Images, uncertainties, and success stories:

the politics of conservation in Laikipia North, Kenya.

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Abstract

Laikipia County, Kenya, one of East Africa's most exclusive safari tourism destinations, exemplifies both the benefits and challenges that come with pursuing conservation outside government-administered protected areas. In Laikipia, where more than forty percent of land is owned by expatriates, white ranchers, and conservation organizations, Maasai communities on the county's peripheries struggle with declining natural resources, insecurity, poor infrastructure, and weak access to public services. While minority landowners face growing criticism for land inequality in this region, Laikipia remains an icon of the promise or potential of community-based conservation in African drylands. Conservation organizations often cite Laikipia as proof that conservation beyond parks can work if local communities are meaningfully engaged in everyday efforts to protect land and wildlife. Tourism has contributed substantially to Laikipia's image as a conservation success story, as land relations in the county enable landowners or tour operators to show guests pristine and seemingly unpeopled landscapes.

While recognizing that conservation and tourism provide employment and other benefits to some Laikipia Maasai, this dissertation explains the disillusioning affects these industries also have on the Maasai population. This study situates conservation and tourism in what Anna Tsing calls the "global economy of appearances," where success is often predicated on looking successful in the eyes of investors, clients, and global partners. Discussing a range of conservation efforts in one community I call Ol Tome Group Ranch, the study argues that neoliberal conservation today is largely a project of *representing others*. Partnering with conservationists and tourism investors not only requires Maasai to change how they use land, but also to present themselves as allies of conservation in ways that their global partners can recognize. In the process, I explain how conservation discourse articulates with many aspects of life in this Maasai community, producing relationships of 'alienation' among group ranch residents and conservation partners. This dissertation offers a critical and contemporary look at the politics of community-based conservation and tourism in Laikipia by discussing actors, organizations, industries, and ethnic groups that have not been the focus of other studies in this region.

This dissertation is based on 15 months of fieldwork in Laikipia North and nearby areas. Later periods of the study coincided with the deadly pre-election violence that struck Laikipia and neighboring counties in 2017. I discuss the political ramifications of these conflicts by analyzing their coverage in various forms of media, and suggest that pastoralists are serving as scapegoats for Laikipia's political and environmental problems. The study offers insight on the conflicts and controversies that have enveloped Laikipia County in recent years, and highlights opportunities to strengthen conservation and development partnerships throughout pastoral regions of East Africa.

Résumé

Le comté de Laikipia au Kenya, l'une des destinations de safari les plus prestigieuses d'Afrique de l'Est, est un exemple à la fois des retombées et des défis entourant les efforts de conservation de la nature à l'extérieur des aires protégées administrées par l'État. À Laikipia, où plus de quarante pourcents des terres sont contrôlées par des expatriés, des fermiers blancs et des organismes de préservation de la nature, les communautés Maasai qui résident à la périphérie du comté sont confrontées au déclin des ressources naturelles, à l'insécurité, à des infrastructures déficientes et à un accès limité aux services publics. Bien que la minorité de propriétaires terriens fait face à des critiques croissantes quant à l'iniquité de la répartition des terres, Laikipia demeure le symbole du potentiel d'une préservation de la savane africaine basée sur la communauté. Les organismes de préservation citent fréquemment Laikipia comme preuve que la préservation peut fonctionner au-delà des parcs nationaux lorsque les communautés locales sont significativement impliquées dans les efforts quotidiens pour protéger la terre et la faune. Le tourisme a substantiellement contribué à l'image de Laikipia comme un succès de préservation, la répartition des terres dans le comté permettant aux propriétaires et aux tours opérateurs de montrer aux visiteurs des paysages immaculés et en apparence inhabités.

Tout en reconnaissant que la préservation et le tourisme fournissent des emplois et d'autres avantages à certains Maasai de Laikipia, cette thèse met en évidence les effets négatifs que ces activités économiques ont sur la population Maasai. Cette étude situe la préservation et le tourisme dans ce qu'Anna Tsing appelle « l'économie globale des apparences, » dans laquelle le succès est souvent défini selon ce qui semble réussi aux yeux des investisseurs, des clients et des partenaires internationaux. À travers l'analyse d'une série d'initiatives de conservation dans une communauté que j'appelle Ol Tome Group Ranch, cette étude défend l'idée selon laquelle la préservation néolibérale est aujourd'hui principalement une entreprise de *représentation de l'autre*. Les partenariats avec les organismes de préservation et les entrepreneurs touristiques force les Maasai non seulement à modifier leur utilisation de la terre mais également à se poser en alliés de la conservation d'une façon que leurs partenaires internationaux puissent reconnaître. Ce faisant, j'explique comment le discours sur la préservation s'articule avec plusieurs aspects de la vie dans cette communauté Maasai, aliénant les résidents des ranches et les partenaires de la préservation. Cette thèse présente un regard critique et contemporain sur les politiques de préservation et de tourisme basées sur la communauté à Laikipia en étudiant des acteurs, des organisations, des industries et des groupes ethniques rarement étudiés.

Cette thèse se base sur 15 mois de recherches de terrain au nord de Laikipia et dans les environs. Les étapes subséquentes de la recherche ont coïncidé avec les violences préélectorales tragiques qui ont frappé Laikipia et les comtés voisins en 2016 et 2017. J'aborde les ramifications politiques de ces conflits en analysant leur couverture dans divers médias et suggère que ces conflits donnent maintenant un élan à l'amélioration des relations entre les Maasai de Laikipia et leurs voisins. De façon générale, l'étude éclaire les conflits et controverses qui ont touché le comté de Laikipia ces dernières années et met en évidence des opportunités pour renforcer les partenariats de préservation et de développement dans les régions pastorales en Afrique de l'Est.

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List of acronyms

AC	Assistant Chief
AWF	African Wildlife Foundation
CBC	community-based conservation
CBNRM	community-based natural resource management
CLA	Community Land Act
EBP	Ewaso Baboon Project
ECK	Electoral Commission of Kenya
ED	Executive Director
FGM	female genital mutilation
GWP	Global Wildlife Partnerships
KPR	Kenya Police Reserves
KWS	Kenya Wildlife Service
LFA	Laikipia Farmers' Association
LMS	Land Man Stands (UK)
LWF	Laikipia Wildlife Forum
MCW	Maasai Cricket Warriors
NCT	Naibunga Conservancy Trust
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRT	Northern Rangelands Trust
PES	payments for ecosystems services
URP	United Republican Party (Kenya)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

List of terms

boma compound housing people and/or livestock constructed from natural materials.

eunoto ritual ceremony in which Maasai warriors graduate to the status of junior elder.

laibon diviner or spiritual leader in Maa communities.

moran Maa warrior, often aged between 18 and 30.

mugoka inexpensive variety of khat.

mzungu European or person of white skin.

ndorobo Maa-speaker descended or assimilated from hunter-gatherers.

olopololi enclosure of pasture used to hold calves or weakened livestock.

shifta bandit or outlaw.

shroba small bundle of khat.

shuka raw textile worn as a garment.

wageni visitors or tourists.

Introduction: alienation and uncertainty in Laikipia North.

In January 2018, my research assistant and I were driving across the northern stretches of Laikipia's group ranches, near Laikipia's border with the neighbouring county of Isiolo. Climbing from the town of Dol Dol to a high point that looked west across Laikipia North, I saw a small cluster of buildings high atop a hill with views looking north towards the Matthews mountain range. My assistant, named Gabriel, a young member of a Maasai group ranch nearby, informed me that this cluster of buildings was in fact a high-end tourist lodge. Opened in 2007 by a foreign investor supported by the US-based conservation group the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), this lodge, called Ol Lentille, is one of Laikipia North's most successful tourism enterprises (Lamers et al. 2015). In the past decade, revenue and funding generated by Ol Lentille has made its host community the envy of other group ranches in Laikipia. This group ranch, called Kijabe, hosts two schools with high quality facilities and a well-equipped medical clinic funded by Ol Lentille. Kijabe Group Ranch also receives millions of Kenyan Shillings in transfer payments from Ol Lentille each year for education bursaries and infrastructure development (Nthiga et al. 2015). Feeling impressed as Gabriel recounted the benefits Ol Lentille was providing to Kijabe, I suggested that we divert and stop at the lodge so that I could see the enterprise for myself. Immediately, Gabriel sucked his teeth and gave a nervous laugh from the passenger seat. "You cannot visit Lentille unless you have been invited there" he said. "They say that [Ol Lentille] is a community-owned enterprise, but most people in Kijabe have never seen the place up close."

In the weeks that followed, as Gabriel and I spoke with many members of Kijabe Group Ranch, I developed an appreciation for the impact, but also the ambivalence, Ol Lentille generated in this Maasai community. Despite the valued assets, including a new solar powered

borehole, that Ol Lentille had helped Kijabe to obtain, the enterprise was locked in a struggle with group ranch leaders that was threatening to bring the partnership to a bitter end. While negotiating a renewal of the lease agreement between Ol Lentille and Kijabe Group Ranch, Maasai leaders claimed that the investors were neglecting the pledges they had made to the community when their partnership was sealed. Though profit sharing agreements with Kijabe had been honored—as evidenced by receipts produced in the meetings—group ranch leaders claimed that Ol Lentille was not employing the number of people from Kijabe that they had originally promised. In defence, the Chairman of Ol Lentille explained that the enterprise was employing as many people from Kijabe as it could. As the lodge features 5-star facilities catering to demanding international guests, roles such as the chef, the Chairman explained, had to be filled by people with formal training and work experience outside the group ranch (Muthiani et al. 2011). Though foreign visitors to Ol Lentille have made significant donations to hospitals, schools, and development efforts on Kijabe, "why", asked one resident, "must our community depend on outsiders to have tourist businesses and to make them successful?"

Indeed, community-based tourism enterprises throughout Kenya often struggle to compete in the global tourist market (Charnley 2005). Communities are often reliant on investors or intermediaries to access the capital and the expertise needed to make tourism enterprises successful (Manyara and Jones 2007; Little 2013). Home to a great diversity of wildlife and set against the picturesque backdrop of Mount Kenya, Laikipia County has become an international tourist destination and a focus for international conservation organizations in recent decades. An arid and high elevation region—once the centre of Kenya's commercial beef industry—roughly forty percent of Laikipia County is made up of ranches and conservancies owned by investors, foreign conservation groups, and white Kenyan ranchers. Beginning in the 1980s, when the

European Commission instituted a ban on beef imports from Kenya (Schluter 1984), many landowners in Laikipia began divesting their ranches of livestock and looked to conservation as the future of the region. In 2013, Laikipia County attracted over 80,0000 visitors to its lodges and conservancies.[1] With the freedom to pursue wildlife conservation alongside livestock production and other commercial enterprises, ranches in Laikipia are often touted as 'role models' for community-based conservation in Africa.[2]

While Laikipia, or some of its large private ranches, are known around the world as conservation success stories, pastoralist communities on the county's margins have struggled to find their place within this glossy narrative. Decisive for the long-term sustainability of migratory wildlife throughout the Mount Kenya region (Kinnaird and O'brien 2012; Gadd 2005), Laikipia's group ranches have been a focus for international and Kenya-based conservation groups for the past three decades. Formerly the site of a large native reserve created for hunter-gatherers in the 1930s, Laikipia's group ranches are home to an amalgam of Maa-speaking ethnic groups whose primary livelihood is livestock production. While the owners of larger land parcels in Laikipia have found economic success in conservation, eco-tourism, and related enterprises, group ranch communities struggle to balance the demands of conservation with their own economic and environmental needs. Though the promise of jobs and enhanced natural resource management is attractive to communities struggling to subsist on livestock production, conservation and tourism initiatives on Laikipia's group ranches have had complex socio-political side-effects. While conservation and tourism are indeed delivering some benefits to

[1] See: http://laikipia.org/Thematic_areas/tourism/
[2] See: https://www.olpejetaconservancy.org/uploads/assets/uploads/2018/06/Annual-Report-2017-FINAL.pdf; https://www.nathab.com/extensions/lewa-downs-extension/

Maasai people in Laikipia, the relationships that conservation partnerships depend on are not as simple to maintain as a solar powered borehole.

This dissertation will explore some of the dilemmas that Maasai people in Laikipia must navigate as they engage with the actors, institutions, and ideologies that constitute community-based conservation (CBC)—presented to many pastoral communities in East Africa today as their best or only chance for a prosperous future (Manyara and Jones 2007; Matheka 2008). Emerging in the 1980s "in response to the recognized failure of top-down approaches to development and ecological limits of ['fortress'] conservation," CBC, says Goldman (2003:833), "shifts the focus of conservation from nature as protected through exclusive state control, to nature as managed through inclusive, participatory, community-based endeavors". But as several studies from throughout Sub-Saharan Africa attest, participating in conservation can put strain on the fabric of communities themselves (Greiner 2012; Goldman 2003; Kellert et al. 2000; Nelson 2012; Neumann 1998). Throughout this thesis, I will describe group ranch residents and their partners working to build or maintain the relationships needed to make conservation projects successful. Though a lack of understanding between conservation actors and local populations is often cited as a cause of project failures (Goldman 2003; Thompson and Homewood 2002; see also Scott 1998), this study strives to describe and contextualize this challenge with ethnographic nuance. As each chapter of the thesis explores a different dimension of how one group ranch community encounters conservation, I explain how CBC projects often impose what Jim Igoe (2010) calls "aesthetic prescriptions" on participants. As funding and support for conservation in Laikipia is largely drawn from international sources, accessing the benefits of conservation often requires that participants project a donor-friendly image. The image that pastoral peoples in

Laikipia are friendly to donors is not an illusion. But community-based conservation, in the context of Laikipia, can involve putting appearances before substantive impacts.

By analyzing the experiences of group ranchers in Laikipia using the concept of 'alienation', I also call attention to the subtle ways that conservation shapes the broader social landscape of the county. At times, community-based conservation in Laikipia involves "relation[s] of domination" (Jaeggi 2014, 22), though many pastoral communities are drawn to conservation for the tangible benefits that it can offer. Benefits like jobs and enhanced social services are enticing to Maasai in Laikipia, though the conservation sector also draws its power from structures and discourses over which pastoral communities hold very little control. For example, in 2011, researchers from the University of Nairobi conducted a study on the partnership between Ol Lentille and Kijabe Group Ranch, concluding that the partnership was threatened by the "inferred lack of trust" residents felt towards the foreign investor (Muthiani et al. 2011:2; see also Nthiga et al. 2015). Kijabe residents were especially unhappy that Ol Lentille's management had opposed the construction of a cellular tower on the group ranch that would have drastically improved communications and facilitated commerce in the area. Ol Lentille's managers and funders had alleged, said the study, that a cell tower would upset the natural landscape of the group ranch and make the area less attractive to tourists (Muthiani et al. 2011). As one Kijabe member explained to me on the steps of the hospital funded by Ol Lentille, "we are thankful for the things that Lentille has brought us, but I think they are just paying us to stay out of their way."

