geographically and economically distant from the marketplace, was nevertheless connected through Lankenua who acted as an intermediary. Lankenua brought purchased food from the market and gave it away by drawing on moral norms of exchange. In doing so, she created kinship like bonds with Mabe who became her dependent – a dynamic reflected in the terms these two women used to mutually recognize their bond to one another.

5.5 Black Foods: Changing Diets, Development and Risk

The types of food Maasai women circulated between one another helped to communicate their relationship to one another, but also how they understood food in relation to development. Generally speaking, milk was an important ‘relational vector’, to use Hutchinson’s (2000) term in her discussion of relatedness among the Nuer, like in other pastoral contexts where milk is used by pastoral women to create social connections (Århem 1989; Holtzman 2009; Hutchinson 2000; Kettel 1992), including in Oltepesi. The importance of milk, relative to other foods, can be explained by a broader set of values around food in pastoral contexts. Historically, many pastoral groups throughout East Africa followed diets primarily based on milk, meat, blood and fat, with milk being the main source of calories

(Århem 1989; Galaty 1977). While the Maasai have also eaten wild fruits and herbs, as mentioned by the elderly women above, as well as occasionally agricultural products, Maasai men and women valued livestock-based foods as being important markers of their identities as pastoralists. The introduction of agricultural foods has nevertheless been encouraged over time, first by explorers and later by colonial bureaucrats. To quote the founder of the German East Africa Company, and social evolutionist, Karl Peters (Peters 1981: 224-25 in Holtzman 2009: 24):

The continual flesh diet on which they [pastoralists] live has physiologically increased their natural savageness, and their brutalizing of the feelings that must ensue with people who are in the habit of slaughtering and devouring, in a cold-blooded manner, the domestic animal they themselves have reared, appease here in a very decided manner... This law has always explained why the herdsmen of the nomadic races have constantly furnished the most savage phenomenon in the world's history as we have seen them embodied in Europe, in personages like Jhengis Khan and Attila.

For some Europeans like Karl Peters, who bought into 19th- and early 20th-century theories of social evolution, pastoralism as a livelihood and as a diet was seen as one step along an evolutionary path that would eventually be replaced by agriculture (Peters 1981 in Holtzman 2009). As Jon Holtzman (2009: 24) writes: "Pastoralism, as a practice and diet, has long been marked as a problematic aspect of the lives of East African pastoralists." During the colonial period, some authorities in Kenya pushed cultivation as a means of bettering pastoral people (Galaty 1977). In the late and post-colonial period, development projects also encouraged Maasai women to adopt agricultural diets and to incorporate plants more into their cooking, as mentioned in Chapter one through the example of MYWO. MYWO, like many other NGOs that focused on how to improve women's lives, taught Maasai women how to prepare rice, beans, maize meal and lentils in idioms of development. While women have always incorporated non-livestock foods into their diets over the last 50 or more years,

particularly during the dry season, agricultural foods have become daily staples in Maasai households.

Changing diets in pastoral contexts in East Africa were inextricably the result of, in part, Maasai men and women's growing dependency on cash to sustain their family's basic needs. The lack of land in Maasai areas has limited the number of livestock families can keep. As an alternative source of food, both the colonial and post-colonial government encouraged Maasai families to cultivate agricultural products in areas of Kajiado County (Hughes 2006). However, very few families in Oltepesi successfully grew food due to the dry ecological conditions where they lived. As a result, they historically relied on either barter trade to access agricultural food, but more recently cash. For example, elderly Maasai women often described to me how they used to travel to town centers in their youth to trade beadwork for maize meal, sugar and tea, but only every few months, sometimes walking for three days due to a lack of vehicles in the area. Over the course of 50 years, market exchange has replaced barter exchange between pastoralists and agriculturalists. As such, Maasai men (and sometimes women) from Otlepesi travelled on a weekly and sometimes daily basis to Kiserian to purchase food. In diversifying their diets, Maasai women assigned new values to food that were discussed by drawing on the term development.

In Oltepesi, many younger Maasai women viewed the introduction of purchased foods as being emblematic of development, whereas other women, particularly elderly women, saw their dependency on purchased, agricultural products as being a sign of poverty. The different values placed on purchased commodities in relation to development and poverty have been observed by Holtzman (2009) in Samburu communities. The shift in Samburu communities towards relying on agricultural foods, as Holtzman explains, has led to feelings of ambivalence. Both Samburu men and women view the introduction of new foods into their diets as emblematic of both development and poverty. This ambivalence is epitomized, as

Holtzman argues, by Samburu descriptions of these foods as being ‘gray’: “...an indistinct blend – neither as light as milk nor as dark as meat, but a vague, mixed-up colour, like a muddied admixture of pure forms....” (Holtzman 2009: 154). Samburu men blame ‘gray’ foods for a range of problems, including their inability to rely on pastoralism, their dependency on government aid and selfishness, since unlike livestock-based foods, agricultural goods are not as closely linked to moral norms of sharing and re-distributing food. At the same time, the Samburu view consuming new foods as a sign of progress, highlighting one’s ability to adapt to modern life and successfully cope during the dry season.

Maasai women expressed similarly ambivalent sentiments about depending on purchased foods, however their concerns about these foods were rooted in understandings of bodily well-being. On the one hand, most Maasai women viewed the introduction of new foods as ‘signs of development’ for very pragmatic reasons. As many women told me, wild fruits ‘do not fill the belly’ in the same way that maize meal and other purchased foods did. On the other hand, while Maasai women eagerly incorporated new foods into their diets, they were also fearful of becoming overly dependent on these foods as their sole source of nutrition, particularly maize meal. Their reluctance to rely too heavily on purchased foods was expressed through the term of ‘black food.’ As described to me by many women, black foods were foods that became ‘black’ when eaten on their own. For example, maize meal without the minimum addition of vegetable fat was a form of black food. Black tea that was prepared without milk or sugar was also an example of a black food. Importantly, livestock foods, such as milk, could not be black even when they were consumed on their own, highlighting the continued value placed on these foods as the main source of nutrition.

Maasai women considered black foods to be particularly dangerous for children, even though children in Maasai contexts were expected to eat virtually anything. Eating anything included consuming day-old food that was dried and crusted to the sides of dirty cooking pots

and tea that was cold, foods that adults would never eat. As Holtzman describes in Samburu contexts as well, children still scavenge for food while herding during the day, eating gums and plants that are not considered edible by adults. Therefore, without dismissing the problem of food security in Kajiado, it was not surprising that the gentleman from the Christian-based aid organization, discussed in the opening vignette of this chapter, found a boy on the side of the road eating leaves. In Maasai and Samburu communities (Holtzman 2009), part of raising of children involved changing them from being people who are expected to eat almost anything into young adults who were very selective with what they consumed.

Despite the lack of limitations placed on what children could eat, women still considered black foods to be dangerous for their health. For example, Mabe's two-year-old daughter was frequently ill; sometimes she was unable to eat, and at other moments she would vomit the food she had consumed. Most often she was irritable and under-weight. In describing the cause of her illness, Lankenua, Namunyak and Nataana each recounted to me the problems associated with black foods. As Lankenua told me: "Children cannot handle their bitter taste. Without at least vegetable fat, children need to force the food down their throats. They get ill." Nataana similarly described how Mabe's daughter's body was weak and frail as a result of eating maize meal every night for dinner, without any milk or vegetable fat. In describing purchased foods in this way, Maasai women expressed awareness to me about the risks associated with changes to their diets that had come from settling and being less dependent on pastoralism for their food. Pastoral diets provided families with food rich in protein and fat and as sense of bodily well-being (Oiye et al. 2011).

To avoid becoming ill from maize meal, women went to great lengths to avoid being dependent on just agricultural foods. These efforts included travelling to where their livestock migrated during the dry season in order to access milk. Mabe's mother-in-law Jane was a woman in her 70s who was one of the very few women who had their own herd of livestock.

During a particularly dry season, her livestock migrated with hired herders. After spending less than a month away from her herd of cows, goats and sheep, Jane decided to migrate with a young boy who was in her care. With the young boy, she left for three months to a village over 20 kilometers away from her home. When I asked her why she had moved, she explained that she wanted to be “closer to milk.” Jane’s need to be closer to her supply of milk was both for her own well-being, but also for the young boy who, she described, depended on milk to survive.

Not all women had the option that Jane had, as many could not leave their households during the dry season. As a result of not being able to migrate, women in Oltepesi had to carefully budget their household food supplies so that every meal had a mixture of two or more different types of food. Diversifying one’s diet, meal by meal, was challenging for families who could not afford to buy a range of different types of food beyond maize meal. For those families, black foods became part of their embodied experience of living on the economic margins, with very few livestock and with little cash to supplement the lack of milk, meat and fat in their diets. For women in these households, their social networks of exchange were vital to accessing food that would ‘fill their bellies,’ but also to access milk - a vital source of nutrition – that contributed to Maasai women’s sense of well-being. Gifts of milk connected women like Mabe and Nalep to their identities as pastoralists, their role in taking care of their children and in managing their family’s household food supplies.

5.6 Moral Stakes: Maasai Women’s Decisions over Food

The relative values attached to livestock and non-livestock-based foods affected how Maasai women circulated these foods within their social networks. Flows of milk and maize meal were distinctly different from one another. Maasai women never sold milk to people they knew well, nor did they buy milk from one another. Instead, women frequently gave

milk away within relatively circumscribed social circles or for particular events. For example, Lankenua did not give milk away to any women who came by her house asking for loans of food. Instead, she reserved part of her daily milk supplies for Mabe. Lankenua's actions were not unusual. Nola, who also had an abundance of milk during the rainy season, only gave milk to her friend Nalep, reserving the rest of her supplies for her household's consumption. Women also gave milk to one another after an important event, such as after the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, or during a celebration, such as a wedding or initiation. In these instances, women brought milk to another woman's house as a gift. When women did sell milk, it was never to one another. Instead, women would travel to market-centers to sell milk for cash. In reality though, very, very few women had enough milk at their disposal to sell.⁷

The commodity path for maize meal differed from milk in two important ways. First, women more readily gave maize meal away to their friends, neighbours and kin who came to their houses asking for loans of food. Therefore, maize meal circulated across many more households than milk, with women offering maize meal to those in need. Second, maize meal was also sold locally. Maasai women with small shops, for example, sold maize meal along with cell phone credit, mugs or soap to their neighbours, kin and friends. Sometimes these women were criticized for being greedy for not giving maize meal to those in need, while other women saw them as conducting 'business as usual.' Indeed, there were no strict rules

⁷ It is important to note that, while in the past women had more milk to sell, in more recent years, with the exception of those who are relatively wealthy in livestock, such as Nola and Lankenua, most women in Oltepesi reserved milk for their own house's consumption. This was particularly true in the dry season. Livestock do not produce nearly as much milk during the dry season when they are weak or underfed, compared to the wet-season when pasture and water are much more abundant. Women, such as Nola and Lankenua, who sold milk needed to balance their desire to earn money with the demands of their houses, also needed to manage the 'milking relationships' they created with other women. They did so by continuing to provide these women with milk, selling the additional supplies they had at their disposal only after these women's needs were met.

regarding selling purchased food locally: what mattered more was whether their efforts to earn cash did not disrupt the moral norms of long-term exchange, what Parry and Bloch (1989) call long-term transactional orders. Moral and market economies and norms of exchange therefore operated simultaneously and were sometimes actively kept apart from one another.

While moral and market norms operated at the same time, many women struggled with the tension between maintaining long-established customs around food management with their desire for economic gain and profit. Lankenua, for example, ran a store from her house where she used to sell food, but eventually only sold cell phone credit. In explaining why, she stopped selling food to her neighbours, she described how she used to give much of the food away to women in need, so never made any profits. As she told me: “food isn’t money, people need it to live. I can’t make money from people who don’t have food. I just gave it away.” For Lankenua, the ‘moral stakes’ (Fassin 2009) were too high to sell food to those in need. As a result, she was critical of other women who did so, particularly her close friend Nainyiti. According to Lankenua, Nainyiti was not as generous as she was with the resources at her disposal. I suspect that Lankenua’s critiques of Nainyiti were to some degree reflective of her inability to maintain different commodity pathways for food, fueled by her moral sensibilities. Unlike Nainyiti, Lankenua was acting on the idea that food could only be circulated within the moral economy of exchange, which valued community sustenance and cohesion above financial gain.

Nainyiti did indeed try to have a different outlook and approach to business than Lankenua. She operated a store (*duka*) from her house where she sold food along with other household items like pots, pans, bags and soap. On her trips to Kiserian, she would buy these goods, then bring them to her house to sell for a profit. The cost of these items was higher than if they were purchased in Kiserian, so many women and men avoided purchasing food

from her store, preferring to borrow food from another women or travel to the town to purchase food in greater quantities. To ensure that she could make a profit from the individuals who did frequent her shop, Nainyiti created two commodity paths for purchased foods in her house by, as she explained, “separating the food that I use for my family, from the food that I sell in my shop.” The food for her family was also the food she gave away to a woman in need. In Nainyiti’s ideal, business was business, and only her household’s personal supply of food could justifiably be shared with others.