Maasai dilemmas

Of the many communities in East Africa profoundly impacted by conservation, none have as complex a relationship with this project as the Maasai. Often depicted wearing red *shukas* and performing dances for Western tourists, Maasai have been both privileged and marginalized by their close connection to wildlife and their habitats (Spear & Waller 1993; Hodgson 2011). Living nomadically throughout the Great Rift Valley since the 16th century, Maasai are indigenous to almost all regions of East Africa where safari tourism is currently practiced. As human settlement and cultivation displace large fauna, often resulting in human-wildlife conflict, regions inhabited by pastoralists remain some of the few areas of Africa where wildlife still thrive (Reid 2012). For decades, Maasai peoples have seen their access to pasture and other natural resources curtailed as governments, conservationists, and private investors work to reserve more space for wildlife and for tourists (Wright 2016; Goldman 2003).

In recent decades, conservation has been a primary aperture through which the world understands East African pastoralists and the complex regions they inhabit (Galaty 2002). By depicting wildlife, landscapes, and pastoral peoples living in harmonious balance, conservation transforms places like Laikipia into what Garland (2008:62) calls "capital of a more convertible and globally ramifying kind". A Google Image search of the word 'Laikipia' reveals the simple convertibility of this capital—a Maasai dressed in traditional regalia, staring vigilantly across the Laikipia plateau, which is lush with grass and replete with wildlife. The potential ramifications of these visual images would be unclear to most lay people in North America, however. In Laikipia, such images conceal stark inequality, oftentimes drawn along racial and ethnic lines.

Since the early 1990s, pastoralists throughout East Africa have been recruited into programs intended to help them find new sources of income. By decreasing people's reliance on

livestock and natural resources, conservationists and planners hope that wildlife can endure in the face of infrastructure development and human population growth (Igoe & Brockington 2007). But in Laikipia, as in other conservation centres such as the Masai Mara or Tanzania's Serengeti, studies demonstrate that many pastoral people remain dissatisfied with (or ambivalent about) community-based conservation programs (Gadd 2005; Manyara and Jones 2007). In a study conducted in proximity to the Masai Mara National Reserve, for example, Norton-Griffiths (1996) argued that conservation is an intrinsically less productive use of arid lands than livestock production. Though employment and payments for ecosystem services (PES) can relieve the pressures of contracted grazing areas, conservation, Norton-Griffiths (1996) says, cannot compete with the productivity of pastoralism on a person-by-acre basis. Like many conservation and tourism enterprises throughout Kenya, Ol Lentille's partnership with Kijabe Group Ranch hinges upon an allotment of land where lodgings for tourists have been constructed. With roughly twenty-five percent of their group ranch reserved as a conservancy, Kijabe residents claim that their livestock are barred from this area, even when suffering from intense drought (Muthiani et al. 2011). While conservationists and proponents of safari tourism work to provide sustainable incomes for communities, poverty among pastoralists continues to be high, even near conservation areas (Rutten 2002; Homewood et al. 2009). Ol Lentille's Chairman assured me that Kijabe residents are permitted to graze their livestock in the conservation area during droughts. However, he claimed that "group ranch politics" made it challenging to ensure that all Kijabe families have the chance to do so.

In his work the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx described alienation as a phenomenon that emerges as societies become stratified by class. Workers lose a sense of the use-value of the products that they make, and are segregated from the segments of

society that consume them. Concurrently, consumers lose a sense of where the products they buy originate. They are also unaware of the social, economic, and environmental costs incurred by the people that have made them. According to Igoe (2010:378), "alienation refers to a general loss of control by people over the conditions that shape their lives" as well as "a severing of meaningful and abiding social relationships". In recent years, anthropologists have observed alienation as a common feature of neoliberal globalization. Anna Tsing (2000), for example, describes alienation as part of what she calls the "global economy of appearances"—an economy in which marketing and stories of success "conjure profit" by enticing investors from afar. In Laikipia, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa, patronage for tourism and funding for conservation is largely drawn from overseas sources. As anthropologists including Bruner (2001), Galaty (2002; 2014) and Hodgson (2001) have pointed out, the image of Maasai as a noble and traditionalistic ethnic group has been crucial in marketing East Africa's tourism and conservation sectors, the benefits of which Maasai have not always enjoyed. In this thesis, I will describe several scenarios in which Maasai struggle to enact or fulfill the image needed to succeed in conservation—to be seen (or represented) as maintaining the correct balance between traditionalism and a willingness to change.

Indeed, conservation and tourism initiatives such as Ol Lentille work to give visitors a positive impression of Maasai communities—inspiring would-be donors to support charitable causes or local enterprises by emphasizing a community's strengths, not its weaknesses. Taking tourists to visit pastoral communities is a balancing act, a Maasai tour guide in Laikipia told me. "You want *wageni* [visitors] to know there are problems that must be dealt with, but you don't want them to leave with a bad taste in their mouths." It is alarming, a group of Italian tourists

told me as they visited a public marketplace in Laikipia, to see Maasai people "in such a beautiful place" facing issues like addiction, hunger, and idleness.

Though presenting a positive image for visitors is understandably key to succeeding in tourism, imposing such standards on pastoral communities, Igoe (2010) says, also subjects them to 'fetishization'. In the conservation context, Igoe (2010:378) defines fetishization as "the transformation of human relationships and the output of human production into commodities, such that objects, experiences and people are purchased and consumed *without reference* to the relationships and contexts from which they were produced" (emphasis mine). While some foreign partners are genuinely committed to improving the lives of Maasai people in Laikipia, partners may struggle to engage with pastoral communities outside their own frames of social and cultural reference. Though conservation efforts do sometimes deliver worthwhile benefits to Maasai partners, accessing these benefits can require people to assume a conservation (or donor) -friendly image. As fulfilling this image is easier for some Maasai people than for others, the benefits of conservation remain out of reach for some individuals or communities. "We need to pay special attention," says Igoe (2010:389), "to the ways in which processes of alienation and fetishization effectively exclude some groups from global connections and the collective imaginings that they sometimes allow".

In using the concept of alienation to analyze community-based conservation in Laikipia North today, it is not my intention to convince that conservation or tourism is damaging. Though the word 'alienation' carries negative connotations in popular contexts, "it is a peculiarity of the concept of alienation," says Jaeggi (2014:26), "that it undermines this distinction" between description and critique. Instead, I propose that the impacts of conservation in Laikipia are more complex than previous studies have adequately described, and that conservation, paradoxically,

can alienate the very people that are benefitting from it. As Igoe (2010:376) explains, the global economy of appearances "offer[s] important opportunities for more in-depth anthropological engagements with capitalism's environmental contradictions"—for understanding the unseen (or unforeseen) impacts that conservation is having on participant communities. As ethnographers, says Tsing (2005:270), we must be "immersing ourselves in the uncertainty of global capitalism,"—towards a clearer understanding of the risks *and* possibilities inherent to community-based conservation in Kenya today.

A community in focus

Though the drama I have described between Ol Lentille and Kijabe has helped to illustrate key dilemmas, this study is in fact focused on another Maasai group ranch in Laikipia North I call Ol Tome.[3] Created in the mid 1970s along with other community-owned land parcels in the area, Ol Tome is unique for both the advantages and challenges it has faced in working with conservation actors. Accessible to visitors, investors, or other partners due to its proximity to a major road, Ol Tome—though a relatively small group ranch—faces social and environmental dilemmas of scale and intensity more significant than other pastoral communities in Laikipia. In addition to seeing its rangelands overrun by an invasive species of cactus called *opuntia stricta*, this community is struggling to build consensus on the role that conservation will play in its future. For example, as this region of Laikipia is an increasingly popular source for construction-grade sand, leaders on Ol Tome have capitalized on the opportunity to sell this natural resource for cash. Though sand harvesting is helping to sustain this group ranch as

[3] 'Laikipia North', the region I name as the focus of the study, is a parliamentary constituency and 'sub-county' made up of the wards of Mukogodo West, Mukogodo East, Segera, and Sosian. I have chosen to demarcate the study area as Laikipia North, not Mukogodo West, because the trends, events, and power structures I discuss are significant for the sub-county as a whole.

peoples' ability to subsist on pastoralism declines, sand harvesting is offensive to conservation actors and threatens their relationships with group ranch communities. Efforts to curb the impact of invasive plant species have also had an alienating effect on group ranch residents. This ecological challenge has recently attracted donor support, but has also been an auspice for local-level corruption. As I learned of the common social disconnectedness that prevails between conservation partners and group ranches, I found that residents were at times too alienated from their partners to help worthwhile conservation efforts succeed.

While the politics of sand harvesting and invasive species management have had a divisive effect on group ranch communities, individuals also experience alienation as they interact directly with partners from abroad. For example, Ol Tome Group Ranch is host to a tourism enterprise designed specifically to generate income for Maasai woman, though this enterprise has struggled to conform to the prescriptions or expectations its funders have outlined. Another institution on Ol Tome, a youth-led sports team founded with the help of wildlife conservationists, promotes itself as an 'ally of conservation' in an attempt to gain employment opportunities for its members. But as this team's image is curated by partners to depoliticize conservation in Laikipia, its members sometimes find themselves objectified by partners, who use their image without adequate reward or consultation.

While some residents of Ol Tome Group Ranch are benefitting from their involvement in conservation organizations or enterprises, the continued success of these efforts was challenged as Laikipia edged towards Kenya's 2017 General Election. For several years, some politicians in Laikipia have attempted to undermine the relationship between pastoral communities and conservation actors—evoking the county's difficult colonial history to secure their own success at the ballot box. Though this period of violence passed without irreparable damage to relations

between Ol Tome and their partners, some measures that the conservation community in Laikipia took to defend themselves during the crisis caused offence among Maasai. On social media, some landowners proffered that pastoralists were a threat to progress in Laikipia—evoking the concept of the 'tragedy of the commons' and other damaging stereotypes about pastoral peoples. The foreign media, who looked predominantly to white figures for testimonies about the roots and ramifications of the conflict, also made use of tropes or misconceptions that cast pastoralists as threats to Laikipia's future. The chaos that prevailed during these conflicts not only posed dangers to people and property, but also to the relationships that sustainable community-based conservation projects ultimately depend on.

As the man on the steps of the Kijabe hospital suggested in stating that his community were "being paid" to stay away from tourists, group ranchers in Laikipia care about the ways that conservation actors and discourses represent them. For communities that maintain longstanding relationships with neighbours or partners in Kenya or abroad, do those relationships hinge on interaction, or are they constituted and mediated by images? In this study, 'images' refers to photographs and other mobile or mutable representative forms, though my concern with images lies with what Igoe (2010:389) calls "the global connections and the collective imaginings that they sometimes allow." In Laikipia, images are what allow Maasai and their partners to feel common interest and to trust each other—to see the qualities one desires in a partner reflected in unfamiliar social groups or settings. When a Google search of the word 'Laikipia' yields traditionally-clad pastoralists guarding pristine land, the viewer gains an imagistic expectation of what conservation in Laikipia involves and excludes.

My goal in describing the dilemmas and dissatisfactions some group ranchers feel in engaging with conservation is to remind that participating or investing in conservation is a *choice*

that not all pastoral communities can be expected to make (Adams and Hulme 2001). If members of Ol Tome, Kijabe, or other group ranches make choices against the advice of conservationists, investors, officials, or partner organizations, we must try to understand the first-hand experiences and perspectives that inform these decisions. While community-based conservation will likely always struggle to benefit all members of Kenya's many pastoral communities (Norton-Griffiths 1996), the future of conservation in Laikipia is also challenged, I suggest, by the alienation of its direct beneficiaries.

Defining conservation

As this study is concerned with the social and political ramifications of conservation in Laikipia North, it is necessary that I clarify how I define 'conservation' in this context. Other scholars or practitioners will define conservation in their own manner, though I theorize that conservation in Laikipia North consists of four pillars:

1. Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). As a calamity of natural and human-driven factors make pasture, water, and other natural resources scarce in Laikipia North (Letai and Lind 2013), all conservation actors operating in this area urge that residents work to enhance their management of the land itself. Many conservation actors work to educate residents about the risks of unregulated grazing, charcoal burning, sand harvesting, and other forms of unsustainable resource use. Several conservation groups in this area attempt to work with group ranch leaders in devising more effective and enforceable grazing plans (Pellis et al. 2015). Such measures often involve demarcating group ranches into zones or paddocks through which livestock are rotated seasonally, giving the land a chance to regenerate. Such methods are often described using the term 'holistic rangeland management,' an approach that is

accessible and cost-effective for pastoral communities as it makes use of resources that people have on hand (Berkes et al. 2000). Holistic rangeland management also promotes the revitalization of traditional land care methods that may have declined during colonialism or in the decades since. *Olopololis*, for example, are small areas of pasture maintained near households to sustain calves or sick livestock (Little 1992). This method, say ecologists, is helpful in encouraging pastoralist families to assert and maintain responsibility over small areas of land (Curtin and Western 2008). Re-seeding has helped revitalize grasses in some areas of Ol Tome Group Ranch, though the cost of grass seed and the labour needed to sow it has prevented this activity from being carried out on a wider scale. As the scarcity of water is another significant natural resource challenge in Laikipia's group ranches, conservation organizations try to enhance access to water for people, livestock, and wildlife by constructing boreholes, dams, and water catchments. In this thesis, any efforts carried out for the direct purpose of protecting, maintaining, or enhancing natural resources are considered acts of conservation.

2. Security. As international conservation groups have recently grown active in parts of Kenya where the state's power has always been weak, both conservationists and communities recognize the need for conservation to involve investments in security. Throughout Kenya, conservation groups now routinely hire, train, and fund community members to work as rangers, scouts, or security staff (Pellis et al. 2015), who are charged with protecting wildlife, but also communities and their livestock assets. In many areas, security staff are armed and trained with the support of the Kenya Police Reserves (KPR). In addition to protecting communities against banditry or livestock theft, security staff can deter or investigate illegal or unsanctioned forms of resource use (i.e. illegal grazing, charcoal burning). Though critics raise concerns about the risk of arming people in conflict-prone regions in the name of conservation (Duffy 2013; Lunstrum

2014), communities in northern Kenya have been drawn to conservation largely for the security benefits that it provides. Having a visible and professional security team is also important for a community's image, especially if they want to attract investment or foreign tourists. Security efforts and infrastructures on some of Laikipia private ranches are funded by overseas donors, and the equipment and training security staff receive rival many branches of Kenya's Armed Forces.

3. Eco-tourism. While security efforts and CBNRM can both be beneficial for pastoral communities, eco-tourism is one of the few ways that conservation can generate income for stakeholders. This study will discuss several small-scale eco-tourism enterprises in or near Laikipia's group ranches, all of which were founded with the financial and human resource support of conservation organizations or investors. The 'eco' in eco-tourism signifies that patrons pay to engage with nature in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner (Duffy 2013; Stamou and Paraskevopoulos 2004), though some eco-tourism enterprises in Kenya are more socially equitable than others. Eco-tourism in Kenya often involves some degree of interaction with residents of an area. These experiences, however, are sometimes curated to satisfy the expectations visitors bring with them (Salazar 2012; Bruner 2001). In some cases, revenue generated by eco-tourism can benefit communities in substantive ways. In other cases, eco-tourism has spurred resentment and inspired communities to force tour operators off their land.[4] As strong security and an aesthetically pleasing landscape are prerequisites for a viable eco-tourism enterprise, pastoral communities are not considered good candidates for investment until these first two pillars of conservation have been built. While investors or other proponents of eco-tourism are often not 'conservationists' in the professional sense, I regard them as

[4] See: https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Shompole-Ngurumani-Ranches-Morans/1056-2513750-11e7s6nz/index.html

'conservation actors' insofar as promoting conservation is crucial to their work. Furthermore, one does not need to be a professional conservationist to traffic in (or profit from) conservation discourses and pursuits.

4. Attitudinal development. As it is challenging to convince people that land-use changes can translate into income or a more sustainable environment down the road, conservation actors must employ creative strategies to gain the confidence and consent of potential partners. For example, one favoured strategy of conservation actors working in Laikipia North is the 'success story.' As it is challenging for partners to guarantee that an enterprise will benefit a community in the long term, investors must point to scenarios where success and sustainability have been achieved under seemingly similar conditions. Of course, success stories can gloss over the challenges people have endured on the path to success, or fail to reflect the uneven ways that benefits have been accessed or distributed. Attitudinal development is similar, I suggest, to what Arun Agrawal (2005:22) calls 'environmentality'—discourses that consolidate and naturalize "awareness and recognition of the fragile resources on which livelihoods depend," while "restraining [groups] of people who might break the rules." These 'rules' not only apply to peoples' use of natural resources, but also to the ways that they or their land appear in the eyes of partners, donors, or visitors. Though I will explain the key environmental and economic features of all the case studies covered in this thesis, it is this fourth, most immaterial pillar of conservation that concerns me most. At times in the thesis, I describe conservation in the third person, like an actor in itself. In this case, I am referring to conservation discourse in the Foucauldian sense—a system of codified statements and symbols that exert power free from a singular authority (Foucault 1974).

Alienation and the economy of appearances

Though I warn that alienation poses risks for the long-term viability of community-based conservation in Laikipia, the concept of alienation is also useful in understanding how neoliberal conservation is experienced and encountered. Alienation, as contemporary philosopher Rahel Jaeggi (2014:22) explains, is "a relation of domination, but of a kind that is not captured by standard descriptions of unfreedom and heteronomy". In Laikipia, no group ranch community can be said to have been *forced* into conservation in so strict a sense. The limited number of alternatives people have, however, should call the freedom of their decisions into question.

Jaeggi explains that alienation involves "two different but intertwined diagnoses"—first, the loss of power and, second, the loss of meaning. The loss of power experienced with alienation, says Jaeggi, involves "having one's properties determined by another" (Ibid.:23). Throughout the thesis, as individuals attempt to conform to the aesthetic or imagistic expectations of their partners, it will be clear that they are alienated insofar as these actors' abilities to determine their own "properties" are diminished. In other cases, as pastoralists are misrepresented or cast negatively in the global media, it will be clear that conservation discourse can alienate pastoral communities from the world at large. The loss of meaning, Jaeggi says, occurs when peoples' worlds begins to appear "alien" (Ibid.:23). If peoples' properties or goals have been set for them by another, she explains, they are alienated insofar as they fail to recognize why they are engaged in a given activity. As people expend their labour over time and the mode of expenditure becomes a part of their identities, they become embedded in an economic system without recognizing what their purpose is. Throughout the thesis, as I describe different groups or actors faced with opportunities to join in conservation, I will ask what their purpose within the effort is and whether its benefits are material or abstract. To be sure, the ways

that people experience the loss of power and the loss of meaning can rarely be detached. “It seems to be one of the main points of the phenomenon described as alienation,” says Jaeggi (Ibid.:23), “that in it these two problems are intertwined.”

Though Marx first spoke of alienation in the mid-nineteenth century, the concept of alienation is in fact rooted in the works of Georg Hegel and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau—witnessing the early impacts of industrialization in Europe in the eighteenth century—warned that people were losing their material self-sufficiency by being “subjected to the conformist dictates of society” (Jaeggi 2014:7). Decades later, Hegel (1991[1820]) was similarly concerned that industrialization was corrupting social institutions such as family. “We become free,” Hegel thought, “in and through the social institutions that first make it possible for us to realize ourselves as individuals” (Jaeggi 2014:8). With urbanization and changing labour relations implicating people in larger economies, Hegel argued that social life was not being destroyed, but was rather being made “deficient.” Decades later, when Marx gave these social deficiencies the name “alienation”, he was particularly concerned with the impact this phenomenon was having on people’s relationships to labor. Marx defined alienation as “the inability meaningfully to identify with what one does and with those with whom one does it” (Jaeggi 2014:12). Marx theorized that alienation involved “the inability to exert control over what one does—the inability to be, individually or collectively, the subject of one’s actions” (Jaeggi 2014:12).

Seminal studies by Emile Durkheim (2006[1897]) and Max Weber (1905) also addressed alienation, though they conceptualized this phenomenon differently from Marx. Durkheim described the phenomena of alienation through the concept of “anomie”—the moral disorientation people feel as societies transition from mechanical to organic forms of solidarity. Weber’s understanding of alienation differed more drastically from Marx’s, as Weber saw ‘the

individual' as the casualty, not the perpetrator, of exploitative capitalism. As Europeans went to work in factories, making products they themselves would not consume, Weber argued that people became comfortable in states of being where their own values or aspirations are discarded; Weber famously described this condition as an "iron cage". For Marx, one of the most socially and politically consequential features of alienation was 'commodity fetishism', or when discrete objects "appear to take on a life of their own" (Little 2006:np). Marx argued that, in capitalism, "social relations are conceived as relations between things" (Little 2006:np). In the process, the material and social realities that bind people together are obscured.

Commodity fetishism has been a fertile concept in anthropological critiques of conservation (Ives 2017; Igoe 2010; Tsing 2005; Kosoy and Corbera 2010). In his critique of the African Wildlife Foundation programs that led to the creation of Ol Lentille, for example, Igoe (2010:377) argues that conservation organizations traffic in sensational representations of pastoralist communities in a process Tsing (2000:138) calls "spectacular accumulation". Igoe claims that AWF's African Heartlands initiatives, for example, involved imposing "a dominant aesthetic order" both on people and on landscapes. By creating and controlling the very frame of reference through which Western actors understand conservation, international organizations use fetishized images to make donors, tourists, and other patrons feel intimately connected to African stakeholders. Though Igoe (2010:378) concedes that these value chains deliver some benefits to Maasai communities, he is concerned that these connections result in alienation as "meaningful and abiding social relationships" between communities and donors remain underdeveloped. Furthermore, global images of intimate connection may exclude or gloss over grievous rights abuses. If Maasai communities in a tourist area refused to construct their homes using traditional materials, for instance, Igoe (2010) claims that AWF would collaborate with police authorities in

having people forcefully removed from their land. For years, anthropologists have warned that Maasai are susceptible to being misrepresented in development discourse, often being cast "as unwitting symbols of resistance to the modernist values" that development and conservation often stand for (Galaty 2002:347). Though images of Maasai that accentuate traditionalism have helped attract donors and tourists to their regions, pastoralists are also stigmatized by their governments or other ethnic groups for being a hindrance to modernization (Hodgson 2001; Meiu 2016). In Laikipia, Maasai people have been fetishized by conservation in contradictory ways; they represent the majesty of this part of Kenya—they are also the reason it must be protected.

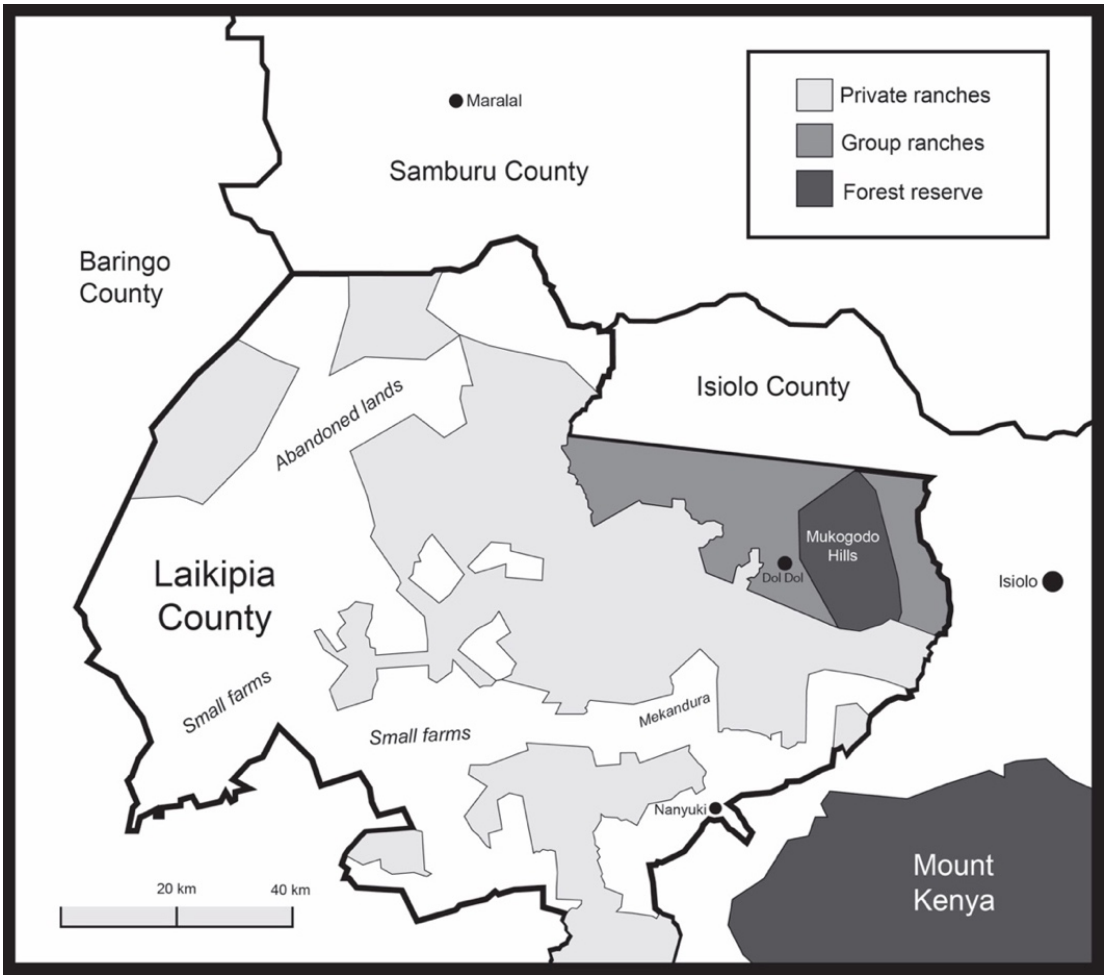

Figure 1: Land relations in Laikipia County, 2016. Map by the author.

Orientations

Fieldwork for this study began in Kenya in July 2015. I had originally proposed to conduct a study on the securitization of conservation in Laikipia North. Reports by scholars and NGOs stated that poaching and cattle rustling were major challenges on Laikipia's group ranches (Bond 2014), to which non-governmental conservation organizations were responding by providing communities with security resources like vehicles, weapons, and surveillance equipment.[5] With knowledge of the negative social repercussions securitized conservation was having in other African contexts (Duffy et al. 2015; Lunstrum 2014), I planned to study alongside community-based security teams and examine their relationships with group ranch communities. During my first week in Kenya, I met members of Ol Tome Group Ranch at a conference on natural resource management in Nairobi. I had identified Ol Tome and nearby group ranches as a potential field site, and the residents I met invited me to their group ranch to explore prospects for research. When I arrived at Ol Tome the following week, my hosts advised that I seek lodging at the local women's centre that had been struggling to raise its profile as a tourist destination. By October, I had built a strong network of participants on Ol Tome and committed to making the group ranch my primary study site.

But as I worked to gain access to the security actors needed to execute my original study plan, I soon found that security was a challenging subject to investigate on Ol Tome. Security staff that conservation groups provided for this area in fact spent little time on Ol Tome Group Ranch, but most of all, I found that most people in Ol Tome were hesitant to discuss security issues with an outsider. Over my year of fieldwork, as I came to better understand the

[5] See http://www.nrt-kenya.org/security/ and http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/cll_naibunga_brochure_08.pdf

relationship between group ranches, their neighbours, and Kenya's government, I learned that Ol Tome residents felt their reputation for insecurity had been a barrier to political inclusion and economic development in the area for decades. People believed the group ranches' reputation for insecurity had been a deterrent for tourists, for example, and gave Kenya's government an excuse not to develop infrastructures in the area. Also, I believe residents were hesitant to discuss security issues with me because they wanted me to feel welcome and comfortable in their community. Though I reiterated often that my interests in security were intellectual in nature, questions about security appeared to make my hosts uncomfortable, especially people in leadership positions. I also learned that I could not separate 'security' from the landscape I would need to navigate to study it. I was not prepared, as I told a British scholar I met that year at a conference in Nairobi, to drive around Kenya until I found a place "insecure enough" to carry out my study.