Yet despite this goal, Nainyiti, like Lankenua, complained that keeping these two commodities flows of food separate was nearly impossible. During the dry season, for example, her store ran at a loss because she gave food away, despite her intention not to. Interestingly, men, who were trying to supply food for their families on credit, were the main source of her complaints because they often accrued large, unpaid, monetary debts. These debts, while understood by Nainyiti as needing to be repaid, were ultimately left unsettled. Nainyiti’s inability to recover these debts was a result of many factors, but primarily the gender inequalities that existed in Oltepesi between Maasai men and women over a range of resources, including cash. While women could demand cash from indebted men, their ability to apply pressure was relatively weak without the support of other men to support their efforts. Women were, comparatively, much more financially accountable to one another as highlighted in the discussions around debt in the last chapter. Without her husband’s support, Nainyiti could not easily persuade men to repay their debts to her store.

As a result, Nainyiti had to wait for men to repay the money owed to her store, often for months at a time. In instances where she could not wait, she employed other strategies to avoid operating her store at a financial loss that involved limiting her social networks of exchange to only include Maasai women. For example, during a second dry season in February 2012, a man named Sironka, who lived close by and was Nainyiti’s brother-in-law,

accrued a debt of 8000 Ksh (93 Cad) over the course of three months. As Nainyiti explained to me, Sironka often fell short of providing his wife Esther with enough food, so he relied on Nainyiti's willingness to extend credit to feed his family. Yet, during the 16 months I was there, he never repaid his debt. As a result, Sironka initiated a pattern of what Sahlins (1972) calls 'negative reciprocity' - taking without reciprocating - that potentially impacted his relationship to Nainyiti and her family.

In addressing his accruing debts, Nainyiti told Sironka to send Esther to her home when she needed food instead. During a six-week period, Nainyiti gave Esther six kg of flour a week, in addition to 1.5 kg each of rice, sugar, maize and beans to her single family. Esther, unlike Sironka, was not expected to pay Nainyiti back. When I asked her why she expected Sironka to repay her but not his wife Esther, even though in both cases the food was going to the same home, Nainyiti had difficulty explaining her reasons:

Nainyiti: "It's just better. Now Sironka won't buy food from me. Instead, Esther will come over and borrow food until Sironka pays me back. Until then, I'm not giving him any food from my store. It's just better. She will borrow what she needs and I will give her what I have."

Me: "From your house or from your store?"

Laughing at both my confusion and her own struggles in answering my question, Nainyiti said: "from my house, but it's hard to keep a business here. I only try to keep the food from my business and from my home separate, but it's impossible."

By banning Sironka from her store as a debtor, Nainyiti was ensuring that she avoided providing him with credit that would never be repaid. Her decision to give food away to his wife, in turn, created a series of long-term exchanges between Esther under the norms of *osotua*, which bound together women in need with women who had something to give away. By making this shift, Nainyiti created an economic boundary between herself and Sironka, while simultaneously creating a social connection between herself and Esther. Maintaining

this social boundary between herself and Sironka was important to Nainyiti, since it allowed her to gain more control and power over the terms through which she gave away food. As mentioned in the last chapter, men had more power than women over resources, including food that was for sale, which resulted in very gendered networks of exchange that were premised on social and cultural norms, but also power inequalities.

By creating and maintaining these different paths for flows of food, Nainyiti was insulating her business from Sironka's mounting debts. Perhaps more importantly, she was also defining and solidifying her position in the moral economy of exchange. As she explained to me: "If I don't give food away to a woman whose children go to bed hungry, what kind of future am I giving to my children? My children could go to bed hungry one day. Who would they turn to if I didn't help other women?" Lankenua offered a similar explanation as to why she gave food to Mabe: "Mabe's children cannot go to bed hungry if my children are fed. It could bring problems to my children in the future." These two women were communicating their understanding of one another's fate as being connected to the life of a child. As Paul Spencer (1988) discusses in his book on Maasai rituals, the Maasai view children as belonging to God, and by extension to all people. Therefore, a child's distress raises anxieties that are shared by all, which I often observed to be true for Maasai women in Oltepesi particularly during periods of food insecurity.

In drawing on this notion of the future, neither of these women rationalized their choices by pointing to the quantities of food they had at their disposal (which exceeded their needs), nor did they discuss the specific needs of the individual women to whom they gave food. Rather, they drew on a broader set of moral, cultural and social norms that spoke to their concerns for the future. This future was based on the security of being socially embedded and networked within a moral economy of exchange where goods circulated through patterns of general reciprocity. In this economy, short-term financial gain was

secondary to the material welfare of community members, particularly their children.

Answering the short-term needs of their friends, neighbours and chosen kin allowed both Nainyiti, Nola and Lankenua to create the needed social pathways and connections to address their long-term, potential needs.

While women like Nainyiti, Nola and Lankenua gave food away to firmly root themselves in a moral economy of exchange, there were women in Oltepesi who did not abide by these broader social norms. Jane, Mabe's and Esther's mother-in-law, was one of these women. Jane was responsible, to some degree, for these two women's welfare as their in-law, yet never loaned them food. In fact, she sold milk to Mabe as well as to Esther. The act of selling milk represented what Appadurai (1986) calls a diversion, wherein certain goods are set on a different path than are set out for them. Jane's actions had little to do with her need to earn money, since she did not sell milk to anyone else—not even to strangers in Kiserian. Jane's refusal to give her daughters-in-law milk was, instead, a deliberate attempt to break ascribed kinship bonds with them, whom she disliked for various reasons. Yet, rather than undermine the salience of the moral economy, the example of Jane was read by other women as being indicative of familial disfunction in a context where goods, such as food, were both gifts and commodities. Jane was sometimes described as being selfish and even cruel to her daughters-in-law and by extension grandchildren, who also relied on her generosity and sense of responsibility. Accordingly, Jane's actions were actively condemned by other women in Oltepesi, who frequently cited her as an example of how market norms can disrupt social ties and moral bonds.

While food circulated as commodities in Oltepesi, women nevertheless continued to rely on moral norms in order to address each other's needs. In doing so, they were defining futures built on mutual support, which went hand in hand with their understandings of development. In the case of food, however, distinct from cash, the networks that women

created, sustained and supported through the circulation of food were mitigating against risk - risks of drought, periods of food insecurity and illness. By not providing milk for her daughters-in-law and other women in need, Jane was in effect opening herself up to these vulnerabilities and uncertainties. For both relatively poorer women like Mabe, Nalep and Esther and wealthier woman like Lankenua, Nola and Nainyiti, the moral economy of exchange created bonds and relationships that would last long into the future, adding security to the long-term well-being of each of their families.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at how Maasai women created social networks around food in a context where their diets have significantly changed to include purchased food. I focused on food in seeking to understand these networks because, like cash, food circulated ubiquitously between women. When giving away, selling and receiving food, Maasai women navigated moral and market norms to create systems of reciprocity that attended both to their short-term and long-term needs by creating different types of commodity paths for food, depending on the value placed on these goods. Their ability to adapt, strategize and maintain commodity flows for food highlight how Maasai women, despite wanting to reserve resources for their households, equally wanted to participate in a wider network of exchange that was connected to moral norms. This network was considered essential for Maasai women, both rich and poor, in addressing their future needs, mitigating risk and building a life, premised on improvement and epitomized by what they ate and whom they supported in times of insecurity.

Chapter 6 – Land, Money and Development

6.1 *'Too Developed'*

While driving one day with Lankenua to her birthplace of Insinya, located around 40 km east of Oltepesi, we saw a series of fences lining the side of the road that stretched across plains of pasture, intended to demarcate rectangular plots of land. There were no circular homesteads with a central cow kraal inside the fences, as was common in Oltepesi. Instead, we saw a series of individual tin houses. Looking at the cows in the distance that grazed beside the houses, I told Lankenua how different Isinya looked compared to Oltepesi, where there were very few fences and where circular homesteads dominated. In explaining why the two places looked so different, and some of the ramifications of these physical differences, Lankenua explained:

Land was subdivided here [Insinya] and sold very quickly. Many people from town and even Nairobi moved here to buy land. The Maasai in Insinya don't know their neighbours; you don't know who to turn to when you need help. It's not like it is in Oltepesi where people still live together. People do not talk to each other here; they don't share their problems.

Pointing to the fences, Lankenua remarked: "see, they live separately from each other. They are too developed."

Lankenua's commentary highlights how Maasai women conceived of development along a continuum, with some Maasai communities like Isinya being 'too developed.' On this continuum, moving forward and completely away from customary social and cultural norms was not valued by Maasai women as necessarily implying positive change. In this particular instance, Lankenua was criticizing the subdivision and sale of land in Insinya and the resulting social and spatial separation that arose as a result. As mentioned in Chapter one of this dissertation, fewer families lived in the same homestead together as a result of the

subdivision of land; in Insinya this shift was more extreme, with single families living alone, as Lankenua highlighted. In both contexts, changes were occurring to homesteads that reflected broader shifts in land tenure.

The connection between changes in land tenure and the social dynamics of Insinya reflect a common trait of indigenous land tenure systems in Africa, as representing a series of social relationships in terms of spatial dynamics. As Kenyan scholar Okoth-Ogendo (2008) defines it, indigenous land tenure can be understood by looking at the social order in a given context, which creates a set of "reciprocal rights and obligations...and vests power in the community members over land" (2008: 129). The social relationships that apply to land range from tenancy, use, control and disposition of rights over land. Similarly, Bohannon (1963: 102-103) notes that land tenure is a "social system with a spatial dimension" by drawing on examples from West Africa. This system, as Matter (2010: 15) further explains, "consists of relationships between people and land, landed resources, and, more abstractly, rights in land as valuable objects." As each of these authors highlight, land tenure involves managing an extensive set of social ties, social exchange, distinct from land that is understood solely as an individual's or an institution's exclusive property to manage and control. Indeed, in Maasai communities, land has been customarily managed by many social institutions that operated at different geographic scales. Within a 3000-5000 km area, there were different localities (*inkutot*), neighbourhoods (*ilatiaritin*), homesteads (*enkang*), and households (*olmarei*) that acted as social institutions to govern land use and occupancy. For example, to access land, families asked permission from members of an existing homestead. Since, in the past, land was not understood as being exclusively owned, families were only denied permission to use land in rare cases where there was not enough water and fodder for the residents' herds of livestock.

Governments, policy makers and scholars have viewed land tenure reforms as being a central means of spurring economic productivity and development, leading to a series of legal changes throughout Sub-Saharan Africa in how land is managed and owned (Amanor and Moyo 2008; Berry 1992; Galaty 1999; Leach 1996; Okoth-Ogendo 2008). These reforms have, in various ways, been supported through what Emery Roe (1994) calls ‘development narratives.’ A development narrative simplifies complex realities by presenting a beginning, middle and end, not unlike a story. As Roe notes, the beginning of these narratives present a scenario, which are often hypothetical problems that are rarely fully rooted in reality. From these scenarios, so-called experts create interventions that aim to change both people and places that are in need of reform. The result in these narratives is the resolution of a problem that did not fully exist in reality. Creating a narrative arc nevertheless allows so-called development experts to justify their policies.

Hardin’s (1968) *Tragedy of the Commons*’s narrative has influenced policies for rangeland management and exemplifies Roe’s point (Fratkin 1997; Galaty 1994; Homewood 2008; Lane 1998;). Employing imagery, Hardin (1968: 1244) asks the reader to “picture a pasture open to all” in which each “herdsman keeps as many cattle as possible.” As “rational beings,” individuals will maximize their gains, without fully internalizing the externalities of their use. Under common property systems, he (1968: 1244) asserts that “each man is compelled to increase his herd without limit – in a world that is limited.” This results in the over-use of resources causing non-reversible environmental destruction, what he calls the ‘tragedy of the commons.’ The solution, Hardin proposes, is to change land use practices through land tenure reforms that promote individual ownership. However, in making this argument, Hardin confuses communal tenure and land use with a lack of governance over land. As scholars highlight (Bollig 2008; Galaty 2016; Ostrom 1990), including using the example of Maasai pastoral tenure systems, in many places the communal use and management of land is

supported through a variety of customary institutions. These institutions prevent Hardin's 'tragedy of the commons' scenario.

The presumed causal link between the formalization of property rights and economic productivity has been further supported by the work of Hernando de Soto (2000), who argues that formal property rights hold the key to poverty reduction. Formalizing property rights, de Soto contends, unlocks the capital potential of assets held informally by people living in poverty. This argument is premised on the idea that land is a commodity and should be treated as such by the non-Western governments. The key to transforming assets into capital lies in instituting a system of property rights and documentation of those rights at a national scale that is legible to outsiders. As he writes, the informal arrangements around land mean that it "cannot readily be turned into capital, cannot be traded outside of narrow local circles where people know and trust each other, cannot be used as collateral for a loan and cannot be used as a share against an investment" (de Soto 2000: 5). Formal land titling programs enable these types of investments and transactions, which according to de Soto stimulate economic growth.

In Kenya, land tenure reforms have been supported by development narratives such as those proposed by Hardin (1968) and de Soto (2000), which promote the privatization of previously communal land. These changes in land tenure, however, have not been favourable to the vast number of residents in Maasai areas, particularly for women. Land has been appropriated by outsiders, illegally sold, transferred and grabbed by elites, government officials and willing buyers. Maasai women have been particularly affected by these changes in land tenure and ownership as a result of having been excluded from processes of subdividing previously communal land. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, Maasai women's names were left off the list of potential land owners, known as the group ranch registrars (Mwangi 2007). They were also not included as members of group ranch

committees, which played a central role in how land was managed and subdivided. These two factors, among others as well, meant that most Maasai women in Oltepesi did not own land.

In this context, Maasai women earned money and built social networks of support that mitigated the insecurities caused by the subdivision of previously communal land. These efforts did not, however, lessen their desire and hope to one day own land. Having land tenure security was central, in Maasai women's view, to building a future premised on improvement, particularly for their children.

Appadurai's (2004) discussion of aspirations as being a navigational capacity is important to considering Maasai women's relationship to land. In describing aspirations in this way, he explains that the ability for an individual or group to act on their aspirations is determined by the different pathways at their disposal. These pathways for action are not equally distributed to all individuals with a given cultural and social context. As he (2004: 69). writes:

If the map of aspirations (continuing the navigational metaphor) is seen to consist of a dense combination of nodes and pathways, relative poverty means a smaller number of aspirational nodes and a thinner, weaker sense of the pathways from concrete wants to immediate contexts to general norms and back again.

In describing these pathways as being 'thinner' and 'weaker,' Appadurai clarifies that one's relative poverty does not determine whether a person can imagine, dream and hope for better lives. Rather, one's ability to effectively act on their aspirations for the future are determined, in part, by the resources and pathways available to them.

Maasai women lacked many of the resources and pathways needed to claim rights to land, including, until recently, legal statutes that affirmed their rights. In response to mounting women's rights movements, composed of lawyers, advocacy organizations and constituencies that operated in Kenya and regionally, Kenya changed its constitution in 2010

to include strong laws for women to own land. Article 60 (f) of the 2010 Constitution calls for the elimination of gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land tenancy and property in land. This article is further supported by Kenya's first Bill of Rights. Both the Constitution and Bill of Rights replaced previous land rights legislation that had gender-neutral language that included the presumption that male right-holders represented their entire families. As a result, women were previously not sufficiently protected by the law.

This chapter looks at Maasai women's experiences in Oltepesi with land tenure reforms since the 1970s, up to 2013. Maasai women drew on their social networks to both discuss and understand their new rights to land. However, as I argue, the implementation and realization of their rights depended on the actions, in large part, of the Kenyan state, and specifically civil servants who controlled titling processes and the allocation of land rights. Rather than implementing constitutional laws that provided women with equal rights to men, civil servants who managed development projects and land titling processes excluded Maasai women, thereby marginalizing them from accessing land. Maasai men, in turn, benefited from these processes having both the social and financial capital needed to claim land. As a result, gender inequalities between Maasai women and men were being perpetuated despite changes in the law.

Part of my argument in this chapter is that the state's failure to protect women's land rights was caused by the very bureaucratic and legal processes that sought to provide transparency and clarity over who owns land. These processes disguised a myriad of informal and often illegal dealings, often involving the exchange of cash, that were occurring alongside public procedures. I illustrate this point by drawing on the example of a land claim made by four Maasai women presented to the Kajiado Land Control Board (LCB) in 2012. In this case, the four women were challenging the sale of their late husband's land to a man who

later sold part of the land he purchased to the state for an infrastructure project. Through a discussion of this case, I show how while women actively wanted to claim land, their legal rights became secondary to delineating the documentary evidence over land sales and to the economic interests of the men involved. Delineating both the public, bureaucratic processes and the parallel, illegal transactions involved in securing land rights is important to understanding the social and financial capital required to navigate the law in order to access constitutionally guaranteed rights. Maasai men, who compared to Maasai women, had more access both to cash and to social networks that influenced decisions about land ownership, were better able to navigate the state's system of distributing land rights.

In making this point I highlight how development in Oltepesi, while being driven by Maasai women in their efforts to improve their lives, also depended on the support of state that controlled certain resources. The state institutions responsible for allocating land rights were not led by women nor did they prioritize women's rights when implementing policies and development programs, which affected how policies that were aimed at correcting gender inequalities were implemented. In order to create transformative change, initiatives to improve women's rights therefore needed to be steered by individuals who had their primary interests in mind. Women's groups provided a structure for initiating change in Maasai communities as social institutions that were formed and led by their members. These groups provided, for example, a platform for Maasai women to discuss issues of land and how to navigate challenges in securing legal rights. However, Maasai women's efforts to act on their aspirations around land-ownership remained relatively nascent. Changes to the law spurred many of these discussions and efforts, offering a sense of hope and potentially a pathway towards initiating future changes in the gender dynamics of land tenure.

6.2 Changing laws: From Gender Neutrality to Affirming Women's Rights

Since the beginning of the colonial encounter in East Africa near the end of the 19th century, drastic shifts and reconfigurations transformed customary systems of land tenure (Fratkin 1991; Galaty 1994; Hughes 2006; Lane 1998; Okoth-Ogendo 1991). Many of these shifts involved creating inheritance and family laws that prohibited Kenyan women from owning land. Native reserves also restricted the amount of land and resources available to Kenyan women to access and use (Hughes 2006, Sorrenson 1968). In the post-colonial period (1963-onwards), the state's efforts to formalize land rights, failed to fully account for the structural challenges that women faced in accessing land rights by drawing on gender neutral language in the law. For example, the 1963 Registered Land Act (RLA) was part of a nationwide land tenure reform program designed to eliminate and replace the customary system of communal land management with individualized ownership. According to the RLA, the first person to register as owner of a given piece of land would receive an absolute ownership (Kameri-Mbote 2005). In theory, the RLA allowed any person, without specifying if said person was a man or a woman, to own land. Yet despite the egalitarianism implied by gender neutral language, laws like the RLA failed to adequately protect women's land rights.

In 1967, the Land Control Act was created, in part to better protect women's rights. This legislation required that all land transactions, including land sales, be approved by a Land Control Board (LCB). LCBs were composed of a district commissioner (now deputy county commissioner) or a district officer (now assistant county commissioner) as the chairperson, two public officers and seven residents who owned agricultural land within the jurisdiction of the board and who were appointed by a cabinet secretary. Boards were not mandated to include women as members, meaning that women were often not involved in decisions over land sales and transactions. Under this law, the owner of agricultural land (most often men) had to apply for and receive a LCB's consent before any transfer of land

could take place. Part of the intention of both establishing LCBs and the requirement of consent was to protect an applicant's spouse (most often a woman) and any adult children. Namely, these family members had to appear before a LCB to indicate that they were aware of the proposed transaction before consent would be granted. Transactions could have been blocked if a woman reported that their husband was attempting to use or sell their land in order to secure a loan without consulting with them first. This law assumed that if consent was granted, a woman's land rights were secure and derivative from their husband's rights.

The creation of LCBs throughout the country did little to curb the sale of land without women's consent in Kenya. As Karanja (1991) explains, the parties involved in land sales found different ways to obtain a LCB's consent than going through the formal process, irrespective of whether a spouse or an adult child was previously consulted. Consequently, land sales that were, in theory, illegal were nevertheless recognized and honoured by the LCB. Often Kenyan men who were involved in selling land engaged in fraudulent financial deals involving bribes of members of LCBs in order to avoid the bureaucratic processes associated with applying to sell or transfer land. Thus, while the 1967 Land Control Board Act aimed to strengthen women's rights, in practice the number of informal processes that operated alongside or instead of formal procedures rendered it largely ineffective in meeting this objective.

While some inheritance and family laws changed in a piecemeal fashion to support women's rights after 1967, 2010 marked a significant shift in legal discourse over women's rights to land. This was largely thanks to mounting pressure from women's rights organizations and their movements. These organizations and movements had been particularly active since the 1990s in drawing attention to women's lack of land rights in Kenya. For example, in 1992, over 2,000 MYWO members in Meru Central District appealed to the Kenyan Government to include women on LCBs (Tripp 2004). In 2000, the Widow

Support Network of Kenya was responsible for pressing the Kenyan Constitutional Review Commission⁸ to better protect the land rights of widows and women in marriages. The Widow Support Network's efforts were sparked by previous national laws that prevented women from being able to register property under their own names unless their husbands endorsed it (Ibid). The organization demanded that family courts be mandated to deal with all matters concerning widows, widowers and their children. They also advocated for free legal assistance for rural women who needed support in claiming land rights.

Kenyan's women's rights movements, coalitions and lawyers further accelerated their efforts in the lead up to the reform of Kenya's Constitution in 2010. Beginning in the late 1990s, discussions about reforming the constitution encouraged feminist activists in the country to build alliances and coalitions with other organizations to lobby politicians and key power holders at various levels (Domingo et al. 2016; Opoku et al. 2018). Feminist lawyers, notably the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA), also created concrete suggestions for legal reforms during the drafting process of the Constitution (Domingo et al. 2016). They reported on the gaps in women's rights that existed in previous legal acts through written reports and statements, while also using media outlets to disseminate their advocacy messages to the general public.

Women's rights organizations and leaders also formed regional networks across countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, composed of advocacy organizations that saw issues of land rights as being central to both gender equality and to women's human rights more broadly (Tripp 2004). In East and Southern Africa, for example, Women and Law in Development in Africa (WILDAF) has been active since the early 1990s on land and other issues, as has

⁸ The Constitutional Review Commission was first established by President Daniel Arab Moi in 2000 in order to review and initiate constitutional reforms. Members of the commission were mandated to gather public opinion on constitutional rights in Kenya by visiting various districts throughout the country leading up to the 2002 general elections.

Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) in seven southern African countries. These movements, as Tripp (2004:3) writes, “have been especially pronounced in the former British colonies of Eastern and Southern Africa.” Increasingly, however, similar movements have been growing in strength and influence in Nigeria, Mali, Senegal and Madagascar, where women have formed their own, self-led organizations to ensure that any changes in land tenure reforms incorporate women’s rights. Importantly, these organizations and regional networks have identified and drawn on international legal instruments like the United Nation’s General Assembly’s International 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁹ to push forward their case. Notably, CEDAW includes article 15, which ensures women’s property rights are recognized by signatory governments during marriage, at divorce and in the event of her husband’s death. The Kenyan government is signature of this Convention; therefore, the Kenyan Constitution is also supported through international law.

As Sally Engle Merry (2006) discusses in her examination of human rights in different cultural contexts, the adaption of global laws depends on the work of intermediaries such as community leaders, NGOs and social movement activists. These people, as Merry writes, understand the distinctive contexts of transnational human rights and local cultural practices, thereby allowing them to act as knowledge brokers between culturally distinct worlds. With regards to women’s rights specifically, intermediaries help to re-frame gender inequalities through the language of legal rights. For example, Merry describes a group of Hong Kong feminist activists who persuaded a group of indigenous women to see their lack

⁹ The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty that was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. CEDAW aims to act as an international bill of rights for women. CEDAW has been adopted by 189 nation-states, including the Kenyan state, which is a signatory of the Convention.

of land rights as gender discrimination under the law rather than just the product of being treated poorly by their male kin. This re-framing of the problem of accessing land as a legal issue enabled these women to mobilize and advocate for their rights to the public and to legislative bodies in Hong Kong. In Oltepesi, the Mainyoito Pastoralists Integrated Development Organization (MPIDO) played the role of an intermediary with Maasai women in translating the reforms in the Constitution to local gender contexts. MPIDO was started by a group of young men whose names were left off the Loodariak Group Ranch registrar, along with over 2,000 other residents. Meanwhile, 360 outsiders, including high-level civil servants from the Ministry of Lands and other politically influential persons, were listed as members. These younger men protested the subdivision and transfer of land in the former Loodariak Group Ranch. They succeeded in putting a ‘caution’ on sections of the group ranch, which prevented land in those areas from being further subdivided, sold or transferred. However, the group ranch continued to be subdivided in waves. While continuing to advocate against the subdivision and sale of previously communal land, MPIDO gradually expanded its mission by drawing on global indigenous rights laws and movements to push forward their broader agenda to “promote and secure the rights of the indigenous communities with regard to land and natural resources” (MPIDO 2021). To achieve this mandate, the NGO had five main programs, including one called ‘Girl Child Education and Women Empowerment.’ The other four programs focused on supporting pastoral livelihoods, climate change interventions, leadership and governance of rangeland environments and natural resource rights for indigenous and pastoral communities. While other NGOs in the region had women-specific programs, MPIDO was very active in advocating for women and girls’ rights through a number of different outreach programs in Oltepesi, even though gender-based activism was never the main objective of the organization’s mission.