Hearing often from residents of Ol Tome that the future of their group ranch was uncertain, I sought my hosts' advice in identifying issues that they felt deserved closer attention from researchers. I remained interested in how conservation actors asserted influence over Laikipia at large, though my focus also honed itself on how conservation manifested in struggles among group ranch members. For example, as I became settled at the women's centre and got to know the people who worked there, I learned that this enterprise had been a fault line in this patriarchal community. Over the year, as I observed Maasai women struggle to make their enterprise succeed, I was intrigued to see their efforts being challenged—not only by men—but by the very donors who had pledged to help them. The women I interacted with daily at the centre helped draw my attention to other issues, as well. They were concerned about substance abuse, the decline of water resources, and the fact that several tourism investors were buying up

land near to Ol Tome. These struggles, as I found, often left people confronting the hard realities of their circumstances—asking how much short term cost or compromise could be justified in building a stronger future.

Elsewhere in the group ranch, I met an eclectic group of actors who contributed immensely to my studies throughout the year. In Ol Tome's town centre, I befriended many migrant workers, most of whom were young women from neighbouring counties who earned a living selling khat—a mild stimulant—to Maasai men. In the heat of the day, under the few acacia trees that skirted the small town, I met young Maasai men queuing for a chance to earn money digging sand from local rivers. I learned that some of these men—despite their unglamorous livelihoods—had travelled around the world and appeared in films as members of a cricket club founded with the support of wildlife conservationists and foreign governments. I also became acquainted with the elders and male elites responsible for governing natural resources in the group ranch. I learned that this group of men acted largely as a foreign relations body working to secure pasture for their own cattle on neighbouring lands. I also met several young Maasai who worked for landowners that bordered on the group ranch. The jobs Maasai people held on neighbouring lands were often menial, seasonal, or low-paying, though I learned that the impact or value of such jobs could not be measured strictly by numbers.

Methodologies and ethical considerations

As an anthropological study, this project is grounded in long-term, first hand observations, informal dialogues with a range of interlocutors, and the synthesis of data from a variety of sources. In addition to testimonies gathered in interviews, community meetings, and everyday conversations, I draw on evidence collected in the media and the literatures of

conservation organizations and eco-tourism enterprises. In recent years, Laikipia's landowning and/or conservation establishment have used social media as a platform for promoting their interests to an audience of Kenyans, potential donors, and casual news consumers worldwide. Social media is especially useful for this study because it offers a public, unobstructed window into the perspectives of actors or institutions that were not always accessible for direct inquiry.

In preparation for fieldwork, I studied methodologies designed to give participants a major role in the research process. I was most attracted to a collection of qualitative methods that Veronica Strang (2010) calls "cultural mapping." As Strang explains, cultural mapping "explores peoples' historical and contemporary relationships with local environments," and "provides a relaxed and productive context for [data collection]" (Ibid.:132-133). Strang suggests engaging participants in "walkabouts": moving together through landscapes while eliciting information on specific subjects. Speaking with participants "in place," says Strang, "draws on both experiential and abstract forms of knowledge," and is among the least obtrusive methods a social scientist can deploy.

Though I arrived at Ol Tome eager to learn about Laikipia's political geography on foot, the fact that I appeared in an off-road vehicle with a large seating capacity excited my hosts. Indeed, this off-road vehicle proved to be my most valuable data collection tool. Without the financial resources to make other significant contributions to my host community, transporting people on a regular basis was a productive way to build relationships and collect data while genuinely benefitting my participants. For example, each week, I transported a dozen Maasai women and their goods to a market in a nearby town. I often transported members of the women's centre where I lived to Nanyuki to shop, visit relatives, or to promote their business. On several occasions, I assisted the Maasai cricket team in travelling to tournaments and other

events throughout the region. I transported members of the Ol Tome Group Ranch to Nairobi on several occasions to represent their community at international forums and conferences. In addition to providing a level of privacy participants desired to discuss sensitive topics, travelling by vehicle beyond Ol Tome prompted residents to reflect on the challenges facing their communities at home. For example, when transporting Ol Tome's grazing committee to large ranches or conservancies to negotiate for pasture, we passed through lands where grasses stood waist-high and no livestock could be seen any direction. In Nairobi, my Maasai companions gawked at the scale of Chinese-funded infrastructure development, and wondered whether foreign investment of this scale would someday reach Laikipia North. In other words, the walkabout method Strang (2010) describes proved effective powered by an engine and on a wider scale.

In addition to these 'driveabout' methods and my participation in the daily life of the community, I tried in the first months of research to engage participants in conventional interviews. Interviews were a productive way of gathering testimonies from some landowners and conservationists, but many Maasai interlocutors appeared uncomfortable with this approach. I believe that the challenges I encountered with interviews were rooted in my failure to appreciate local conceptions of privacy and anonymity. Maasai participants often seemed uncomfortable in being asked to speak on behalf of others, and preferred to refer me to leaders rather than risk offending them on the record. It was challenging, furthermore, to carry out interviews in a community where privacy is not treated with the sanctity a researcher may be able to expect in North America. Attempts to hold private conversations were frequently subject to interruption, or evolved into group discussion as people grew aware of something formal taking place. Privacy and protection from interruption was a major reason that driveabout

methods were so valuable. On some occasions, participants would approach me and suggest we drive together to a place or event of significance, only to reveal that they desired to speak privately, but that doing so would have been impossible in the town or at their homes.

Over the year, I shifted away from more formal methods and relied more often on participant observation. As sand harvesting emerged as a sub-topic in the study, for example, I asked group ranch leaders if they would permit me to join digging crews in their work. Some participants remarked that digging sand was something they had never envisioned a white person doing. This type of participation helped me forge close relationships with participants and to gain a better understanding of their livelihoods. I applied the participant observation approach with as many members of Ol Tome community as possible. I worked alongside the Ol Tome's women's group in preparing their centre to receive foreign guests; I helped group ranchers to construct new homes and helped others take their livestock to the market to be sold. At night, in the town centre, I joined men and women of various ages and backgrounds where they drank beer, chewed khat, discussed politics, and debated about their people's future. Though my presence in this community never ceased to be unusual and my status as a white man shaped my experience profoundly, I invested substantial time and effort in knowing Ol Tome as even-handedly as possible.

That said, the collection of testimonies from Maasai participants required (and continues to require) special ethical consideration. I am confident that the majority of Maasai participants understood the objectives of my research; indeed, many subtopics covered in this study came to my attention thanks to their input. Though I attempt, throughout the thesis, to explain social issues with consideration for the motivations or positions of all parties, my statements could potentially bring harm to participants by damaging their relationships with conservationists,

neighbouring landowners, other group ranch members, or government authorities. To mitigate this risk, I have made extensive efforts to conceal the identities of most participants in the study. In some cases, the experiences or testimonies of persons have been re-attributed to others. On occasion, the backstories and genders of participants have also been changed. Many geographical markers have been altered or omitted to prevent the identification of places or communities. Nevertheless, people intimately familiar with Laikipia North may recognize certain places or personalities in this study. Though the wellbeing of all participants in this study is of tremendous importance, total anonymity for my participants is a challenge in an area deeply penetrated by foreign researchers, donors, and conservationists. In concealing information, I am potentially making the study less useful as a resource for other scholars, though my intention is to provoke discussion about conservation paradigms, not to make program or policy prescriptions with direct bearing on group ranches in Laikipia.

Most of my research was carried out without the help of research assistants or interpreters. Most male residents of Ol Tome Group Ranch spoke English well enough that we could communicate easily. Women, elders, and less-educated men were less likely to speak English. I conversed with non-English speakers in Kiswahili or with the help of a Maa-speaking assistant. I spent the year prior to my fieldwork studying Kiswahili with a private tutor in Canada, strengthening the language skills that I had developed in previous years of work and study in Kenya. Research assistants were invaluable when speaking with participants beyond Ol Tome Group Ranch. These participants had not been told about my research by their Chief, so presenting clear and thorough introductions was important.

Gathering testimonies from female participants on Ol Tome involved unique challenges. While conversations with men often resulted in questions from other men about our discussions,

no man ever questioned me about the information I gathered from women. Maasai men were either doubtful that women had anything of importance to tell me, or they correctly assumed I would not divulge the information I had gathered. Instead, my interactions with women unfortunately often led to public speculations about intimate relationships between female participants and myself. Studying with women was unfortunately just as challenging away from the town centre and the public gaze. Many Maasai women in the group ranches bore tremendous domestic responsibilities, and struggled to make time to participate in my research as they attended to children, livestock, and other duties. For those who could, our interactions were often challenged by language, as many women spoke neither English nor Swahili. I spoke with several women at their homesteads with the help of a female interpreter. Some progress was achieved, though my interpreter explained that some women felt speaking to me was a drain on their time. My most productive work with Maasai women was achieved by asking them to participate in informal focus groups held at the women's centre near Ol Tome. This enabled me to provide a meal for the women and their children. A female elder told me some women appreciated having an excuse to socialize with other women. Maasai women were also ostensibly more comfortable speaking to me about political issues in a group setting.

Though I occasionally travelled to large private ranches alongside participants from the group ranches, I also visited several ranches alone to speak privately and more extensively with their owners or proprietors. Many productive meetings, conversations, and interviews also took place in the county capital, Nanyuki, where some conservationists and their organizations are based. Conversations with conservationists and landowners took place in environments in which they felt comfortable: on ranch house verandas, their organization's offices—sometimes through the windows of trucks when we passed each other on the dirt roads that wind through the county.

I took detailed notes during more formal meetings, but did not rely on audio recording. Many members of the conservation and landowning establishments in Laikipia asked that their comments be treated as "off the record". I interpreted these statements as requests for anonymity, but also as appeals to take what they said seriously. In most cases, I have withheld details that could help identify these participants directly. The names of most persons and ranches have been changed, except for cases where my studies overlap with mainstream media coverage.

Throughout the year, many landowners, ranch managers, or conservationists did decline to speak with me, usually by not returning my phone calls or responding to my emails. Their inability or unwillingness to participate in the study cannot be taken as a gesture of defensiveness. Like Maasai women, these figures were often busy with work responsibilities, or fatigued from talking to other foreign researchers. Though participants from the landowning and/or conservation establishment that I spoke with consented to lending their testimonies to the study, I do not expect that all participants would agree with how I represent them. In many cases, landowners, conservationists, donors, or NGO workers eagerly responded to my requests to talk, seemingly confident that I regarded them as neutral and authoritative on group ranch affairs. Many conservationists and landowners were eager to share their perspectives on the group ranch with me, often highlighting the issues of poor leadership, irresponsible grazing practices, and untenable population growth. Though comments of this nature underscored legitimate challenges faced by people in my study area, my image as a young, impressionable Western student also made some actors comfortable in voicing prejudices. As I encountered more statements belying the respect conservation actors claimed to hold for Maasai people, I was motivated to document and emphasize the incongruities I saw between conservation practice and discourse.

In the fall of 2017, roughly one year after my fieldwork concluded, I received funding from the National Geographic Society to conduct a small media project in Laikipia in collaboration with my former research assistants. I returned to Laikipia for one month in the winter of 2018. We made a film documenting the impact of invasive plant species in Laikipia North with the objective of urging county authorities to mount a response. My partners claim our effort has been modestly successful by gaining them formal meetings with county officials. In addition, this project was an opportunity for me to conduct a brief period of follow-up research. The previous year, Laikipia and nearby counties had been stricken with drought, political tensions, and, consequently, a steep decline in tourism. I wanted to investigate for myself what impact these challenges had had on my participants on Ol Tome. This period of research led me to question some of the provisional conclusions of my study, and brought the relationship between conservation and security in Laikipia to light.[6]

Outline

The first chapter of the thesis establishes an historical and contextual foundation for the study, including Laikipia North's unique history as site of ethnic intermingling. I will explain how this region of Laikipia was transformed from a hunter-gatherer reserve to group ranches, and some of the political, economic and environmental challenges this spelled for area residents. I then attempt to sketch a larger picture of conservation in Laikipia today, noting the key ranches and organizations most significant for everyday life on Ol Tome.

The second chapter discusses one specific community-based conservation effort on Ol Tome—a pilot project carried out in 2016 to test the feasibility of ridding the group ranch of the

[6] The output of this project can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6z4sc7vEF8&t=307s

invasive cactus, *opuntia stricta*. I will explain how this effort was challenged by the actions of one Maasai man, who has succeeded for years in positioning himself as a gatekeeper between foreign partners and group ranches in Laikipia. In the process, I will shed light on the challenges group ranches and partners face in working collaboratively across vast physical and social distances, and explain how the global economy of appearances bears upon group ranches in the form of donor programs.

The third chapter will discuss the sand harvesting industry that is now a major facet of Ol Tome's economy—a fact that has been heralded by group ranch leaders, while evoking disappointment from conservation actors. I will describe how a tourism entrepreneur has recently purchased land near Ol Tome Group Ranch, and is struggling to convince local leaders of the benefits of conservation vis-à-vis sand extraction. Unfortunately, this investor's frustrations have recently led him to alienate himself from his neighbours, as he sees sand harvesting as metonymical to the substance abuse challenges the community also face.

The fourth chapter details a conservation project and eco-tourism enterprise at Ol Tome led by Maasai women—an effort that has been beneficial, but is struggling to live up to its partners' expectations. I will describe the experience of this project's female leader during the visit of a foreign donor in 2015, illustrating some of the contradictory pressures that community-run eco-tourism can place on its stakeholders. In the process, I will discuss the alienating potential of the current global market for Maasai handcrafts—an industry that has been an important source of income for women in pastoral communities for decades. I compare this female-led effort at Ol Tome with other well-known community-based enterprises in Laikipia, demonstrating how challenging it is for group ranches to succeed in ecotourism without abiding, long-term partner support.

Chapter five will then discuss the Maasai Cricket Warriors, an all-male sports team based on Ol Tome, and their experience as they travelled across Laikipia to participate in a tournament raising funds for rhino conservation. I will discuss some of the challenges these young athletes face in acting as ambassadors for the Maasai community, particularly the pressure they face to look and act in a way that satisfies the expectations of their partners. The case of this team also demonstrates how intangible the benefits (and imagistic the connections) of community-based conservation in Laikipia can be. For years, the Maasai Cricket Warriors have held reservations about how conservation actors use their image—precipitating conflict among the team's members and upsetting their relationships with their closest partners.