As part of ‘Girl Child Education and Women Empowerment,’ MPIDO hosted an information seminar about the changes in the 2010 Constitution in October 2011 for Maasai women in Oltepesi. I did not attend the seminar, but I heard women speaking about the event weeks later in meetings of women’s groups. According to the women I heard from, over 500 Maasai women attended, far beyond the number that was expected by the organizers. At the meeting, two Maasai women who worked at MPIDO led the event. These two women read the new constitutional laws and the Bill of Rights, translating and communicating the text into Maa simultaneously using loud microphones and speakers. They also strongly encouraged women to lay claim to their legal rights. In speaking about this meeting, Maasai women remarked on how they now had equal land rights to men, marking a shift in how they previously spoke to me about land as a resource that they could not control.

6.3 Land, Money and Life: Maasai Women’s Rights to Land

I spoke to many women about their experiences with the subdivision, privatization and sale of previously communal land. While occurring during my time in Oltepesi, the shift from living in the Loodariak Group Ranch to living on individually owned parcels of land occurred mainly in the 1980s and 1990s. In describing their experiences during this time period, many women spoke about changes in land tenure as being a product of external forces that were beyond their control. For example, Joseph’s mother, Enkoko, often spoke to me and Namunyak about the subdivision of the former Loodariak Group Ranch in our discussions of land in Oltepesi. Rather than referring to the different titling schemes and laws that motivated shifts in tenure, Enkoko spoke about the changes that she observed in the 1990s by referring to very opaque forces of change. She conceived of the changes in land tenure as related to supernatural factors, perhaps highlighting the gap between her experiences of tenure-reforms and their intended effects to spur economic development. To quote her:

We only heard people talking about land being subdivided here and that it was the government (*serakali*) who was saying so. The person who decided for land to be subdivided had the *oloirirua*. Ole Nina had oloirirua. I'm saying it's the devil because he gave out most of the land out to the Kikuyu and left most of the people staying here without land. And now the person who subdivided the land is not alive – he's dead and we have to live with it. But at the time, we only heard people saying: land has been subdivided.

Enkoko, in the above quotation, was referring to the head of the group ranch committee in Loodariak – Ole Nina – who infamously allocated land to non-Maasai Kenyans in the subdivision process, leaving many residents of the group ranch landless. Oloirirua, the term Enkoko uses above, refers to an evil spirit or force that occupies an individual, causing them to become mad or to behave psychotically. Enkoko's description of Ole Nina as being influenced by the 'devil' highlights her understanding of his actions as being strongly antithetical to Maasai norms and values and, indeed, beyond her influence.

Enkoko had no land rights, nor was she directly involved in the decisions over land that took place in the 1990s when the former Loodariak Group Ranch was subdivided. At the time the land was subdivided she was a widow and did not receive a title deed to land. She nevertheless was able to access land through her two eldest sons. Her two youngest sons, however, were part of the group of younger men whose names were excluded from the group ranch registrars, and did not receive land at the time it was subdivided. Enkoko was living on Joseph's land and in the same *enkang* with her two younger sons and their families during the course of my time in Oltepesi. The two younger sons both later were allocated plots of land 10 kilometers from Joseph's homestead in 2002, but decided to stay at Joseph's *enkang* in order to live closer to the main road, the church and primary schools. The three brothers used their three plots of land communally, alternating between grazing areas during the dry and rainy seasons. In doing so, they were drawing on customary land-use patterns by collectively

managing their land in order to facilitate migrations. While Enkoko's sons continued to practice aspects of customary land-use and tenure, she nevertheless felt insecure with their current arrangements. As she explained to me:

We are living at Joseph's land. When the time comes and Joseph doesn't want to see us again, he will just say: 'leave.' Simon was given land, but just a small piece. Nothing like the size of the chief's land next door. He was given land where there was already a nursery school for kids that we built with tin sheets, but he got a group of young people down to tear down the nursery school, saying it was his land.

Enkoko's account highlights the inequalities that were created between men, but also between men and women during the subdivision process. Many women felt as though they did not have the power to influence decisions over how land was used in Oltepesi, as highlighted in Enkoko's description of the chief's decision to tear down a nursery school and Joseph's power to evict her from his land. The attribution of power over land to individuals as a result of privatization represented a shift away from customary forms of tenure where decisions were made by residents of a larger homestead and a number of other social institutions as described above.

Money played a role in discussions with Maasai women in Oltepesi around land, as a competing source of wealth that, seemingly, encouraged men to sell land. As Jacinda, a woman in her late 40s, explained to me:

Men like money. They sell land to get whatever money they can. Our men do not know the business of selling land; we used to depend on cows for our livelihoods but now they are in the business of selling land. When the money and land are finished, women and children have nowhere to go.

Jacinda's comment highlights the gender narratives that existed around money, but also land. As mentioned in Chapter two of this dissertation, women saw men as being

irresponsible and greedy with regard to cash. Conversely, women saw themselves as being more responsible with money than men because of their ability to save money and participate in women's groups. In participating in these groups, Maasai women extended the 'social life' of cash, while also 'boosting' their savings in idioms of development. However, their interest in earning and saving cash did not compete with their strong desire to have secure land rights and tenure: in their minds, money and access to land were separate, with land being a more important source of value and economic security than cash. For women who saw the link between having land to graze and herd livestock as necessary for the continuation of pastoralism and their families' survival, selling land for money would not only cut off access areas for grazing, but also threaten the continuation of pastoralism and Maasai identity. Land sales were therefore not only seen by Maasai women as threatening what Parry and Bloch (1989) call 'long-term transactional orders,' but also life itself.

Conversely, women viewed many Maasai men as viewing land and money as competing sources of value, epitomized in their willingness to sell land for cash. Indeed, the women I spoke with often described men's desire to sell land as being indicative of their lack of 'vision.' Having a lack of 'vision' for Maasai women was expressed most often through their concern for their children and for future generations. Take the example of a widow who was one of the few women that I met who accessed a title deed during the subdivision process. Her late husband was a relatively wealthy man whose name was on the group ranch register. While land was not typically given to widows during this time, she successfully petitioned - multiple times - the Loodariak Land Committee of the group ranch to provide her rights to her late-husband's land. I suspect that she was successful at accessing a title deed because of her late husband's influence in the community. While she was not wealthy in cash, despite her late husband's wealth, she had no intention of selling her land. Like many

other Maasai women I spoke to, she believed that land represented a more stable form of value and wealth than money that contributed to the long-term security of her family:

I own my land and I will pass it onto my sons. I'll never sell my land. Other people are selling their land, but I won't sell ours. If for example my son gets married, where will he settle with his children if we sell our land. I hate it, I hate it completely. Because if you sell the land, and the one that you've sold it to moves to your old land, and you've used all the money that was given to you, you will be told to move out. Where will you go to? You will be like somebody who is dead.

As this quotation details, this woman saw the sale of land as a type of death. To quote another woman who I spoke to about land-sales: "Selling land is like selling life. What will you remain with? Money? It gets spent. What will you do next? These men who sell land have no vision for the future, for their children." Indeed, women's interests in owning land were not as individual rights-holding citizens, but as mothers to future generations of children whom they hoped to pass down their land to in the future through customary and patrilineal institutions. As such, they continued to view land tenure as being relational and connected to a broader set of familial interests, rather than a set of rights bestowed upon a single individual.

6.4 Delivering Rights: Maasai Women and the State

While women had different degrees of control over money, food and houses, as well as a number of other material goods that they valued, they did not have control over land. Patrilineal and customary institutions of land ownership only partially explain why women were not involved in decisions over land. Through these institutions, men had power to make decisions, although women were often consulted and involved, to varying degrees, over how resources were managed. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the state's tenure reforms establishing individual property weakened Maasai women's ability to influence

decisions over the subdivision, transfer and sale of previously communal land. An elderly woman, who was nearly blind, explained the scenario that she and many other Maasai women faced in trying to influence decisions over land with their husbands:

When a man wants to sell land, he just sells it. He doesn't tell his wife because the women don't like the land to be sold. Men used to sell the land secretly because if they were to ever ask their wives, they would say: "it should not be sold", but then he can tell her: "I can sell it by force." And the conflict comes in between the husband and wife. In the past, she used to report to the chief to tell them to interfere with the husband's sale of land.

As this women's comment suggests, Maasai women used to turn to local leaders, what she is referring to as a 'chief,' to settle disputes over land. The position of a chief was not indigenous to customary institutions of land governance in Maasai communities. Instead, these individuals were appointed by the colonial government but remained as power holders in local politics in the postcolonial period. During the course of my time in Oltepesi, individual men were often referred to as a 'chief' who were bestowed power by members of their respective communities. These included men who were appointed the role of the chief by the government and those who were considered traditional leaders. Yet, as I observed, local, elected councillors, civil servants and officials from the Ministry of Lands had the power to implement land tenure reforms and laws, county development plans and titling programs. MPs also had significant power of issues of land tenure but did not necessarily get involved in disputes over land at the village-level. Combined, these individuals had the power over land, but they almost never worked directly with women when implementing legal reforms and government policies.

For example, in 2009 the Kajiado County government introduced a plan to promote the development of small scale, local business in Oltepesi. In the village where I stayed, this was done in 2011 by allocating leaseholds to very small plots of land on the side of the road,

which were around 5-7 meters square, to local residents. To receive a title deed to the land, nearby residents needed to pay a fee for the title deed and promise to build a small, commercial shop within two years of being allocated a plot. I came to understand how the scheme worked indirectly from having three different men, whom I had had limited previous interactions with, approach me asking for loans of 3000 Ksh (50 Cad). None of these men had ever asked me for a loan before, let alone for such a large amount of money. Curious as to why all three men needed the same amount of money, I consulted with Joseph about the situation. As he explained to me: “The land on the side of the road is being developed. The councillor is giving away commercial plots to people here, but you need to pay 750 Ksh a year for taxes on the land, plus 3000 Ksh for the plot.” The money that these three gentlemen asked to borrow was to pay for their initial rights to the land.

Maasai women were not involved or consulted in the scheme to commercially develop the land on the side of the road. This became apparent to me when a local councillor and two surveyors visited the village about two weeks after I spoke to Joseph. A group of 15 women, including Nainyiti, Lankenua, Jacinda, Nola and Mabe, gathered together to sit by the side of the road around 10 meters away from a group of men who were huddled around the councillor, tilting their ears and shuffling in closer in order capture what he was saying. I asked Lankenua whether I could move closer to hear what was being discussed, but she warned me to keep my distance in order to abide by the norms of respect that encourage social and spatial divisions between women and men. In this instance, these norms meant that women were being excluded from participating in the discussion with the local councillor. These discussions were over both land and cash. While the local councillor was Maasai and understood the norms of respect that separate women and men, he did not speak with women separately from men, thereby barring them from being included in the process of accessing a title deed and developing the land.

A couple minutes later, and quite suddenly, a few men ran outside of the huddle to seemingly random patches of dirt, where they placed rocks to lay claims on small areas of land. The group women erupted in laughter as they watched the men act so impulsively, with one woman commenting that the men “looked like little children running for candy.” The group of women were using humour and mockery to elevate their lack of power in the process. Indeed, to my knowledge, Lankenua was the only woman whom I met whose name was written on the title deed, thanks to Joseph’s insistence that she legally be recognized as a landowner. As mentioned in Chapter three, Joseph expressed his masculinity – and by extension his modernity – in part by providing Lankenua with resources and addressing her economic needs. Most men, however, were not like Joseph. In fact, as many men later told me, few had any intentions of building a shop on the side of the road. Instead, they planned to sell their plots to people from Nairobi for a profit in order to earn cash.

The scheme to develop the side of the road was discussed by many women during meetings for their women’s groups in the month that followed the councillor’s visit. These groups were not only a platform to discuss their aspirations for development, but also how to mobilize around their rights. In these discussions, a few women described visiting the councillor separately to ask if they could be allocated a plot of land to build a shop, knowing that they had rights to land. The councillor reportedly told them that their rights to land were through their husbands. Outraged by the councillor’s reaction, some of the women at the meeting expressed a strong desire to organize a protest at the councillor’s house to demand their rights to land. While I also offered to write formal letters of complaint to the County government, the women in the meeting preferred their plan to physically present themselves to the Councillor by going to his house.

As Galaty (2005) writes, this form of protest is an important modality in Maasai land claims. Drawing on the example of a group of Maasai men who marched to President’s Moi’s

lawn in 1992 to protest the Loodariak Group Ranch subdivision, he (2005: 1983) writes in his discussion of violence in Maasai communities that: “In some cases, on-the-ground ‘presence’ does anticipate or lead to violence, in other cases it does not, but, if not, still may be effective because of the sense conveyed, and the reality observed, that violence is indeed possible.”

For the Maasai women in the meeting, I suspect their plan to protest outside of the councillor’s house was primarily to gain recognition, not to threaten violence, which is something they could not do in front of their male-kin on the day that land was allocated. While cultural norms between women and men in Maasai communities help to explain part of their inability access land rights, so too do the actions of the state. Both the councillor’s actions (or lack thereof) and his rationale for how land was allocated show the continued failure of the state to include women in land tenure reforms and titling programs that aimed to spur economic growth and development in Oltepesi.

6.5 Landlessness and ‘Public’ Process

While the project to commercially develop the side of the road in Oltepesi was relatively small, the state was also planning a large electrical project in Kajado County that required building transformers across the Rift Valley escarpment. The project was beyond the geographic limits of Oltepesi, but affected women and men who owned land and migrated throughout the region, and whose families were interconnected as a result. I did not hear about the project until Namunyak told me about Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha, four women who were facing eviction from the land where a transformer was scheduled to be built. Their late husband, Namunyak explained to me, owned three different plots of land after the subdivision of the Loodariak Group Ranch, which he sold in the mid-1990s to a man from Nairobi named Kamau. The four women lived together on one of the plots of land that was allegedly re-sold to the state by Kamau for the electrical project. Four

months prior to my meeting with these four women, police visited their homestead in an effort to evict them. The widows relied on Mama Mary's son, who was relatively educated and knew how to maneuver through the bureaucratic norms of the state, to challenge the eviction.

Eager to understand the processes involved in claiming land, I arranged to meet with the four women at their homestead, which was not a typical Maasai enkang. There was no central kraal for cows and no fence around the perimeter of the women's houses. Instead, there were six scattered houses, each with their own small, fenced in enclosure for goats and chickens, not unlike what Lankenua and I observed in Isinya. Just off to the side of all the houses was a small area that was being used to grow maize meal. The women were not practicing pastoralism on the land. In fact, there was already an electrical box next to one of small patch of maize meal that was part of the infrastructure planned for the electrical project.

Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha came outside to greet Namunyak and me when we arrived, dressed in traditional shukas. Only Nalutuesha spoke Swahili – the other three women spoke only Maasai – which, as they explained, limited their ability to communicate with people who were not Maasai. I therefore spoke mainly to Nalutuesha to better understand their case. She was the second wife of their late husband and grew up just east of Oltepesi. She was from a large, well-known family in the area. As a young child, Nalutuesha moved with her family between two different places until she was old enough to attend primary school. When she was married to her late husband, she was just 15 years old. Reflecting on her experience of being married young to a man with one wife already, she focused on being taken out of school prior to moving to her late-husband's enkang:

I didn't know much at the time. I wanted to finish school until class 8, but I did not know I had the right to refuse early marriage. I lived in denial for a long time. I refused to accept that I was married. It was only until I had three children that I accepted myself as the wife of my husband. But I

prayed to God that my daughter would finish school. But, I myself didn't finish my studies.

Like many Maasai women of her generation, Nalutuesha was not expected to finish secondary school before being married, but wanted a different life for her daughter - one that involved being more formally educated.

Her late-husband proceeded to marry two other women within a 10-year period after wedding Nalutuesha. Towards the end of his life, around the time he sold his land, he drank a considerable amount. His wives, as well as others I spoke to about him, assumed that he sold land to pay for alcohol. At the time of the sale, none of his wives were even aware of it, as Nalutuesha told me:

My husband sold land. We aren't sure why, but he drank a lot. He never told us when he sold the land. We really didn't know much, and none of us asked him either. We didn't know the meaning of selling land, like we do now. We just saw him doing business – selling and fattening cows, but we didn't know he used the money from selling land to run his business. Before, the Maasai women would not ask the husband questions because they didn't see women as anything. You wouldn't even ask him what he's doing when he takes a cow to the market to sell.

As this quotation highlights, Nalutuesha and her three co-wives were excluded from decisions around – and even conversations about – land. As a result, they did not have a clear understanding that they were landless when he died. At the time we spoke to Nalutuesha, she was also unsure how many acres of land were left for her and her family. As she explained to me, Kamau claimed to have purchased 55 acres, which would have been the entire amount of land that her late husband owned. Yet, Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha had only seen a title deed for the sale of 30 acres of his land. A second, unofficial, handwritten agreement existed between their late husband and Kamau that stated that an additional 20 acres of land was sold. According to Nalutuesha, five acres remain unaccounted for.

Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha were living on these five acres, but they did not

have a title deed or another form of legal, written permission to remain on the land. In order to avoid being evicted, they requested Nalutuesha's eldest son's, who went by the name of David, to assist with the case. Referring to their struggle to remain on the land, she said:

"David is our last hope."

David lived with his young family on the same land as his mother and her co-wives. He worked as a paid intern at a local civil organization that had a mandate to, as he explained, "advocate for land rights and to ensure that the Maasai community had access to enough land to practice raising cattle and goats." In describing the organization's work, David emphasized to me the importance of having access to extensive land on which to raise livestock and noted the recent changes in land tenure have impoverished many Maasai families. He explained, in detail, the current realities of Maasai pastoralists as being directly linked to the historical injustices related to land, including during the colonial period when "we were told to stay in certain areas of the country," referring to the colonial reserves. In short, David was well-versed in the implications of land tenure reforms and how they had led to poverty and political marginalization for Maasai communities over time.

Though David worked at a civil society organization that had a mandate to support the continuation of pastoral livelihoods, he had little interest in raising livestock himself. Instead, David wanted to build a lodge for tourists to visit the area. As he explained to me: "When my father was alive, he paid for all of the boys in my family to get an education and I was lucky. Now I can earn an income that does not require me to rely on pastoralism." David continued by remarking how Maasai youth were increasingly going to school to "get degrees... they can no longer tolerate the droughts. What do you do when you've lost two hundred cows in a single season? How will you survive? You can't, so it's best to go and get a job." Indeed, David was highlighting the growing risks associated with pastoralism that were linked to land loss, but also Maasai men's changing aspirations for the future. He was landless and did not

see a future in pastoralism for himself and his family, yet nevertheless wanted to continue to live in the community. To do so, he viewed his education as offering a pathway that would allow him to pursue other career options through the market and tourist economy.

David continued the conversation by describing the particular challenges that Maasai women faced. “Women have no rights to land,” he explained, “because only men have been dealing with land committees and government officials. Women’s names are not on title deeds.” The lack of documentation of women’s legal and customary rights to land translates, as David described, to a lack of economic security for themselves and their families:

When their husband’s die, women are left landless. Their husband’s brothers inherit the land. Sometimes women are left with nowhere to live, sometimes they have no control over their family’s assets, so they cannot make decisions about paying for school fees or even buying food. They become economically vulnerable.

David was speaking to his own mother’s, Edith’s, Nalutuesha’s and Nkasiogi’s situation, and saw himself as well-positioned to support their case. The organization he worked for, as David explained, was ‘gender sensitive,’ allowing him to learn and understand the challenges that Maasai women faced in accessing land, but also avenues for securing rights. For example, he talked to me about the resistance that women often faced from men when claiming land rights, noting that “our office has women working in it, and they have a program that promotes women's land rights. This involves talking with men, who say they are trying to defeat them.” David described himself as playing the role of engaging other men on the issue of women’s rights, explaining that women could not talk to men about land: “land is such a sensitive issue. A man has to talk to the men about women's land rights. It's too sensitive to talk about with women. They can understand a man better than they can understand a woman.” According to David, men, by virtue of their gender, were in a better position to act as brokers for women over land disputes than women themselves. In making

this claim, David positioned himself in a place of power to act on behalf of women in their struggles over land. With regards to his mother's case, specifically, he acted as an authority figure in their case with the LCB in Kajiado County.

6.6 Delineating Land Rights: The Kajiado County Land Control Board

The LCB in Kajiado County was located in Ngong Town Center, about 45 minutes driving distance from Oltepesi, inside an office building surrounded with green, tall leafy trees. When I visited the offices, the humid and cool air was strikingly different from the dry heat in Oltepesi. Upon arriving at the parking lot, we entered a scene of people as we approached the building, with women wearing pencil skirts and men in suits and ties in various shades of navy blue, dark greys and black. They were streaming in and out of the front door to answer their cell phones, while others sat in a waiting room in front of a reception desk. All four of the widows were, by contrast, dressed in traditional clothes, with layers of beaded jewelry hanging from their necks and draped in colourful fabric tied together at the waist with a thick beaded belt, while David wore a blue suit.

Before entering the building, David told his mother, Edith, Mama Mary and Nkasiogi what to say to the LCB. He stressed to them that Kamau had to prove that he owned all of his late father's land by presenting the necessary documents to confirm and legitimize the sale of his late father's land, which David believed he did not possess. Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha nodded their heads in agreement. While it is true that Kamau did need to provide documented evidence that the land was legally sold to him, he also, according to the 1967 Land Control Board Act, had to prove that the four women had consented to the sale in advance. Yet though this requirement was part of the 1967 Act, it did not factor significantly into the proceedings that occurred during the meeting. Instead, the focus was on validating whether the documents presented by Kamau confirmed the sale of land.

We briefly sat in the front waiting room of the building with David who sat with a file folder on his lap, before the administrative assistant told him that we could proceed to the second floor. On the second floor we sat in a narrow hallway outside of a room. Kamau entered into the hallway where we were seated on chairs. He greeted us all in Swahili – ‘Habari zenu’ – a relatively formal greeting – to which we all responded before being invited by a man in a suit to enter into the main room. There were three long, rectangular conference tables arranged with one table at the front and the other two tables flanked to the sides to make a u-shape. Three, middle-aged men sat with file folders in front of them at the main table. Kamau sat behind one of the long tables by himself with a file folder, while we sat across from him. There were brief introductions, with David explaining that he was representing Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha in the case. I also briefly explained that I was a researcher from Canada and answered a few questions from members of the Land Control Board about women’s land rights in Canada.

The proceedings began by acknowledging that Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha were there to claim their rights to land. However, David, rather than Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha, was invited to speak first. As he explained to the three men from the Land Control Board: “Kamau bought 30 acres of land from our father, then another 20 acres for 30,000 Ksh each, amounting to 600,000 Ksh.” This sum was around 7000.00 Cad. David claimed that the five acres where his family, Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha were currently living were never sold to Kamau. According to David, his family went to Kamau with a proposal to buy back the 20 acres of land that was sold, but as he claimed, five acres remained theirs. In response, David explained that Kamau asked for 7 million Ksh (81,395 Cad) in total for the full 55 acres of land. The family agreed to pay back 600,000 Ksh (7, 000 Cad), but could not pay anything beyond that. Referring to their poverty, David pled to the committee for help, highlighting their long, familial connection to

the land: “The first born and the last-born child was born there and now we are squatters. We are here to ask the committee for help.” David’s plea highlighted his family’s connection to the pieces of land in question in order to emphasize their loss from his father’s previous sales.

Kamau reported a different version of the story. He had a title deed for 35 acres of land and then another title deed for 55 acres issued Jan. 24th, 2012, which included the 35 acres that he claimed to have previously purchased. One of the three men from the LCB then asked Kamau how he went from owning 35 acres to 55 acres of land. Kamau explained that he bought land gradually overtime: “I bought 20 acres first, then 15 acres, then five acres, up to 55 acres of land.” Referring to Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha’s late husband, Kamau described himself as conducting business with a willing seller. As he explained: “I wanted to buy land and the mzee was selling land, so it was an agreement. I even asked him [if] he was selling his land, and he told me “I cannot die from hunger when I have land to sell.” Like many men in Maasai areas, Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha’s late husband sold land to access cash in order to support his immediate needs. In doing so, he left Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha and their children landless, potentially for generations to come.

According to Kamau, Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith, and Nalutuesha’s late husband wrote a handwritten document that confirmed the sale and transfer of land between the two parties. He then hired a surveyor for the 55 acres and got a title deed for the full amount of land. This title deed was stored in Ardhi House in Nairobi, where the Ministry of Lands was located. Kamau did not bring the title deed to the court, but instead showed the title deed for the 20 acres and a hand-written agreement for the remaining 35 acres, which was signed by David’s father. As Coldham (1979) points out, while unregistered dealings, such as the one presented by Kamau to the Land Control Board, may be devoid of legal effect and proceed invisible to the state, they may be considered valid in the local context. However, it remains

possible to challenge local arrangements by asserting claims in terms of and through official practices and principles. This is precisely what was happening in this claim by Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha. David was challenging the legality of his late father's alleged agreements with Kamau on behalf of these four women.

Like many other land transactions throughout the country involving Maasai speakers, hand-written notes were used as evidence of previous land-sales in cases such as the one between the four widows and Kamau. These hand-written notes were often presented by state officials or individual buyers to Maasai men who did not always understand the full implications of their agreements to sell land. For willing buyers, the sale of land meant that rights were being transferred in full, providing them with absolute control and ownership over their property after a payment was made. For many Maasai men, however, these agreements were understood as providing individuals with rights to use the land for a finite period of time, which was how land was managed under customary norms and institutions. The lack of clarity over the implications of land sales was the result of cultural differences, as well as men's inability to read or write. Beginning with the colonial encounter at the end of the 19th century, Maa-speakers with limited literacy signed documents pertaining to the sale and transfer of land in their own names, sometimes signing documents that they could not read with their thumb prints (Hughes 2004, Matter 2010). Some of these documents later included national identification card numbers and plot numbers in order to mirror the officialdom of the state, but nevertheless were created through relatively informal agreements between parties who did not share a common understanding of land tenure.