Chapter six then explains the complex relationship between Ol Tome and several of its neighbours who engage with Laikipia's group ranch communities in remarkably different ways. I will describe how one investor has overcome social barriers to forge strong relations with their Maasai neighbours, showing that eco-tourism can be beneficial for communities living at its margins. More importantly, however, I show that conservation is only one tool for building relationships with pastoral communities, and that climate change and land pressures are making Laikipia's political landscape more combative by the year. In the final chapter, I will discuss the conflicts that arose in Laikipia in the run up to Kenya's 2017 General Election, explaining both the challenges and opportunities they have posed for Ol Tome residents. Though conservation, with its heavy reliance on images, has the capacity to alienate Maasai communities from their neighbours, the world, and oftentimes each other, the current state of community-based conservation in Laikipia North is best characterized by uncertainty.

Chapter 1: The history and social landscape of Laikipia North.

Though conservation presents opportunities and dilemmas for Maasai communities throughout East Africa (Lamprey and Reid 2004), this dissertation examines the experiences of one Maasai community in the north of Kenya's Laikipia County. Today, Ol Tome Group Ranch is home to roughly 1,600 Maasai people, as well as several hundred men and women from other ethnic groups who work as merchants or tradespeople in Ol Tome's eponymous town centre. Ol Tome Group Ranch sits at a key junction on the road linking Nanyuki with Maralal, and shares a border with several large commercial ranches, some of which will be described in more detail throughout the study. Ol Tome Group Ranch measures approximately five thousand acres in size. Other group ranches in Laikipia North range in size from approximately 6,000 to 19,000 acres.

Becoming Maasai, being group ranchers

While most residents of Laikipia North today identify firmly as 'Maasai', Ol Tome and the other eleven other group ranches in the area are in fact sites of prolonged ethnic intermingling and transformation. Sometime between 1874 and 1876, a violent conflict took place in present-day Laikipia between two Maasai groups: the Laikipiak, who had been prominent in this area for several centuries, and an alliance of Purko, Kisongo, and Keekoyokie who held territorial dominance in the central and southern Rift Valley. By all historical accounts, the Laikipiak Maasai were harshly defeated in this conflict. Many adult men were killed, while surviving Laikipiak families were assimilated, mainly by the Purko who led the winning alliance. However, some Laikipiak managed to escape assimilation by migrating north towards Lake

Turkana, or by seeking refuge among the hunter-gatherer groups who inhabited the forests and mountainous regions of Laikipia (Sobania 1993; Little 1998).

Relatively brief and localized as the Laikipiak-Purko conflict may have been, the political ramifications of this event have shaped Laikipia's history in profound ways. At the turn of the twentieth century, as Maasai found themselves negotiating treaties with the British, Purko leaders often boasted about their victory over the Laikipiak as a testimony of the Maasai's military prowess (Hughes 2006). While Purko leaders claimed the Laikipiak were driven to extinction in the conflict, historians suggest that the Laikipiak merely became a less coherent and concentrated ethnic unit (Sobania 1993). Nevertheless, British officials and colonists were impressed by Purko leaders' accounts of this battle, and gained the impression that the conflict had left the Laikipia plateau depopulated (Hughes 2006; Sandford 1919). Officials who visited Laikipia in the early twentieth century also reported that the area "was practically unoccupied" (Sandford 1919:24; see also Huxley 1935). In reality, remnants of the Laikipiak continued to inhabit Laikipia in the late nineteenth century (Sobania 1993). Laikipia was also home to hunter-gatherer groups like the Mumonyot, Ndigirri, Ewaso, Yaaku, and Il Ng'wesi (Cronk 2004).

Historians argue that the British arrived in Maasailand at a time that was fortuitous for the empire. A recent epidemic of rinderpest had taken a devastating toll on Maasai livestock herds, leaving the Maasai too weakened and demoralized to mount a significant defence against the British (Waller 1976; Hughes 2006). Using payments of cattle, the British were able to build alliances with Maasai leaders, most notably Lenana, a *laibon* or diviner of the Purko section. As the British were working to build a railroad linking the Indian Ocean with Lake Victoria, the central Rift Valley—the home of most Maasai—had to be secured and opened for commerce.

Convinced that the Laikipia plateau was vacant and well-suited to pastoralism, British officials designated the area as a reserve where the Maasai could live in perpetuity.

According to a 1919 report by historian G. R. Sandford, Maasai leaders were originally enthusiastic about the prospect of their people being moved into reserves, if such a plan would guarantee them land and prevent future conflict with settlers. According to Sandford (1919:24), "the Maasai […] expressed themselves as quite satisfied in regard to the water supply on Laikipia," an area with which some Maasai were familiar having occupied it itinerantly in the past. The relocation of the Maasai to the northern reserve was agreed to in a treaty called 'the Masai Agreement of 1904,' signed by leaders of the Purko, Keekonyokie, Loita, Damat, and Laitaiyok sections (Sandford 1919). A second Maasai reserve was established in the present-day county of Kajiado as a home for Maasai populations (including Purko) then living in proximity to Nairobi (Sandford 1919).

The Masai Agreement of 1904 stipulated that all Maasai in the Rift Valley would move to Laikipia, but mistrust in the British by the wider Maasai populace made implementing the treaty difficult. The fact that the agreement involved splitting the Maasai between two reserves was "regarded with suspicion," said Sandford (1919:26), "it being suspected that the Government were adopting this policy in order that they might more easily annihilate the tribe." Ultimately, the Purko were the only section to migrate to Laikipia on masse, presumably under the instructions of Lenana, who was a strong supporter of the move (Hughes 2006). Lenana did not join the Purko in their move to Laikipia, however; he would continue to reside at the settlement of Ngong within the boundaries of the Southern Masai Reserve. Some Loita Maasai are known to have accompanied the Purko to Laikipia in 1904 (Hughes 2006), though others, along with Damat, Laitaiyok, and Keekonyokie, remained near their territories in the Rift Valley

(Sandford 1919). At the time of its creation, the Northern Masai Reserve encompassed a vast area stretching across the present-day counties of Laikipia, Baringo, Isiolo, and Samburu (Sandford 1919). Hughes (2006) claims the Purko's first years in the northern reserve were prosperous and their livestock numbers recovered substantially from the epidemics of recent decades.

In addition to making space for the construction of the Uganda Railway, the movement of the Maasai also opened the Rift Valley to European settlement. But by 1908, European settlers were experiencing significant challenges in ranching, as their livestock proved susceptible to the insect-borne diseases that thrived in lower-lying areas of the colony. Given its aridity, high elevation, and freedom from tsetse flies, Laikipia soon caught the attention of settlers, most notably the influential Lord Baron Delamere (Hughes 2006). In 1909, a French Canadian named Percy Girouard was appointed Governor of the East Africa Protectorate. Historians claim Girouard was easily influenced by British settlers desiring more land, and characterize him as unconcerned with honoring Britain's 1904 agreement with the Maasai (Hughes 2006). In addition, Lenana was concerned that the splitting of the Purko Maasai between two reserves had weakened his power (Hughes 2006; Sandford 1919). Girouard and Lenana began discussing the removal of the Maasai from Laikipia in 1909, and went on to quietly devise a plan for uniting all Maasai in a single southern reserve (Sandford 1919).

The movement of the Maasai out of Laikipia began in early 1910 under the pretext of a coming-of-age ritual called *eunoto*, scheduled to take place between the two reserves near Naivasha. *Eunoto* ceremonies unfold over months and involve the migration of thousands of Maasai. The 1910 ceremony began with Purko warriors leaving Laikipia for a site in the Kinangop granted to the Maasai for ceremonial use. Once the move began, Lenana intervened

demanding that the ceremony be moved to Ngong, requiring Maasai throughout the colony to migrate to the southern reserve instead. Hughes (2006) suggests this change of location was a conspiratorial move by Lenana and Girouard, who planned to tell the Maasai of the new resettlement plan only once they had all arrived at Ngong.

In April 1910, before the Maasai had begun their movement towards Ngong, the British Government received word of Girouard's plan and ordered that the movements not proceed. Sandford (1919:30) says the British Government agreed that uniting the Maasai in one reserve made administrative sense, but that removing the Maasai from Laikipia would be unlawful unless it was agreed to in a new treaty. Negotiations between the British and Maasai leaders took place over the following year, while the Purko warriors who arrived at Ngong were prevented by the British from returning to Laikipia (Hughes 2006). Hughes (2006) claims British officials used the threat of new livestock plagues to convince leaders that the Maasai must leave Laikipia; Maasai remained fearful of the threat of diseases since their herds were decimated in the late nineteenth century. The British proposed to expand the Southern Masai Reserve to accommodate more people and livestock; northern leaders voiced reservations about access to water, but ultimately agreed to the government's proposal. Lenana expressed consent for a new treaty before he died in March 1911. The following month, a new agreement was signed by Purko leaders and the second relocation of Maasai began in June (Sandford 1919).

According to Sandford (1919:32), the movement of the Maasai out of Laikipia occurred willfully; "no police measures of any kind were adopted," he said, "testifying to the voluntary character of the move." Lotte Hughes' (2006) account observes that officials used force in removing the Maasai, and states that disease and starvation affected many Maasai during the move. The move from Laikipia was also hampered by unseasonably heavy rains, forcing many

Maasai to halt their trek and camp on settler lands between the two reserves. By August, fearing that Maasai cattle were a threat to settler herds, officials granted permission for 4,000 Maasai to return to Laikipia. In the subsequent months, British officials continued seeking space to expand the Southern Masai Reserve. Maasai livestock numbers exceeded initial estimates, and a lack of water sources on this reserve was a problem. Hearing of these challenges, the 4,000 Purko Maasai remaining in Laikipia were hesitant to leave, but agreed in 1912 under reassurance from the British. In 1912, Girouard resigned as Governor of the East Africa Protectorate amid concerns by the British Government that the movement of Maasai was unlawful and that the system of a single Maasai reserve would fail. In October 1912, Sir Henry Belfield assumed governorship of the East Africa Protectorate, and reported to London in April 1913 that the removal of Maasai from Laikipia was complete (Sandford 1919).

Though the second Maasai move largely served to open Laikipia for European ranching, the region did not see a significant influx of settlers until the 1920s. Settlers who gave up land for the expansion of the southern reserve promptly received new allotments in Laikipia, but these lands were not occupied for several years due to the breakout of the Great War in 1914 (Huxley 1935). The conflict in Europe had a significant economic impact on the East Africa Protectorate, where armed conflict also took place along its southern border with German East Africa. Administrative and military resources were diverted from districts like Laikipia to support the war effort. The British station in Rumuruti was closed in 1914, leaving Laikipia ungoverned until the war ended in 1918 (Hughes 2006). Historical data on Laikipia during the years of the war is sparse, though research by Cronk (2004) and Sobania (1993) suggests *ndoboro* and Laikipiak continued to reside there. Some present-day group ranch residents insist that their Purko relatives

refused to move south in 1912, and were pushed towards the northern margins of the district as it was settled in subsequent decades.

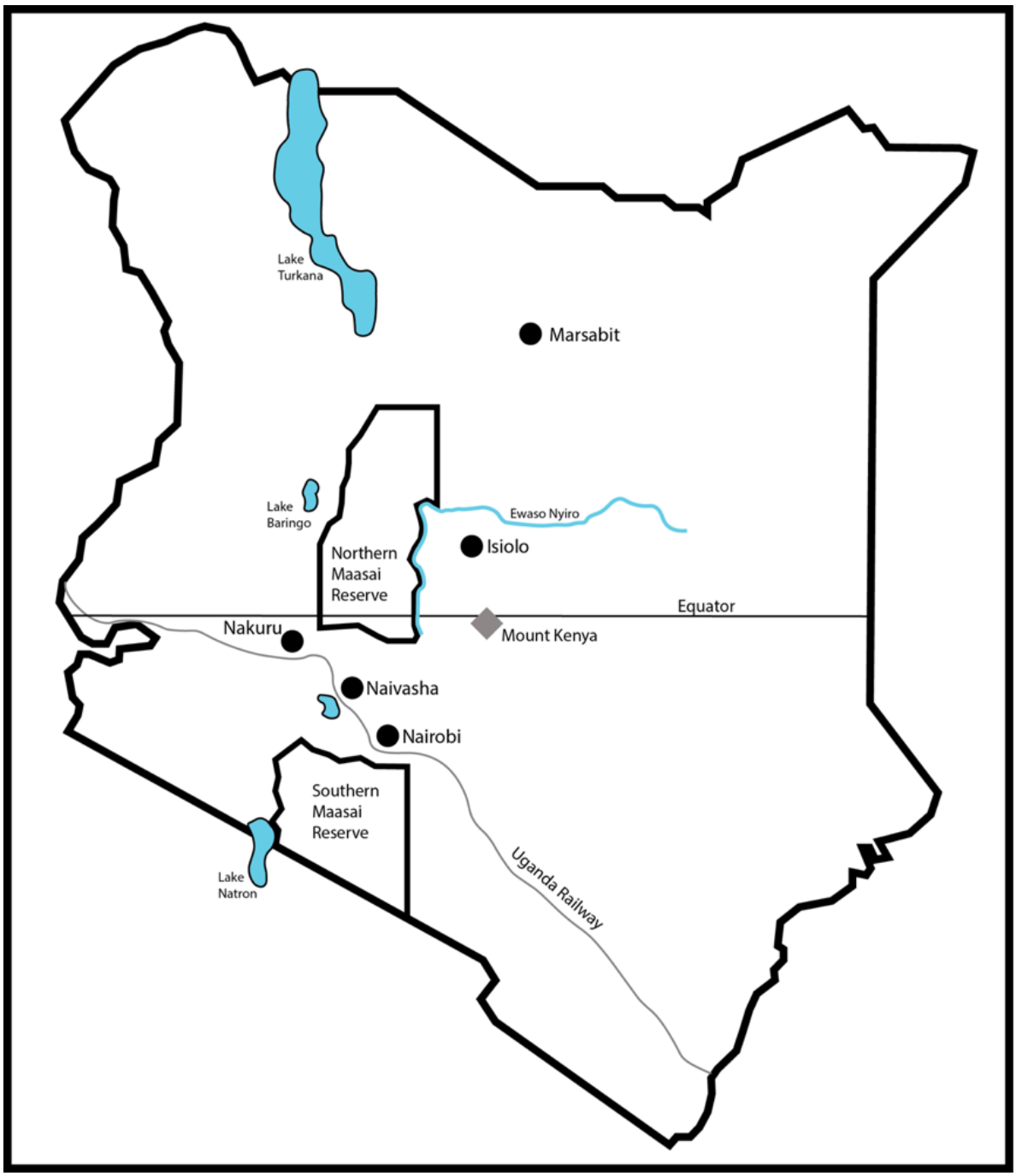

Figure 2: Map depicting the Maasai reserve system in the Kenya Colony, circa 1910. Map by the author, with material from Hughes (2006).