As scholars of bureaucracy note, both official and unofficial paperwork are rarely fully complete (Gupta 2012; Hetherington 2009; 2011; Hull 2015 and 2012). Indeed, to add confusion to the claim presented by Kamau, the written documentation that was used as evidence of land sales had errors. For example, the plot number for the piece of land he

claimed to have purchased was 1228, yet the document read 1229. David also pointed out other errors in Kamau's paperwork that he noticed after going to Ardhi House to review the title deed before attending the meeting. As he explained to the members of the LCB, the name on the title deed, according to David, "does not match the name written on my father's ID." David also claimed that there were multiple title deeds for the same pieces of land – some that read 30 acres of land and others that accounted for 50 acres of land. Raising the point about the remaining five acres of land where he, Edith, Nkasiogi, Mama Mary and Nalutuesha lived, David stated that in the most recent title deed, dated March 21, 1999, did not include information about the plot of land. As a result, the five acres of land were still not accounted for by official paperwork according to David.

It was only during the final moments of the proceedings that Nalutuesha was invited to speak and recount her and her co-wives' version of the transactions that occurred over their family's land. Nalutuesha stood to address the three men from the LCB. She stated: "We are four women. We are not wealthy and we are not educated, but we have lived on this land our entire lives. This is our land. Our husband sold the land without asking us for permission. Now we are left landless. We know our rights; we have equal rights to land." Nalutuesha continued, raising her voice and becoming visibly impassioned with her hand gestures, pointing to the three members of the LCB: "It is your duty to protect our rights. We are women and we deserve rights to our land. We will not move. We are asking for your help. This is our land."

Nalutuesha's testimony to the LCB strikingly contrasted with the rest of the conversation that took place during the hearing. Namely, Nalutuesha focused on a set of rights to land that she, like every Kenya woman, now had thanks to the 2010 Constitution. The topic of their rights, however, had not been raised by any of the men in the meeting. In fact, the members of the LCB did not question whether the four women consented to their

late husband's sale of land. These four women's consent was legally required according to the very same law that established LCBs as legitimate entities to make decisions over land. Yet the LCB in Ngong, instead focused on whether the land sales had been properly documented by the state and by Kamau. The focus on documentation as the primary topic of the hearing, rather than women's rights, was further highlighted at the end of the hearing. After listening to Nalutuesha's demand for land rights and protection, the LCB turned their attention back to the issue of the title deeds. They acknowledged her account, nodding their heads, then requested Kamau to return to the LCB with the title deed that listed the full 55 acres of land. They then turned to David and suggested they visit the five acres of land in question where the electrical transformer was scheduled to be built. The hearing was shortly thereafter ended.

6.7 Follow the Paper: Bureaucracy and Money

In his (2012: 22) discussion of government bureaucracy, Hull encourages ethnographers to "follow the paper" if they "want to understand bureaucratic activities." The documents he 'follows' include files, reports, letters, maps, petitions, and office manuals in order to understand the documentary regime of the Central Development Authority (CDA) in Islamabad, Pakistan. In my attempts to understand the different claims made to land in Oltepesi, particularly in the case of the four widows, I too wanted to 'follow' the paper after the proceedings took place. In my efforts to do so, I tried, repeatedly, to follow-up with David in the months that followed to understand the next steps of the case and how the title deeds were registered. I struggled to reach him, as did Namunyak. David finally agreed to meet me in Kiserian, months later, just before I was scheduled to return to Canada, marking the end of my final longer stay in Oltepesi. He informed me that it was not worthwhile to follow the paper, or at least not the type of paper that was presented to the LCB in Ngong. I should have

tried to follow the money. David had, as he explained, paid certain members of LCB to hear his case and to speed up their decisions over who owned the land. The LCB's visit to the five acres of land was to see how far along the electrical project had proceeded in order to consider the monetary value of the land. By the time I met with him, that visit to the land had already occurred, but the case was nevertheless still open.

The implementation of the law ultimately depends on public officials who also have to navigate a number of bureaucratic processes, involving completing, signing and filing documents (Gupta 2013; Hull 2012). Land titling specifically requires surveying, documenting and registering holdings that are 'legible' and recognizable to state officials and in principle open to the public (Hull 2012). As Gupta (2013) notes, bureaucratization and classification, rather than bringing conformity to informality and disorder, are, in fact, 'messy.' While trying to provide a degree of transparency, bureaucratic processes themselves provide loopholes through which corrupt practices can occur. In their efforts to close gaps in documentation, "government officials either resort to more elaborate 'safeguards' against corruption, or to a reliance on unofficial and informal processes that constitute a rejection of bureaucratic norms altogether" (Hull 2012: 256-247 in Gupta 2013: 436).

Akhil Gupta (2013 and 2012) describes how lower-level state officials in India supplement government procedures with practices of their own invention that were neither authorized nor standardized. As he (2013: 438). writes: "Increasing processualism does not necessary diminish corruption and can even help augment it. Because paperwork is never complete and sometimes complex, bribes can be extracted by higher-level public officials to erase errors in paperwork made by low-level civil servants." In the bureaucracies he studied in rural India, documenting the activities of rural municipalities was central to the jobs of low-level bureaucrats who supported poverty reduction programs. In fact, he (2013: 428) argues that "the task of government then became not to bring about measurable change in the

lives of people from whom development projects were run, but to ensure that procedures were followed to the letter.” When studying the management of water in rural districts in Tanzania, I (2017) also observed a bureaucratic culture in which documenting processes and activities were prioritized by water technicians and engineers above fixing water infrastructure, which was their primary mandate and which provided an essential public service to the rural poor.

While Gupta (2013) describes bureaucracies as being ‘messy’, Chabal and Daloz (1999) use the term ‘disordered’ when describing bureaucratic institutions in the African context. The authors sample different bureaucracies throughout Sub-Saharan Africa to challenge the approach to understanding bureaucratic institutions in relation to Weber’s (1947 in Weber and Eisenstadt 1968) ideal type. In this ideal type, as Weber famously describes, bureaucracies work best when they are neutral institutions and divorced from personalistic relationships. Understanding bureaucracies in relation to Weber’s ideal type is, according to the authors, euro-centric. Chabal and Daloz make this claim by showing how certain bureaucratic ideals have never been realized in many African countries where colonial and post-colonial processes of state-building did not attempt to create bureaucracies that were separate from society. As the author’s claim, bureaucracies in many Sub-Saharan African countries have been established through personal relationships, specifically patron-client ties. These patron-client ties, as the authors explain, make the state accessible to non-state actors.

This understanding of bureaucratic order is described by Matter (2010) in Kenya as involving individuals who interpenetrate the official, bureaucratic structures and rules with patronage in their efforts to secure land rights. The result is the blurring of boundaries between the public and private spheres. This kind of instrumental manipulation in Kenya often requires having cash - cash payments for land are ubiquitous in determining legal ownership (Barkan 1994; Klopp 2001). Unlike the bureaucratic processes of the state, which

require public appointments and legal processes, transactions involving money can be conducted quickly with little record keeping or surveillance, making them hard to ‘follow.’

These different accounts of bureaucracy are largely focused on how men navigate the law and state institutions, without considering how their ability to forge patron-client relationships, for example, is linked to their power as men. However, as I have shown in this chapter, Maasai women faced particular barriers in navigating the official channels of the state in their efforts to access land rights. Rather than providing them with a clear pathway, the individuals and institutions that were mandated to protect their rights still worked through patriarchal norms and private agreements, often between men. In the case of Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith and Nalutuesha, specifically, their rights to land were secondary to the LCB’s, Kamau’s and David’s focus on the documents involved in legitimizing land sales, which also disguised the private dealings that were occurring with money. These gaps in how bureaucracies and the law were supposed to function highlight the tension between newly realized rights and how they were delivered to Maasai women.

Returning to Oltepesi two years later, I saw large electrical transformers dotting the Rift Valley Escarpment including where Nkasiogi, Mama Mary, Edith, Nalutuesha and David used to live. The large, electrical project appeared to have moved forward on the disputed five acres of land. I tried to follow-up with the four women through Namunyak, but she informed me that they had moved away from Oltepesi and lost touch with her. David was also not reachable. I wondered if the four women were given land rights elsewhere, or if they were given cash as compensation to move, or if they simply lost their case and were evicted. While I did not know the final outcome, it was clear that the bureaucratic processes involved in claiming land were, on the surface, focused on documentary evidence of the land sales, rather than on the question of consent and the women’s rights to land, as was enshrined in the 2010 Constitution.

The 2010 Constitution provided a pathway for Maasai women to consider themselves as being rights-holding citizens who in principle were equally eligible to own land in their households. During my time in Oltepesi, however, the discourse of rights was largely public rhetoric rather than a material reality for most Maasai women. Nevertheless, Maasai women's discussions of land rights in women's groups, as well as their nascent efforts to secure land, provided some indication that the gender dynamics around land could change in the future. Having a physical presence during public processes such as the LCB hearing and the titling process for commercial plots on the side of the road, alone, marked an important step for Maasai women in their efforts to claim their rights. Maasai women were observing these processes and, in some cases, strategizing how to navigate the law and infiltrate political networks by contacting their local representatives. While perhaps being 'thin' or 'weak' navigational nodes, to use Appadurai's (2013) terms, Maasai women's discussions and nascent efforts to secure rights highlighted their capacities to aspire for better futures. These futures were premised on improvement, which included more just and equitable gender arrangements around land-ownership.

Conclusion

This chapter explored a central development problem that Maasai women in Kenya faced: land tenure security. While policy makers have reformed customary land tenure systems in pastoral areas through idioms of development, specifically in Maasai parts of Kenya, the results of these programs have not been favourable to the vast number of residents in Maasai communities, particularly for women. Land has been subdivided, sold and appropriated by elites and state officials through both formal and informal channels, leaving many Maasai women landless or dependent on their male-kin to access land. The 2010 Constitution sought to correct these inequalities between women and men, which existed

throughout Kenya, sparking efforts by NGOs and civil society organizations to support women's claims to land. However, in Oltepesi, state officials and institutions had the power to determine whether Maasai women could secure rights and title deeds to land, but often did not have their interests in mind when implementing projects and legal processes. While facing significant barriers, Maasai women were discussing their rights to land and raising questions about how to secure title deeds in women's groups. These discussions, as well as their nascent efforts to pursue their claims, offered hope for future changes in land-tenure arrangements that uphold Maasai women's legally-enshrined rights to land.

Conclusion

This dissertation described how Maasai women experienced development. Development, as I have discussed, was a set of social practices, symbolic aspirations, material goods, and social relationships that Maasai women fostered with one another in order to better their lives. The values they assigned to development were both connected to customary social and cultural norms, such as sustaining moral networks of exchange, but also to ideas about development that were introduced to them by development organizations and the state. As I have described, there was no single definition of development in Oltepesi, rather Maasai women from across the socio-economic spectrum and from different generations discussed and debated their subjective ideas about development. The common thread between Maasai women with different social and economic backgrounds was *how* they acted on their aspirations to better their lives. Maasai women drew on their social ties to one another in order to access resources, gain power and exercise control over how they participated in development.

In making these points, I built on previous studies in anthropology that have examined the topic of development over time and in different contexts. Anthropology has often described development as a set of projects and policies that are implemented by external development organizations with the intention of changing people and places (Agrawal 2005; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990; Li 2007; Roe 1994). These organizations include international development organizations and state bodies, which as research has shown, have the power to control the behaviours of ‘development subjects.’ While development organizations played a significant role in how Maasai women experienced and acted on their development aspirations, understanding development as being solely determined by external actors does not capture the full range of Maasai women’s experiences. As an idiom, development in Oltepesi communicated a set of aspirations that Maasai women acted upon in daily life and

through their social ties to one another. These social ties were built on a set of social and moral norms characterized by mutual responsibility and trust that provided them with more power to control how they participated in development compared to when they engaged with projects that were led by the state or an external development organization. As a result, Maasai women more readily drew on their social networks in order to access resources and power in their communities, thereby distancing themselves from being subjected to the norms and practices of the state.

There are five chapters in the body of this dissertation that support these different facets of development. Chapter one discussed the history of women's groups in Oltepesi. These groups encouraged Maasai women to mobilize their social ties to one another in order to learn new skills, advocate for their rights and gain political power in their communities. In looking at the historical trajectory of these groups, from when they first were started by MYWO to how they operated as ROSCAs, I highlighted the power dynamics involved in Maasai women's engagements with development processes. Maasai women's material interests in earning and controlling money led them to create groups that were run autonomously from any external organization, marking a shift from when women's groups were controlled by Maasai men, the state and MYWO. This shift demonstrates how Maasai women initiated their own development processes in their daily lives and through their social ties to one another. Chapter two discussed the internal dynamics of these groups, but also how they were situated within a broader financial landscape that included micro-finance programs that aimed to address Maasai women's financial needs. I compare and contrast the groups Maasai women created with those supported by micro-finance organizations by looking at the relationships of credit/debt that existed in both. In doing so, I highlighted how Maasai women were creating a field of development that was relatively egalitarian, providing

them with more power to decide how they managed their money and ultimately their relationships to one another.

Chapter three looked at the main material object that Maasai women saved money to purchase – mabati houses. In looking at the gender dynamics around these houses, I demonstrated how men and women were expressing their gender identities in idioms of development, albeit in different ways. Maasai women's desire for these houses were connected to their shared and customary role as home-builders, while men's efforts to build mabati houses highlighted how masculinity was changing in Maasai communities as a result of different historical processes. Understanding gender differences between Maasai men was important to considering the power dynamics between husbands and wives in Maasai households that did not fully fall within the binaries of man/women, masculine/feminine, power/powerlessness. As the example of the mabati house showed, Maasai men were, at times, supporting Maasai women's development goals. Chapter four shifted the focus slightly away from money and women's groups by looking at Maasai women's relationships to one another with respect to food. As I argued, Maasai drew on both moral and market norms to create different commodity paths for circulating food across one another's households. In doing so, they provided one another with 'food aid' in times of need, while also creating social ties to one another by means of idioms of kinship. These social ties provided them with a sense of security for the future, over the course of generations, which was essential to mitigating risk and uncertainty and to building a life that was premised on improvement.

Chapter five of this dissertation explored one of the greatest development challenges Maasai women faced: owning and managing land. Despite changes to the Kenyan 2010 Constitution that provided women with stronger land rights throughout the country, including in Oltepesi, claiming land continued to entrench inequalities between Maasai women and men. Representatives and civil servants from the state worked with men rather than women in

titling processes. Furthermore, the processes of securing legal rights privileged a set of bureaucratic and illegal processes that Maasai men could navigate more so than Maasai women, thereby making it difficult for Maasai women to act autonomously in their efforts to secure land. Nevertheless, changes in the law spurred discussions and efforts between Maasai women over how to act on their aspirations of being land-owners. These discussions and nascent actions, combined with changes in the law, offered a possible pathway towards future change and gender equality around who owns land.

A common theme that I highlighted in these chapters was Maasai women's initiative and creativity in their efforts to secure resources, particularly money. Money was one of the few resources that Maasai women could earn and save independently of Maasai men and external development organizations. In mobilizing their social networks around money, Maasai women were building the social connections and avenues of support needed to potentially access other resources -such as food- within their households and communities. Women's groups were particularly important to Maasai women's efforts to save, accumulate and access money. These groups, however, were not only avenues for accessing money, they were also 'platforms of articulation' (Moodie 2008) where women discussed their development aspirations and strategies for how to gain a variety of resources. The importance of these groups in relationship to Maasai women's experiences with development must be considered with respect to the history of development interventions in Maasai communities.

As this dissertation showed, along with previous scholarship (Hodgson 2001; Talle 1988), development interventions have marginalized Maasai women economically and socially in their household and communities, including development projects that were specifically focused on addressing gender inequality. Given this history of development, women's groups represented a means for Maasai women to gain autonomy in relation to Maasai men and development organizations in their efforts to improve their lives. In making

this point, however, it is important not to overstate Maasai women's power in their households and communities. Maasai women continued to face barriers in their efforts to secure a number of resources that were the result of the ongoing inequalities they faced with men in their households and external actors from development organizations and the state. These individuals could decide which resources Maasai women could access and control. In order to create transformational change, development initiatives must build on the example of women's groups in how they operate. Rather than being led or determined by a set of 'development experts' or Maasai men, development that is seeking to support Maasai women's understandings of the 'good life' (Malinowski 1922), must be self-led by and for Maasai women.

The importance of self-leadership in development processes is supported by feminist research (Cornwall 2007; Cornwall and Edwards 2015; Forester et al. 2020; Htun and Weldon 2018; Weldon et al. 2019). For example, in their cross-national and mixed-methods study of 70 countries across six continents and four decades, Htun and Weldon (2018) found that a strong, autonomous feminist movement is both substantively and statistically the most significant predictor of government action to redress women's legal rights and ability to live free from violence. The authors further explain that national autonomous feminist movements "ensure that institutional reforms (such as women's policy machineries and international treaties) live up to the potential imagined by activists who demanded them" (Htun and Weldon 2018: 82). With regards to economic rights specifically, this research shows that feminist organizing, combined with the support of international intergovernmental authorities, has advanced women's ability to access rights land and inheritance rights to property.

Women in Oltepesi were not participating in any national or transnational feminist movements. However, like these movements and their organizations, they were mobilizing

their social ties to one another in order to access resources and improve their lives. These efforts were nascent forms of political participation and activation that were creating new forms of agency among Maasai women which determined how development processes unfolded in Oltepesi. Anthropologists who are interested in understanding issues about well-being, development, gender and power should consider these forms social networking as being ‘aspirational’ (Appadurai 2004) in their orientation, but also political. This dissertation has tried to highlight the aspirational and political qualities of Maasai women’s efforts to improve their lives through their social ties to one another. In doing so, I have shown that development was not solely an ‘anti-politics machine’ (Ferguson 1990) or a form of governmental control (Agrawal 2005), but was also determined by Maasai women’s efforts to improve their lives in ways that aligned with their gendered identities as women and their understandings of what it means to live well.

Bibliography

- Agrawal, Arun. 2005. *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Amanor, Kojo and Sam Moyo. 2008. *Land and Sustainable Development in Africa*. London; Zed Books.
- Andersen, Kaj Blegvad. 1977. *African Traditional Architecture: A Study of the Housing and Settlement Patterns of Rural Kenya*. Nairobi; Oxford University Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 2013. *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. New York: Verso. <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy1312/2012289834-b.html>.
- . 2004. "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition." In *Culture and Public Action*, edited by V Roa and M Walton, 59–84. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- . 1986. "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 3–58. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Archambault, Caroline. 2010. "Fixing Families of Mobile Children: Recreating Kinship and Belonging among Maasai Adoptees in Kenya." *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research* 17 (2): 229–42.
- Ardener, Shirley. 1995. "Africa: Women Making Money-Go-Round." In *Money-Go-Rounds: The Importance of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations for Women*. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Women; v. 15. Oxford, UK; BERG.
- Århem, Kaj. 1989. "Maasai Food Symbolism: The Cultural Connotations of Milk, Meat, and Blood in the Pastoral Maasai Diet." *Anthropos* 84 (1/3): 1–23.
- Aubrey, Lisa Marie. 1997. *The Politics of Development Co-Operation NGOs, Gender and Partnership in Kenya*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Bailey, Julia. 2017. "Bureaucratic Blockages: Water, Civil Servants, and Community in Tanania." World Bank Development Research Group.
- Barkan, Joel D. 1994. *Beyond Capitalism vs. Socialism in Kenya and Tanzania*. Boulder: L. Rienner.
- Bebbington, Anthony. 2000. "Reencountering Development: Livelihood Transitions and Place Transformations in the Andes." *ANNA Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90 (3): 495–520.
- Beck, Erin. 2017. "Reconsidering Women's Empowerment: The Contradictory Effects of Microfinance for Guatemalan Women." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 52 (2): 217–41.
- Berry, Sara. 1992. "Hegemony on a Shoestring: Indirect Rule and Access to Agricultural Land." *Rights over Land*, 355.
- Biza, Adriano, Michelle Kooy, Sandra Manuel, and Margreet Zwarteveen. 2021. "Sanitary Governmentalities: Producing and Naturalizing Social Differentiation in Maputo City, Mozambique (1887–2017)." *Environment and Planning: Nature and Space* 5 (2): 605–24.
- Bloch, Maurice. 1998. *How We Think They Think: Anthropological Approaches to Cognition, Emory, and Literacy*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Bohannan, Paul. 1963. "'Land, 'Tenure' and Land-Tenure." In *African Agrarian Systems Studies Presented and Discussed*, Daniel Biebuyck. London: Oxford University Press.
- Bolig, M. 2008. "Changing Communal Land Tenure in an East African Pastoral System: Institutions and Socio-Economic Transformations among the Pokot of NW Kenya." *Zeitschrift Fur Ethnologie* 133 (2): 301–22.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Brockington, Daniel. 2001. "Women's Income and the Livelihood Strategies of Dispossessed Pastoralists near the Mkomazi Game Reserve, Tanzania." *Human Ecology* 29 (3): 307–38.
- Brownhill, Leigh. 2009. *Land, Food, Freedom: Struggles for the Gendered Commons in Kenya, 1870 to 2007*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press.
- Bruner, Edward M. and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. 1994. "Maasai on the Lawn: Tourist Realism in East Africa." *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (4): 435–70.
- Burman, Sandra. 1995. In *Money-Go-Rounds: The Importance of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations for Women*. Oxford, UK; Washington, D.C.: BERG.
- Burman, Sandra and N. Lembete. 1995. "Building New Realities - African Women and ROSCAs in Urban South Africa." In *Money-Go-Rounds: The Importance of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations for Women*, edited by Shirley Ardener and Sandra Burman. Washington, D.C.: BERG.
- Butler, Judith. 2004. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- . 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge.
- . 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Carsten, Janet. 1989. "Cooking Money: Gender and the Symbolic Transformation of Means of Exchange in a Malay Fishing Community." In *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, edited by Johnathon Parry and Maurice Bloch, 117–41. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chabal, Patrick and Jean-Pascal Daloz. 1999. *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. African Issues. London: International African Institute in association with James Currey, Oxford.
- Clifford, James. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths." In *Writing Culture*, edited by Clifford James and George E. Marcus, 1–26. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520946286>.
- Coast, Ernestina. 2001. *Maasai Demography*. PhD Dissertation. London: London School of Economics.
- Coldham, Simon F. R. 1979. "Land-Tenure Reform in Kenya: The Limits of Law." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 17 (4): 615–27.
- Collins, Daryl. 2009. *Portfolios of the Poor: How the World's Poor Live on \$2 a Day*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Comaroff, Jean., and John L. Comaroff. 1991. *Of Revelation and Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1990. "Goodly Beasts, Beastly Goods: Cattle and Commodities in a South African Context." *American Ethnologist* 17 (2): 195–216.
- Cornwall, Andrea. 2007. *Feminisms in Development: Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges*. New York: Zed Books.
- Cornwall, Andrea and Jenny Edwards. 2015. "How Feminist Activism Can Make States More Accountable for Women's Rights." *Geneva: UNRISD. Publicado En Línea: Http://Www. Unrisd. Org/Beijing*.
- Crewe, Emma and Richard Axelby. 2013. *Anthropology and Development: Culture, Morality and Politics in a Globalised World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cronk, Lee. 2007. "The Influence of Cultural Framing on Play in the Trust Game: A Maasai Example." *ENS Evolution and Human Behavior* 28 (5): 352–58.

- Dahl, Gudrun. 1987. "Women in Pastoral Production: Some Theoretical Notes on Roles and Resources." *Ethnos* 52 (1–2): 246–79.
- de Soto, Hernando. 2000. *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*. New York: Basic Books.
- Domingo, Pilar, Aoife McCullough, Florence Simbiri and Bernadette Mukhwana Wanjala. 2016. "Women and Power: Shaping the Development of Kenya's 2010 Constitution." ODI. <https://odi.org/en/publications/women-and-power-shaping-the-development-of-kenyas-2010-constitution/>.
- Douglas, Mary and Baron C. Isherwood. 1996. *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*. 1 online resource (xxvii, 169 pages): illustrations vols. London; Routledge.
- Ensminger, Jean. 1992. *Making a Market: The Institutional Transformation of an African Society*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Fassin, Didier. 2009. "Moral Economies Revisited." *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64th Year (6): 1237–66.
- Ferguson, James. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press.
- . 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1992. "The Cultural Topography of Wealth: Commodity Paths and the Structure of Property in Rural Lesotho." *American Anthropologist* 94 (1): 55.
- . 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1985. "The Bovine Mystique: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Lesotho." *Man, New Series*, 20 (4): 647–74.
- Ferguson, James and Akhil Gupta. 2002. "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality." *American Ethnologist* 29 (4): 981.
- Forester, Summer, Kaitlin Kelly-Thompson, Amber Lusvardi and Laurel Weldon. 2020. "A Global, Comparative Map of Feminist Movements, 1975–2015: An Intersectional, Mixed-Methods Approach." *Movements, Markets and Transnational Networks: Feminist Protest and Women's Economic Empowerment Worldwide*. Seattle: Gates Foundation.
- Foucault, Michel. 1991. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fratkin, Elliot. 1997. "Pastoralism: Governance and Development Issues." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26: 235.
- . 1991. *Surviving Drought and Development: Ariaal Pastoralists of Northern Kenya*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Fratkin, Elliot and Kevin Smith. 1995. "Women's Changing Economic Roles with Pastoral Sedentarization: Varying Strategies in Alternate Rendille Communities." *Human Ecology* 23 (4): 433–54.
- Friedman, Jonathan. 2012. "On Text and Con-Text: Towards an Anthropology in Development." In *Differentiating Development: Beyond an Anthropology of Critique*, Venkatesan, Soumya and Thomas Yarrow, 22–40. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Gaitskell, Deborah. 1983. "Housewives, Maids or Mothers: Some Contradictions of Domesticity for Christian Women in Johannesburg, 1903–39." *The Journal of African History* 24 (2): 241–56.