In 1919, Lord Delamere began keeping livestock in Laikipia on a seasonal basis, moving cattle there from his ranch near Nakuru during the dry seasons (Huxley 1935). In 1920, the East Africa Protectorate became the Kenya Colony, and the British were motivated to bring larger areas of the territory under effective occupation. A plan to grant land to British war veterans was devised in 1919. By year's end, 1,500 soldier-settlers arrived in Kenya, 166 of whom settled in Laikipia (Hughes 2006). Early settlers to Laikipia were granted leases of 999 years, though it would later be alleged that these leases were only valid for 99 years (Galaty 2008). Hughes (2006) claims that, in the twenties, some Purko Maasai made unsanctioned returns to Laikipia, finding work on settler ranches as herders or watchmen or rejoining family units that had not moved south. Settlers on land near Mount Kenya began cultivating maize, wheat, and other crops, attracting Kikuyu people from the south who were willing to work as farm labour. As more lands were claimed, Maasai and *ndorobo* were pushed together on the northern margins of the district. As a result, intermarriage between Maasai and hunter-gatherers accelerated greatly in the 1920s (Cronk 2004).

By 1936, however, as administrators in Laikipia were concerned that hunter-gatherers were being aggressively assimilated by Maasai, the government chose to allocate the north-east corner of Laikipia as a reserve exclusively for *ndorobo* (Herren 1991). According to Cronk (2004), British officials in Laikipia had an affinity for one *ndorodo* group called the Yaaku, cave-dwellers who spoke a unique Cushitic language that was being lost through intermarriage with Maa speakers. The plan for this reserve initially required that Maa-speaking pastoralists be evicted from the region. However, this plan overlooked the social moorings many Maasai had established in the region by that time. By the 1930s, pastoralism and the Maa language had become dominant in Laikipia North, and evictees would often return to the area as the will of

officials to enforce evictions waned (Cronk 2004). This *ndorobo* reserve in Laikipia remained a 'closed district' in the late colonial period, as inhabitants' livestock were seen by administrators as an epidemiological threat to nearby ranches (Waller 2004).

When Kenya secured independence from the United Kingdom in 1963, government planners forged a strategy for harnessing the economic potential of pastoral communities and enhancing government services in formerly closed districts. Though pastoral communities throughout Kenya were producing substantial numbers of livestock, weak access to markets was seen by government planners as a missed opportunity for development and state revenue (Galaty 1980). Like other group ranches created in the present-day counties of Kajiado, Narok, Baringo, and Samburu, Ol Tome's creation involved the demarcation of a fixed land parcel and the creation of a register listing the names of all members. With land titles enabling pastoral communities to incorporate as businesses and access loans, the group ranch scheme was intended to modernize livestock production and integrate pastoralists into Kenya's formal economy. Planners, says Moiko (2004), believed that keeping non-members' livestock off the group ranches would be effective in preventing over-grazing, and that better market access would ensure that group ranches did not accumulate excess stock. With pastoral communities better defined and demarcated, group ranches were also intended to facilitate the delivery of government services such as health, education, and veterinary support (Galaty 1980).

But like many other pastoral communities included in Kenya's group ranch scheme, Ol Tome did not experience the economic and infrastructural development that government planners hoped for. Though residents describe the early years of the group ranch as prosperous given that pasture was relatively plentiful, group ranches in Laikipia were marginalized vis-à-vis Europeans in the district and Kenya's more politically dominant ethnic groups (Letai and Lind

2013). While Kenya's independence from Britain in 1963 spurred an exodus of European settlers from the Rift Valley, much of Laikipia's drier areas remained controlled by Europeans. Some settler lands were redistributed to Africans, but largely to members of the Kikuyu ethnic group (Jones 1965; Wasserman 1973). In the north of the district, group ranch communities struggled often with famine and insecurity, while receiving little support from Kenya's government or their neighbours.

Well into the 1990s, Ol Tome was the site of a fortified police barrier marking the line between Laikipia's commercial ranches and the former *ndorobo* reserve, which continued to hold the reputation as a source of insecurity. "Everyone in the community hated the barrier," said a schoolteacher whose home was located nearby. "As residents of Laikipia, we had the same right to travel to town as anyone else. But anytime we came or went from this place we had to explain ourselves to police. People felt they were being locked away here. Thankfully, the government agreed to stop it." As mentioned, Laikipia North's reputation for insecurity in the 1970s and 80s dissuaded Kenya's government from servicing the area, which was a barrier to the investment and market access the group ranch scheme had been intended to enhance.

By the 1990s, Ol Tome and other Maasai group ranches in Laikipia had begun to suffer a steep decline in their natural resources, especially in the grasses and water sources needed to sustain cattle. The reasons for the environmental challenges currently facing Ol Tome are complex, and are often the subject of disagreement between group ranch members and their ranching neighbours. Though many Maasai view the degradation of their rangelands as a result of climate change, invasive plant species, and population pressures, some neighbours of the group ranches view the area's environmental challenges as the strict result of poor land management, weak leadership, or the 'tragedy of the commons' (Letai 2011).

Though it is beyond the scope of this study to survey debates concerning long-term rangeland degradation, one common explanation for the ecological challenges Ol Tome has faced in recent decades is a significant spike in population that began in the late 1980s. Around this time, group ranch residents saw their access to basic health care and commercial food products improve, decreasing the lethality of droughts and enhancing birth rates and life expectancies. Increased population put growing pressure on resources like water and firewood. This growth in population also coincided with a surge in invasive plant species, which began outcompeting native vegetation and causing injury to many livestock (Strum et al. 2015). The loss of native vegetation on Ol Tome has also contributed to soil erosion, further limiting the regeneration of grasses and damaging basic infrastructures like roads and water catchments. The loss of vegetation and growth in human populations have also greatly reduced wildlife numbers on the group ranches, except for elephants and baboons which feed on invasive plants and which most residents consider a danger or a nuisance.

From Mukogodo to Maasai

Today, the ethnic makeup of the former *ndorobo* reserve varies by group ranch, as well as from whom a researcher solicits information on that subject. Though people descendent of hunter-gatherer families make up most of the population in Laikipia North, the label of *ndorobo* often carries stigma, and many people are reluctant to discuss their ethnic histories with strangers. While pastoral communities throughout eastern Africa have absorbed and assimilated *ndorobo* groups for centuries, people from non-pastoralist backgrounds often experience low social status within Maa communities (Galaty 1979). On Ol Tome, many families with greater wealth and status claim a lineage to the Purko Maasai who came to Laikipia with the 1904

migration and managed to evade eviction in the following decades. Though I could ascertain from existing studies that most residents of Ol Tome were descendants of an *ndorobo* group called Ndigirri (Cronk 2004), most people downplayed their *ndoboro* history and asserted that they "are Maasai now."

While descendants of Purko and Ndigirri on Ol Tome often identify collectively as 'Laikipia Maasai', claiming a Purko lineage is an ostensibly effective way for some families to invoke privileged status. At numerous times throughout the year, both in private settings as well as in group ranch meetings and public spaces, adult men expressed that it was in the group ranch's interest for "real Maasai" to hold leadership positions. Though intermarriage between families identifying as Purko and families of Ndigirri backgrounds is common, maintaining their Purko lineage is of interest to many families when the opportunity arises. Gabriel, for example, my primary research assistant whose family are among those who claim a Purko lineage, said his family was pleased when he chose to marry a Maasai women from Narok County whom he had met while attending university in Nakuru. Gabriel, in explaining why his family believed that maintaining their lineage was important, said that people of genuine Maasai backgrounds were more naturally skillful in livestock husbandry.

Though I struggled to find families or persons on Ol Tome who would discuss their hunter-gatherer origins, some communities in other group ranches have in fact maintained or cultivated a *ndoboro* identity for the potential benefits that this can bring. In the group ranches that lie closer to the Mukogodo Hills, for example, some residents claim a lineage to the Yaaku people, who historically spoke an Eastern Cushitic language and once lived in caves within the forested hills (Carrier 2011). Several community based organizations near the town of Dol Dol are dedicated to preserving the heritage of Yaaku people, though residents of Ol Tome claimed

that these groups "will tell you what they think you want to hear" about the Yaaku to gain financial support. Ironically, some ranchers and conservationists in Laikipia made similar accusations against Ol Tome residents, insisting that these residents called themselves 'Maasai' only to gain support from foreign donors (see also McIntosh 2016). Cronk agrees that the label of 'Mukogodo or Laikipia Maasai' did not take hold in this area until the 1970s, when local leaders tried to gain stronger political representation for the region following independence. Residents also felt the need, as Cronk (2002) explains, to distinguish themselves from Samburu communities to the north, who—despite now speaking a common Eastern Nilotic language, Maa—looked down on the Mukogodo's *ndorobo* origins.[7] According to Cronk (2002:43), "the label of 'Laikipia or Mukogodo Maasai' is the deliberate creation of a small number of politically engaged and savvy individuals […] who know enough about the wider world to realize that the distinctions made locally among the various groups are of little importance outside the Division". Today, the area of Laikipia North where the group ranches lie is known collectively as 'Mukogodo'. Administratively, this area is divided into two wards, 'Mukogodo West' and 'Mukogodo East'.[8]

Recognizing that the Mukogodo region's history involves dynamic ethnic intermingling, the slippage between Maasai and hunter-gatherer identities is not a significant focus of this study. Though I do not wish to ignore the fact that Maasai identities in this region are unstable, that instability is sometimes used against group ranchers in ways anthropologists should try to

[7] Though the languages spoken by Maasai and Samburu possess vernacular differences, these languages are intelligible to each other and often considered by members of both groups as 'the same' (the Maa language) (Vossen 1978).

[8] Some Samburu families have resided in the Mukogodo region for centuries. The history of one of these families is discussed in detail in Chapter Six. Conflict between Maasai and Samburu has been an issue along Laikipia's northern border for years, though some Samburu live peacefully among Maasai, especially in and around the town of Dol Dol.

guard against. At several junctures in my fieldwork, conservationists, landowners, and government officials balked when I referred to group ranches residents as 'Maasai,' as they felt that people's claim to this identity was spurious and had been adopted for political gain. "If they were real Maasai, they might know how to take care of their land properly," said the African (but non-Maasai) headmaster of a primary school at Ol Tome. In this man's view, the environmental problems facing the group ranch are the consequence of pastoralism having been adopted by people without the knowledge to practice it sustainably. As mentioned, some group ranch residents who claim a Purko lineage say that innate knowledge makes them superior livestock keepers, though group ranch residents from *ndorobo* backgrounds do not eagerly certify such claims. People of hunter-gatherer backgrounds are stigmatized among Maa-speaking pastoral communities throughout Kenya due to the supremacy these groups vest in lifestyles based on livestock-keeping (Galaty 1979). The prejudices some residents of Laikipia voice against group ranchers echo this stigma—that livestock raising can be ruinous when practiced by people who will not do so properly. In this context, referring to group ranch residents with any ethnic label is fraught. Calling people 'Maasai' ignores a process of ethnic negotiation that shapes Laikipia North in profound ways, while the label of *ndorobo* risks undermining the right to practice pastoralism that this community gained in receiving group ranch status.

Economy, society, and governance

Ol Tome Group Ranch, like many rural communities in Kenya, is governed by a mix of official and traditional leadership systems that can be challenging to disentangle. Ol Tome and other group ranches in Laikipia North are nominally led by group ranch Chairmen. Chairmen are elected in a popular vote which on Ol Tome takes place every three to five years. The election of

Chairmen is sometimes postponed if an election is scheduled to take place in the year of a General Election (such was the case on Ol Tome during the time I spent carrying out fieldwork). I observed the election of one Chairman on a group ranch neighbouring Ol Tome in 2015—wherein hundreds of members (mainly men) gathered beneath a large tree for a meeting that lasted roughly four hours. The election is not by ballot or by poll, but rather by debate and deliberation between the families or persons vying for leadership. Ol Tome, as I would learn, is a community defined more by kinship than by formal registration. Though the names of women, youths, and some less powerful persons are often not included on the group ranch register, male leaders assured me that these persons held a statutory right to the group ranch and its natural assets. Though Ol Tome is subject to many of the political structures imposed on all Kenyan citizens, group ranches are effective in giving pastoral communities some autonomy over their own social, economic, and environmental affairs.

The most important natural asset a group ranch maintains is pasture and water for its residents' livestock. Ol Tome, like other group ranches, maintains a grazing committee that governs whose livestock can graze in what areas, in what numbers, and when. As suggested by the population pressures and natural resource shortages the group ranch now faces, the task of governing grazing resources in the group ranches is extremely challenging. Ol Tome's grazing committee is composed of elder men appointed by all the major families of the group ranch. The committee is led by a Grazing Chairman, elected by grazing committee members in a manner that resembles the election of the group ranch Chairman. I attended several grazing committee meetings throughout the year, both on Ol Tome and on neighbouring ranches. During droughts, which seemed to account for the majority of my fieldwork, these committees were less

concerned with domestic grazing management and more concerned with gaining permission to graze cattle on large ranches and conservancies nearby.

Figure 3: Landscape common to Ol Tome and many other group ranches in Laikipia. The invasive cactus species *opuntia stricta* is prominent, as are signs of erosion. This photo was taken in the month of March, 6-8 weeks before the long rains. Photo by the author.