- Galaty, John. 2016. "Reasserting the Commons: Pastoral Contestations of Private and State Lands in East Africa." *International Journal of the Commons* 10 (2): 709–27.
- . 2005. "Double Voiced Violence in Kenya." In *Violence and Belonging: The Quest for Identity in Post-Colonial Africa*, edited by Vigdis Broch-Due. London; New York: Routledge.
- . 1999. *The Rhetoric of Rights: Construing Maasai Land Claims*. Kampala Uganda: Centre for Basic Research.
- . 1994. "Rangeland Tenure and Pastoralism in Africa." *African Pastoralist Systems*, 204.
- . 1977. *In the Pastoral Image: The Dialectic of Maasai Identity*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Chicago.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1962. "The Rotating Credit Association: A 'Middle Rung' in Development." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 10 (3): 241–63.
- Gell, Alfred. 1988. "Newcomers to the World of Goods: Consumption among Muria Gonds." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 110–38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gough, Kathleen. 1971. "Nuer Kinship: A Re-Examination." In *The Translation of Culture: Essays to Evans-Pritchard*, edited by T.O Beidelman, 79–121. London: Routledge.
- Green, Maia, Uma Kothari, Claire Mercer and Diana Mitlin. 2012. "Saving, Spending, and Future-Making: Time, Discipline, and Money in Development." *Environment and Planning A* 44 (7): 1641–56.
- Gupta, Akhil. 2013. "Messy Bureaucracies." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (3): 435–40.
- . 2012. *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Gurel, Meltem. 2009. "Defining and Living out the Interior: The 'Modern' Apartment and the 'Urban' Housewife in Turkey during the 1950s and 1960s." *Gender, Place & Culture* 16 (6): 703–22.
- Han, Clara. 2012. *Life in Debt Times of Care and Violence in Neoliberal Chile*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hardin, G. 1968. "The Tragedy of the Commons. The Population Problem Has No Technical Solution it Requires a Fundamental Extension in Morality." *Science* 162 (859): 1243–48.
- Hetherington, Kregg. 2011. *Guerrilla Auditors: The Politics of Transparency in Neoliberal Paraguay*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press.
- . 2009. "Privatizing the Private in Rural Paraguay: Precarious Lots and the Materiality of Rights." *American Ethnologist* 36 (2): 224–41.
- Hill, Martin J. D. 1991. *The Harambee Movement in Kenya: Self-Help, Development and Education among the Kamba of Kitui District*. Monographs on Social Anthropology ; No. 64. London; Athlone Press.
- Hodgson, Dorothy. 2005. *The Church of Women: Gendered Encounters between Maasai and Missionaries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 2001. *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 2001b. "Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann.
- . 1999. "'Once Intrepid Warriors': Modernity and the Production of Maasai Masculinities." *Ethnology* 38 (2): 121–50.
- Holtzman, Jon. 2009. *Uncertain Tastes: Memory, Ambivalence, and the Politics of Eating in Samburu, Northern Kenya*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Homewood, Katherine. 2008. *Ecology of African Pastoralist Societies*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Homewood, Katherine and W. A. Rodgers. 1991. *Maasailand Ecology: Pastoralist Development and Wildlife Conservation in Ngorongoro, Tanzania*. Cambridge Studies in Applied Ecology and Resource Management. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Htun, Mala and S. Laurel Weldon. 2018. *The Logics of Gender Justice: State Action on Women's Rights around the World*. 1 online resource (xviii, 350 pages): illustrations, maps vols. Cambridge Studies in Gender and Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hughes, Lotte. 2006. *Moving the Maasai: A Colonial Misadventure*. Basingstoke [England]; New York; Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan. In association with St. Antony's College.
- Hull, Matthew. 2015. "Paper Reforms: Tweaking the Journey of the Humble Government Fil." *The Herald*, 2015.
- . 2012. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hutchinson, Sharon. 2000. "Identity and Substance: The Broadening Bases of Relatedness among the Nuer of Southern Sudan." In *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, 55–73. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1996. *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Isserles, R. G. 2003. "Microcredit: The Rhetoric of Empowerment, the Reality of Development as Usual." *Womens Studies Quarterly* 31: 38–57.
- Kameri-Mbote. 2005. "The Land Has Its Owners! Gender Issues in Land Tenure Under Customary Law." In *UNDP - International Land Coalition Workshop*. Nairobi.
- Karim, Lamia. 2008. "Demystifying Micro-Credit." *Cultural Dynamics* 20 (1): 5–29.
- Karanja, Perpetua W. 1991. "Women's Land Ownership Rights in Kenya." *Third World Legal Stud.*, 109.
- Kenya - Ministry of Health. 1931. "Annual Report." Ministry of Health. Kenyan National Archive.
- Kettel, Bonnie. 1992. "Gender Distortions and Development Disasters: Women and Milk in African Herding Systems." *NWSA Journal* 4 (1): 23–41.
- Klopp, Jacqueline M. 2001. "Electoral Despotism in Kenya: Land, Patronage and Resistance in the Multi-Party Context." [Montreal]: McGill University Libraries. WorldCat.org.
- Lairap-Fonderson, Josephine. 2002. "The Disciplinary Power of Micro-Credit: Examples from Kenya and Cameroon." In *Rethinking Empowerment: Gender and Development in a Global/Local World*, edited by Jane Palpart and Kathleen A Staudt, 182–95. New York: Routledge.deter
- Lane, Charles. 1998. *Custodians of the Commons: Pastoral Land Tenure in East and West Africa*. London: Earthscan.
- Leach, Melissa. 1996. *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment*. Oxford; Portsmouth N.H.: International African Institute in association with James Currey; Heinemann.
- Li, Tania. 2007. *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific an Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London; New York: G. Routledge & Sons; E.P. Dutton & Co.
- Matter, Scott. 2004. "We Have This Land as Our Right": *Ethnicity, Politics, and Land Rights Conflict at Enoosupukia, Kenya*.

- Maurer, Bill. 2006. "The Anthropology of Money." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35: 15.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1925. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Routledge.
- Mayoux, Linda. 2010. "Reaching and Empowering Women: Towards a Gender Justice Protocol for a Diversified, Inclusive, and Sustainable Financial Sector." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 9 (3/4): 581–600.
- . 1999. "Questioning Virtuous Spirals: Micro-Finance and Women's Empowerment in Africa." *J. Int. Dev. Journal of International Development* 11 (7): 957–84.
- Merry, Sally Engle. 2006. "Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle." *American Anthropologist* 108 (1): 38–51.
- Molyneux, Maxine. 2001. *Women's Movements in International Perspective: Latin America and Beyond*. Institute of Latin American Studies Series. New York: Palgrave.
- Moodie, Megan. 2008. "Enter Microcredit: A New Culture of Women's Empowerment in Rajasthan?" *American Ethnologist* 35 (3): 454–65.
- Moore, Henrietta. 1986. *Space, Text, and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Moskowitz, Kara. 2019. *Seeing like a Citizen: Decolonization, Development, and the Making of Kenya, 1945-1980*. 1 online resource (xv, 332 pages): illustrations, maps vols. New African Histories. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- MPIDO. 2021. "Programmes," June 24, 2021, <https://www.mpido.org/>.
- Mwangi, E. 2007. "Subdividing the Commons: Distributional Conflict in the Transition from Collective to Individual Property Rights in Kenya's Maasailand." *World Development* 35 (5): 815–34.
- Oiye, S, Joseph Ole Simmel, Ruth Oniang'o and Timothy Johns. 2011. "The Maasai Food System and Food and Nutrition Security." Montreal, Quebec.: Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment (CINE) and School of Dietetics and Human Nutrition.
- Okoth-Ogendo, H.W.O. 2008. "The Nature of Land Rights Under Indigenous Law in Africa." In *Land, Power and Custom: Controversies Generated by South Africa's Communal Land*, Ed. Anika Claassens and Ben Cousins. UCT Press.
- . 1991. *Tenants of the Crown: Evolution of Agrarian Law and Institutions in Kenya*. ACTS Legal Studies Series; No. 2. Nairobi, Kenya: ACTS Press, African Centre for Technology Studies.
- Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre. 2005. *Anthropology and Development: Understanding Contemporary Social Change*. London; New York: Zed Books.
- Opoku, Maxwell Peprah, Beatrice Anyango and Beatrice Atim Alupo. 2018. "Women in Politics in Kenya: An Analysis of Participation and Barriers." *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies* 7 (1): 1506–30.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Palpart, Jane, M. Rai Shirin, and Kathleen A Staudt. 2002. "Rethinking Em(Power)Men, Gender and Development: An Introduction." In *Rethinking Empowerment: Gender and Development in a Global/Local World*, edited by Jane Palpart, M. Rai Shirin, and Kathleen A Staudt, 3–22. New York: Routledge.
- Parry, Jonathan P. and Maurice Bloch. 1989. "Introduction: Money and the Morality of Exchange." In *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, edited by Johnathon Parry and Maurice Bloch, 1–33. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Peebles, Gustav. 2010. "The Anthropology of Credit and Debt." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 225.

- Pink, Sarah. 2020. *Home Truths: Gender, Domestic Objects and Everyday Life*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation*. New York; Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc.
- Prussin, Labelle. 1995. *African Nomadic Architecture: Space, Place, and Gender*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Rahman, Aminur. 1999. *Women and Microcredit in Rural Bangladesh: Anthropological Study of the Rhetoric and Realities of Grameen Bank Lending*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Rankin, Katharine. 2001. "Governing Development: Neoliberalism, Microcredit, and Rational Economic Woman." *Economy and Society* 30 (1): 18–37.
- Reece, Damian. 2011. "Kenya's Women Spearheading Micro Finance Projects - Telegraph." <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/banksandfinance/8360803/Kenyas-women-spearheading-micro-finance-projects.html>.
- Roe, Emery. 1994. *Narrative Policy Analysis: Theory and Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.
- Sayer, Andrew. 2018. "Welfare and Moral Economy." *Ethics & Social Welfare* 12 (1): 20–33.
- . 2003. "(De)Commodification, Consumer Culture, and Moral Economy." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21 (3): 341–57.
- Scott, James C.. 1976. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sen, Amartya. 1985. *Commodities and Capabilities*. Professor Dr. P. Hennipman Lectures in Economics; v. 7. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Pub. Co.
- Seremetakis, C. Nadia. 1991. *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shipton, Parker MacDonald. 2007. *The Nature of Entrustment: Intimacy, Exchange, and the Sacred in Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Simmel, Georg. 1900. *The Philosophy of Money*. London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Smith, Nicole. M. 2015. "Gender and Livelihood Diversification: Maasai Women's Market Activities in Northern Tanzania." *The Journal of Development Studies* 51 (3): 305–18.
- Sorrenson, M. P. K. 1968. *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Spencer, Paul. 1988. *The Maasai of Matapato: A Study of Rituals of Rebellion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the International African Institute.
- Straight, Bilinda. 2007. "House, Fire, Gender." *Material Religion* 3 (1): 48–61.
- . 2002. "From Samburu Heirloom to New Age Artifact: The Cross-Cultural Consumption of Mporo Marriage Beads." *American Anthropologist* 104 (1): 7.
- . 2000. "Development Ideologies and Local Knowledge among Samburu Women in Northern Kenya." In *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa: Gender, Culture and the Myth of the Patriarchal Pastoralists*, edited by Dorothy Hodgson, 227–49. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Talle, Aud. 1988. *Women at a Loss: Changes in Maasai Pastoralism and Their Effects on Gender Relations*. Stockholm: Dept. of Social Anthropology University of Stockholm.

- Thomas-Slayter, Barbara P. 1985. *Politics, Participation, and Poverty: Development through Self-Help in Kenya*. Westview Special Studies in Social, Political, and Economic Development. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Thompson, E.P. 1963. *The Making of the English Working Class*. [New ed.]. London: Penguin.
- Tripp, Aili Mari. 2004. "Women's Movements, Customary Law, and Land Rights in Africa: The Case of Uganda." *African Studies Quarterly* 7 (4): 1–19.
- Weber, Max and S. N Eisenstadt. 1968. *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building: Selected Papers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weldon, S. S. Forester, K. Kelly-Thompson and A. Lusvardi. 2019. "Handmaidens or Heroes?: Feminist Mobilization as a Force for Economic Equality Around the World." Working Paper 2. Movements, Markets and Transnational Networks: Feminist Protest and Women's Economic Empowerment Worldwide. Gates Foundation.
- Wipper, Audrey. 1975. "The Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization: The Co-Optation of Leadership." *Afristudrevi African Studies Review* 18 (3): 99–120.
- World Bank. 1994. "The Pay-Off of Investing in Women." In *Enhancing Women's Participation in Economic Development*. A World Bank Policy Paper, 1014-8124. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Zelizer, Viviana A. Rotman. 1994. *The Social Meaning of Money*. New York: Basic Books.