Helpful though foreign grazing agreements are for some group ranch members during times of drought, many members struggle to be included in these agreements, which appear to disproportionately benefit elite community members. Though some private ranches are deliberate in accepting cattle from a large number of families and make their fees affordable for the average group ranch member, some ranches accept a large number of cattle from group ranch

leaders and take few or none from the community's poorer members. For example, in February of 2018, as Laikipia was experiencing a moderate drought, a large ranch called Mpala made an agreement with men from several group ranches to accept roughly five hundred head of cattle at a fee of 350 shillings per head per month. Though agreeing to accept 500 head of cattle could have brought major relief to many families in the group ranches, the quota was filled by livestock belonging to less than eight men, including a senior police officer and two sitting politicians. Uneven access to grazing outside the group ranches has been a significant contributor to inequality in the group ranches in recent years. As maintaining cattle in Laikipia North increasingly requires owners to pay to access pasture, residents with other incomes can maintain larger herds of cattle while poorer residents can maintain only few.

Grazing committee meetings, as with most governance-related gatherings in the group ranch, often occur under the supervision of a government official called a 'Location Chief.' A member of the community appointed by the National Government for an unrestricted length of time, the Location Chief is ostensibly the most powerful figure in the group ranch setting. Charged with maintaining order in the community by ensuring traditional governance structures function as intended, the Location Chief of Ol Tome presides over three group ranches and has served in this role for over two decades. Residents of Ol Tome and their various partners held a variety of opinions about this Chief. Some elder men claimed the Chief was extremely effective in negotiating grazing agreements with their neighbours, while some women claimed the man often turned a blind eye to child marriages and violence against women. The Chief is also nominally involved in all activities in the group ranch involving investors, conservationists, or researchers like myself. I required the Ol Tome Location Chief's permission to conduct research

in the area, for instance; I pledged to provide this official with a copy of my study once it was completed.

Ol Tome's Location Chief was explicit in many of our conversations about the need to attract more investment to the area. He emphasized that the invasive cactus species, *opuntia stricta*, was making the group ranch nearly inhospitable to livestock. While the economy of Ol Tome and other group ranches in Laikipia have undergone some diversification in recent decades, livestock are the primary source of savings and income for most residents. Most families in the group ranch maintain several dozen sheep and goats, which they graze near their homesteads and are an important daily source of milk. In recent years, many pastoralists in the group ranches have partially divested of cattle in favour of goats which require less water and can eat tougher, more diverse vegetation (Kibet et al. 2016). Camels are becoming more common in the group ranches due to their drought resistance and high-valued milk. Acquiring camels has been challenging for many group ranch residents, however, as camels are prohibitively expensive for many and must be acquired outside of the area. Pastoralists in the group ranches sell livestock at various times of year in order to obtain cash for school fees or other needs. Many residents see livestock as the preferred method of savings, as access to financial services remains limited for many.

An especially common source of income among young male group ranch residents is providing motorcycle transportation for a fee. This livelihood is popular as it requires little skill and can be practiced on a casual basis. Maasai women on Ol Tome engage in a variety of small scale income generating activities such as making handcrafts and jewelry. Women's ventures, along with a local visitor's centre, will be discussed in greater detail in the fourth chapter. In several of the group ranches that lie nearest to the Mukogodo Hills, sand harvesting is another

important source of income for able-bodied men and, indeed, the group ranches themselves. The harvesting of sand in Mukogodo is controversial however, and will be discussed more extensively in chapter three. Several members of the group ranch are also employed by conservation groups or tourism enterprises in or near the area. The experiences and perspectives of these individuals will be discussed throughout the course of the thesis.

Though the informal nature Ol Tome's economy makes presenting quantitative economic data challenging, one study in a group ranch neighbouring Ol Tome reveals the relative importance of certain income sources. According to Kibet et al. (2016), twenty percent of group ranch residents reported that employment on private ranches by members of the household was a major source of income, while thirty percent reported that employment linked to tourism was a major source of income. Sixty percent of Kibet et al.'s respondents reported that sand harvesting was a major source of household income. This figure is likely to be higher on Ol Tome where sand harvesting is more active than in the group ranch where Kibet at al.'s study was conducted.

Though Ol Tome residents face many barriers in gaining secure employment outside the group ranch, population pressures and the growing need for cash has inspired many families to invest in education for their children. Ol Tome and most group ranches in Laikipia North are fortunate to host several schools, most of which receive funding from private sponsors, development organizations, or conservation groups. Ol Tome hosts both a primary and secondary school, both of which have received consistent funding over the years from a conservation group called the Ewaso Baboon Project (EBP), which also regularly employs young men to work as baboon trackers and research assistants. Though children on Ol Tome have better access to education than they would elsewhere in northern Kenya, the country's introduction of free primary schooling has put tremendous strain on the public education system. Parents whose

children attend Ol Tome Primary School, for example, complained it was chronically overcrowded and understaffed. Frequent disputes between teachers' unions and Kenya's national government have left the country's teachers underpaid and overworked.[9] Like in much of Kenya, many families on Ol Tome will send their children to private schools if they can afford to do so. Though many Ol Tome residents value education as a way of securing their family's futures, the uneven standard and accessibility of education has unfortunately made it a driver of inequality. With the quality of education young people receive tied directly to how much money their families can put up, poorer households cannot make the investments in education needed to break the cycle of poverty (Warrington and Kiragu 2012).

Throughout the thesis, I will refer to some individuals or families on Laikipia's group ranch as 'elites'—a label that group ranch members themselves use, but I employ as a relative concept. People I refer to as 'elites' are persons with the resources or social capital to shape the opinions or alliances of others—to influence how people vote in a group ranch election, for example, or whether they will participate in a conservation effort. Education is an important qualifier of elite-ness on Ol Tome; having attended school brings prestige to individuals, regardless of whether they hold lucrative employment or not. Of course, the families with the most educated members often hold the most material wealth thanks to the employment opportunities that education can help to access. Elite group ranch members exercise their influence over non-elite members in many ways. Alliances among families are often built through marriage, or by establishing material patronage relationships that enable poorer families to subsist during times of drought or financial hardship (Herren 1991).

[9] See: https://answersafrica.com/teachers-strike-incidences-in-kenya.html

The most active sites of commerce throughout the group ranches are the small, single-street towns that host shops and small businesses. Approximately 5 commercial centres are dispersed throughout the group ranches, most in proximity to major roadway junctions. Though these commercial centres sit atop land that is technically group ranch property, group ranches like Ol Tome have allocated small plots to their own members which can be used for commerce or rented out to third parties. A significant portion of the merchant population in the group ranches are women and men from neighbouring regions such as Meru, who are active in the sale of vegetables, sugar, tea, plastic commodities, as well as alcohol, tobacco, and khat. In recent years, some merchants and investors in the area have informally purchased plots from group ranch members. Unfortunately, because the creation of commercial plots on the group ranch has not involved the allocation of titles, merchants have been hesitant to build permanent structures as they feel that they lack long-term tenure security. Though merchants and investors have approached group ranch leaders repeatedly in an attempt to gain titles for their plots, leaders have resisted out of fear that new titles could precipitate a wave of subdivisions across the group ranch. While the subdivision of group ranches in some parts of Kenya has involved brazen corruption, land grabbing, and violent conflict (Riamit 2014), Ol Tome and other group ranches in the Mukogodo region have not undergone any significant subdivision thus far.

In addition to cautionary tales of subdivision from friends and relatives elsewhere in Maasailand, residents' protectionists attitudes towards land have been influenced by Laikipia's unique history with investors. In the sixties, when Kenya's new government gave select ethnic groups preferential access to redistributed land, many investors, land buyers, and land buying companies acquired large tracts of land in Laikipia (Letai 2011). But as most of these lands—the fragments of former ranches—were unsuited to agriculture contrary to what their buyers hoped,

many lands in the county were abandoned by their owners and have been slowly re-occupied by pastoralists (Wade 2015).[10] This phenomenon, referred to by the Laikipia Wildlife Forum (2012) as "abandoned lands", did not occur in direct proximity to the group ranches, but affected a region called Mekandura, roughly forty kilometres from Ol Tome. In recent decades, many families from Ol Tome and other group ranches have established temporary homes in Mekandura in an attempt to gain access to pasture closer to the better-watered centre of the county. But in the past twenty years, as land prices in Laikipia have skyrocketed with the rise of tourism and conservation, some owners who abandoned these lands decades ago have returned to try to reclaim them from pastoralists or 'squatters'. Unfortunately, standoffs between landowners and pastoralists have occasionally led to violence. Though Ol Tome and other group ranches in Laikipia are fortunate that their tenure is relatively secure, conflict over abandoned lands in Laikipia demonstrates the growing intensity of land pressures in this region.

Recently, Kenyan lawmakers have attempted to protect pastoral lands from speculation or illegal acquisition with a legislative bill called the Community Land Act (CLA). Providing a framework for pastoral communities to gain formal title to their land, the CLA, says Alden Wily (2018:1), "signals a dramatic new policy direction for Kenya"—one sensitive to the unique challenges pastoralists face in protecting their lands and harnessing its economic potential (see also De Soto 2000). As the bill also targets existing group ranches that already hold legal title over their land, the CLA is a guidebook for making collective land ownership more democratic

[10] The majority of land in Laikipia North can be classified into three categories: 1). Private ranches (ranging from 5,000 to 100,000 acres in size), dedicated to cattle ranching or conservation and tourism; 2). Group ranches (ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 acres in size) and owned collectively by a group of pastoralists families (predominantly Maasai); 3). Abandoned lands (former ranches that have been subdivided and vary greatly in size) owned by individuals or corporations from outside Laikipia North who abandoned these lands over the past decades because they are unsuited for agriculture. Many Maasai and other pastoralists now occupy these lands, though very few of them hold title.

and attractive to investment. For example, as new laws guaranteeing women equal rights in land inheritance have not been upheld in many pastoral areas, implementing the CLA requires group ranches to review member lists and ensure all eligible woman are included. Overall, the CLA urges communities like Ol Tome to review their existing membership criteria, revisit their governance structure, and to contemplate new investment opportunities.

On Ol Tome, most residents have heard about the Community Land Act, but disagree on what its ramifications for their community are. In theory, implementing the CLA would help protect existing group ranches from sub-division, as it requires that a large quorum of community members vote upon any sale, subdivision, or lease of group ranch land (Wiley 2018). Scholars like Wiley (2018) recognize that the CLA is a positive step in improving the long-term security of community lands, but that the new governance procedures it imposes could still exclude large segments of communities. Though many young Ol Tome members claimed they were impressed by what the CLA promised in theory, they believed it offers little to prevent leaders from lying to residents about the true intentions or terms of lease agreements with outside parties. While "The Community Land Act provides a legal path for pastoral peoples to secure their futures," says Ragan (2017:np), "it also relies on institutions that have historically displaced and taken advantage of pastoralists to make this possible".

The politics of landownership

In Laikipia, the identity or label of 'landowner' is itself a subject of contestation, with different perspectives telling us much about the role that conservation now plays within this county. When Laikipia was settled by Europeans in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, settlers were not granted permanent land titles, but rather leases that were valid for 99 or

999 years. Pastoralists and hunter-gatherers in Laikipia did not own land in the colonial period; the reserves allocated for these communities were property of the colonial government. Most European settlers who remained in Laikipia after independence were naturalized as Kenyan citizens, granting them and their offspring the same constitutional right to own land as Africans. Some leases held by naturalized Europeans were converted to freehold titles after independence, though many Europeans maintained leases with ambiguous expiration dates. In the seventies, some European Kenyans in Laikipia sold their land to expatriates or foreign buyers. Many buyers assumed that the leases they acquired were valid for another nine centuries or more. Ol Pejeta and Orghissi, two large ranches I discuss at several stages in this thesis, were both sold to foreigners in the 1970s and remain under foreign ownership today. The legal ambiguity surrounding these ranch leases in Laikipia has led to controversy in recent years, including a series of protests or 'land invasions' that took place in Laikipia in 2004. A Maasai activist group called OSILIGI mobilized thousands of group ranch members to move their cattle onto several large ranches throughout Laikipia. As the expiration of 99-year ranch leases in Laikipia was approaching, activists sought to pressure Kenya's government to redistribute these lands to Maasai (Galaty 2008). After several months, government security forces moved in to evict the protestors, resulting in the death of one Maasai and leaving relations between group ranchers and large landowners tense (Little 2013).

Laikipia residents of many backgrounds warned me that land laws are commonly misunderstood, especially by people who are illiterate or who receive their information from political sources. The 2017 conflicts in Laikipia, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 7, were partially instigated by politicians trafficking in misinformation concerning land law. For decades, some politicians have told pastoralists in this region that ranches will be theirs if whites are

driven off, but those lands, say analysts, are more likely to become the property or patronage resources of politicians.[11] In 2010, Kenya's new constitution included provisions that clarified the legal statuses of ranches in Laikipia. Any leases held by foreign actors were renewed with a strict 99-year limit, meaning several large ranches, including Ol Pejeta, will revert to state control in 2109. The new laws also certified leases held by Kenyans (including Europeans) for 999 years, meaning that many of Laikipia's largest ranches are firmly tenured in the legal sense. Most ranches discussed in this study, including several discussed in Chapter 6, are held under freehold titles that do not expire.

In the sixties and seventies, pastoralists in Laikipia also gained formal titles over land. Group ranches have freehold titles and registers that list adult men and widows as co-owners. As explained, the group ranch model was designed to help pastoralists invest in their lands by incorporating themselves as businesses and utilizing titles as collateral for loans (Galaty 1980). In Ol Tome, where residents will frequently speak about the investment potential of private land, many people are candid about the limitations the group ranch model has imposed on them. Banks and private lenders often saw group ranches as risky recipients of loans, members said, citing a lack of formal governance structures and the potential for conflict among group ranch members. For example, Kenya Power, a national infrastructure provider, refused for many years to service the group ranches. Ol Tome residents claimed Kenya Power had an unofficial policy not to service lands held under group titles. As most structures and settlements on the group ranch are built below the standards of modern planning, Kenya Power felt that laying infrastructure there was risky and no one would be responsible for paying power bills. A lack of power has been a

[11] See: https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017/11/27/are-leases-in-laikipia-about-to-start-expiring_c1675124

limitation for economic development on the group ranch, discouraging businesses like petrol stations or welding shops from operating. In 2016, Kenya Power agreed to begin servicing structures in Ol Tome town. The centre's first petrol station opened in 2017 within months of the town's connection to the grid.

From the perspectives of the county government and some residents of Ol Tome itself, group ranches lack the systems or cultures of governance needed to maintain or to manage private land. Ol Tome's assistant chief (AC) (also a local elder) claimed that many members do not view their area as private land; they recognize that they have a legal stake in the group ranch, but they do not feel much responsibility towards it. The AC said that most residents expect monetary compensation if they participate in land management efforts (this fact is exemplified in the next chapter in my discussion of one land management initiative). In past years, many conservation groups and NGOs have tried to start land care programs in Ol Tome, most of which, the AC said, have had little impact or have been impossible to upscale or maintain. "Helping the land only works when everybody in the community is active," he said. "People ask 'why should I be working very hard when others are lazy or take more than others?'" Group ranch members with sufficient capital often buy small plots of land elsewhere in the county. The AC told me Ol Tome would "always be [the] people's home," but that "the land has only small potential now."

Several of Ol Tome's European neighbours expressed similar pessimism about the future of group ranches, characterizing them as "moonscapes" or "wastelands"—places of ecological and social degradation. One older ranch manager told me that he felt "heart-broken" about the seemingly grim future facing young group ranch members. "I honestly hope that education is going to make a difference over there. There's no way thousands of people can eke out a living

on that land anymore. Have you seen the cows that come off that place? They're worth almost nothing, but no one understands that." This same man spoke about the history of the Maasai reserve system and stated it was "nothing to be proud of," but asserted that overpopulation and poor governance were problems that group ranches "had to sort out themselves."

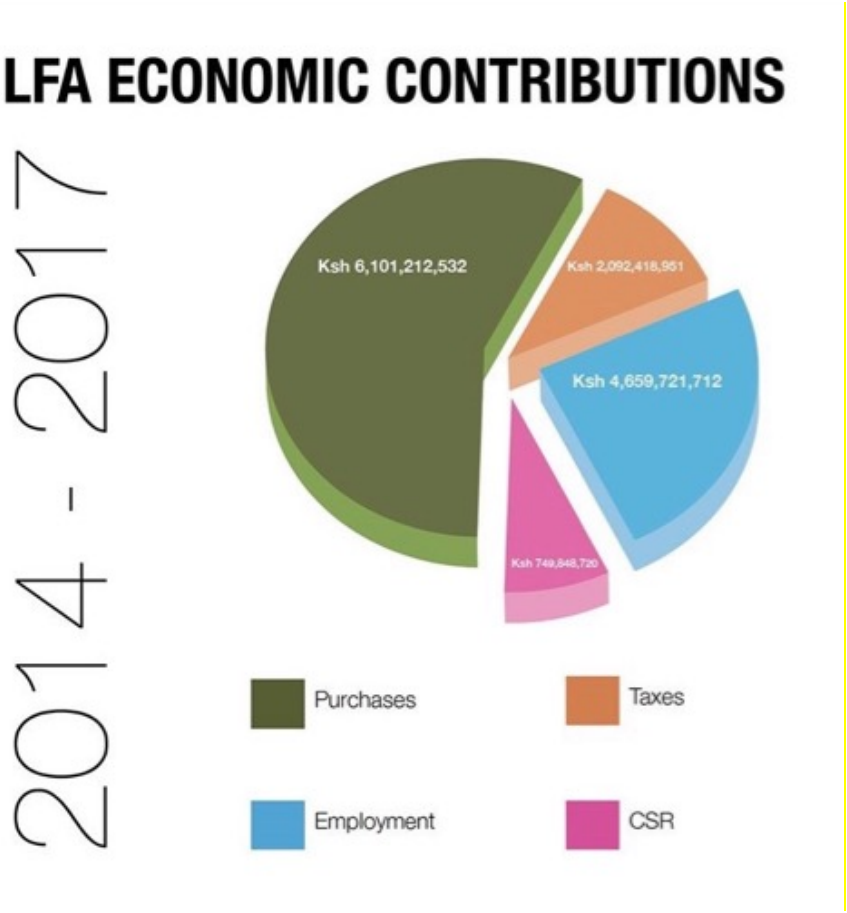

Figure 4: Graphic created and published by the Laikipia Farmers Association detailing the contributions that member ranches made to the county's economy between 2014 and 2017. Credit: LFA

In this context, where situated notions of land health serve as indicators for the health of people too, 'landowner' is a title that describes moral character as much as it indicates a legal title status. The Executive Director (ED) of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum told me that convincing white ranchers to recognize Maasai as 'landowners' is the hardest part of his job. He explained

that ranch owners often strongly doubt the capacity for group ranches to organize or self-govern. Most group ranches were forthcoming about the fact that their community faces governance challenges, but LWF's ED claimed that ranchers and many government officials viewed group ranches as a place of lawlessness. Maasai groups or their members are not seen as 'landowners' because they do not fulfill the ideal of that role—to harness land for its 'productive' potentials or to use it in service of wider good. Here, the 'wider good' refers to the protection of wildlife as public Kenyan assets, or in creating employment opportunities for as many people as feasible. In recent years, large ranches in Laikipia have launched campaigns to publicize their economic contributions to county. Recent public relations campaigns by Laikipia's largest ranches are also explained in the last chapter of the thesis.

Activists advocating for the rights of pastoralists in Laikipia have proposed that a wider-scale response to the issue of labelling landowners is needed—that scholars, journalists, or any Maasai allies should refer to foreign leaseholders or white ranchers as 'settlers'. The term 'settler' invokes the violent history that laid the groundwork for many of Laikipia's current problems, though reserving the label of landowner for African people carries its own risks. This approach might gloss over the land inequality that is prevalent within African communities—an issue that I will shed light on at varies stages in the thesis. In this study, people I refer to as 'landowners' have permanent freehold titles over land, making their land tenure non-contestable from a legal standpoint. I recognize group ranches and their diverse members as being 'landowners' in the legal sense, though I often describe group ranch members in contexts where asserting this fact is not so pressing. All Maasai people I feature in this study are members of the group ranches I describe them as inhabiting. Married women and widows are part-owners of group ranches if their husbands are (or were) registered members. The diverse people I describe

as living on the group ranch—merchants or tradespeople of non-pastoral backgrounds—are not members of the group ranch and often rarely venture outside the town centres.

Conservation rising

Of course, one of the most significant factors shaping the economy of Laikipia's group ranches in recent decades has been the region's rise as an international mecca for tourists and wildlife researchers. In the 1980s, as the decline in Kenya's beef industry coincided with a growing availability of funding and support for conservation on private lands, many ranchers in Laikipia capitalized on incentives to turn cattle ranches into wildlife conservancies (Little 2013). Worldwide, an unprecedented amount of funding from governments and private donors was being invested in order to conserve endangered species in Africa (Corson 2010). In 1977, Kenya issued a ban on commercial hunting, citing a dangerous decline in large wildlife species. Decades of poorly regulated hunting had taken a massive toll on elephants, which by the early 1980s were nearing extinction (Douglas-Hamilton 1987).

Today, Laikipia is home to over a dozen high-end safari lodges. Most are located on large, private ranches, while some—like Ol Lentille—are on lands leased from African communities (Sumba et al 2007). While some of Laikipia's original settler ranches have been subdivided, the county continues to host dozens of ranches more than fifteen-thousand acres in size. Tourism has indeed brought significant investment to Laikipia, where several thousand African residents work in hotels, restaurants, safari lodges, or businesses connected to conservation or tourism. Resorts like the Fairmont Mount Kenya Safari Club employ hundreds of people, and are crucial to the economy of Nanyuki town and other urban centres in the Mount Kenya region. The total revenues generated by tourism in Laikipia are not known, though the

Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) reported that this industry generated 2.2 million US dollars in wages for county residents in 2013. They estimate that 6,500 residents of the county are directly reliant on tourism. They claim that the industry contributes approximately 225 million shillings to Laikipia's economy each year.[12] The landowning establishment in Laikipia has also founded associations and institutions to help manage their relations with pastoral communities and smallholders. The Laikipia Wildlife Forum, for example, was founded in the 1990s as an association of mainly European ranchers, and has grown into a well-funded, globally-connected body that coordinates conservation and tourism efforts throughout the county (Sundaresen and Riginos 2010). A newer organization called the Laikipia Farmers Association (LFA) serves a similar purpose to LWF, though they emphasize agricultural production, not conservation, as their greatest contribution to the county.

While some landowners in Laikipia support their group ranch neighbours with the revenue that they earn from agriculture, most now work with group ranches under the aegis of 'community-based conservation' (CBC). With landowners dependent on the presence of wildlife and the absence of livestock to impress foreign visitors, CBC programs often work to provide communities alternatives to pastoralism, while incentivizing tolerance for wildlife. Though human-wildlife conflict is a well-recognized challenge for group ranch communities, conservationists insist that tolerating wildlife is crucial for the future of these areas. "It is not in my power to convince people that having [wildlife] around is strictly beneficial," one conservationist told me. "These [wildlife] can be a nuisance and I fully understand that. But if people started killing or chasing away these [wildlife], all the benefits we provide them would be finished." This conservationist does indeed support group ranch communities by providing

[12] See: http://laikipia.org/Thematic_areas/tourism/

funding for social services. They asserted that group ranches leaders would not permit them to work in the area unless measurable benefits were being delivered. Whether social services offset the death or damage caused by wildlife is challenging to gauge. In general, group ranch residents recognize the value of wildlife so long as it does not pose a risk to lives or livelihoods.

In addition to the Laikipia Wildlife Forum, the strongest force for conservation in Laikipia for several decades, the US-based NGO the African Wildlife Foundation has been an influence in this region since the 1990s. AWF became active in the group ranches with the launch of their African Heartlands Program. This program, which paired individual communities with investors in developing tourism and conservation enterprises, led to the development of Ol Lentille, a women's centre that will be discussed in chapter four, and an enterprise called Koija Star Beds. Located on Koija Group Ranch along the picturesque banks of the Ewaso Ng'iro River, Koija Star Beds is a partnership between the group ranch and a 61,000-acre ranch called Loisaba. Loisaba developed its own tourism enterprises in the mid 1990s, but struggled to maintain amicable relations with its Maasai neighbours. As is often the case in Laikipia, the owners of this ranch accused Maasai of failing to respect their borders. Koija residents often grazed their cattle on Loisaba without permission, which the ranch owners claimed degraded the landscape, threatening large wildlife and their tourism ventures. But with AWF's help, this large private ranch was able to make Koija its formal business partner, providing a pretext for closer cooperation and incentivizing Maasai to tolerate wildlife. Under AWF's leadership, an agreement was negotiated wherein Koija would allocate 8,500 of its 18,700 acres of land as a conservation zone. A lodge was built within the conservation area, and the community's livestock could only graze in the conservancy during the droughts. Loisaba contributed half of

the capital needed to build the lodge, while the group ranch's share of equity in the project was contributed by USAID (Sumba et al. 2007).

Though the enterprise at Koija has generated some income for the group ranch in recent years, Lamers et al. (2014) claim the community has lost access to water and pasture, while revenue from tourism has proven undependable. In 2013, Loisaba's safari lodge experienced a devastating fire that forced it to close its doors to tourists for several years. As the lodge at Koija was largely run as an extension of Loisaba's enterprise, the group ranch received very few clients for the duration of Loisaba's lodge reconstruction. Though this partnership is a positive example of how a well-resourced tourist enterprise can lend its expertise to less-advantaged partners, it reveals that group ranches are often dependent on these partners to succeed in marketing and managing their enterprises. In the past three years, the African Wildlife Foundation has incrementally ceased all operations in Laikipia, and is no longer officially involved in Ol Lentille, Koija Star Beds, or other enterprises. In 2015, AWF's last staff members in Laikipia told me they believed the group had chosen to invest resources in other African countries, instead.

Orghissi

For many years, one of Ol Tome's most significant partners or supporters has been a neighbouring 60,000-acre ranch I call Orghissi. While changing ownership several times in the past century between British settlers and expatriates, this ranch has been a lifeline for Ol Tome in times of need. The owners of Orghissi were very charitable towards the community in the 1980s, employing many members as livestock herders and security guards. Orghissi, now owned by an

American citizen, is not open to the public for tourism. It has mainly been kept as a leisure property and has been run with the personal finances of the owner.

For decades, Orghissi has supported Ol Tome by building and maintaining their main borehole, and have also constructed several dams on the group ranch to help conserve water for livestock during droughts. Orghissi also maintains ongoing grazing agreements with Ol Tome intended to help all families in the group ranch maintain a herd of cattle. Orghissi accepts approximately 500 cattle from Ol Tome members seasonally. They also make arrangements to sell those cattle once fattened and remit the profits to the livestock owner. Many livestock owners, including women, claimed they were happy with Ol Tome's arrangement with Orghissi. Some ranches that neighbour on Maasai areas, as I will explain later, require grazing fees on an upfront basis or only make agreements with elite livestock owners.

The positive narratives on the relationship between Orghissi and Ol Tome were sometimes permeated by disappointment. A particularly sore spot in the history of the Orghissi-Ol Tome relationship took place in 2013, involving group ranch members working for the ranch's security team. A black rhinoceros allegedly died of natural causes in an isolated and forested area of the ranch. The fact that it took weeks for its death to be discovered revealed the staff from Ol Tome had not been keeping as close an eye on the rhino as reported. Meshami, who was one of the members of that team and now works as a teacher on Ol Tome, claimed that Orghissi's management responded to the incident by dismissing all employees from the group ranch, claiming that they posed a security threat. Since then, Orghissi have employed few, if any, Ol Tome members on its staff of several hundred people, relying instead on workers from elsewhere in the region. In 2015, Ol Tome continued to maintain seasonal grazing agreements

with the ranch, though some elders mentioned that their relationship with Orghissi was not as strong as it once was.

In conversations with other landowners and conservationists in the region, I learned that Orghissi was undergoing a change in senior management that had the potential to undermine its relationship with Ol Tome. As Orghissi, for decades, had mainly served as a vacation property for its owners, charitable gestures towards Ol Tome were made with relatively little cost-benefit analysis. But more recently, the cost of maintaining the vast ranch has risen sharply, and a new manager was recruited to try to help the ranch tap into the tourism market. Though Orghissi's grazing agreements with Ol Tome have remained intact, Orghissi has curtailed the financial and human resources available for supporting Maasai neighbours. In chapter four, as I discuss the challenges facing a small-scale tourism enterprise on Ol Tome, we will see that Orghissi's shifting orientations toward this group ranch has a bearing on this community's relationship with the world.

Figure 5: Ol Tome Group Ranch residents at the gate of Orghissi Ranch, collecting livestock that are returning from a six-month period of grazing, October 2015. Photo by the author.

Naibunga Conservancy Trust

One of the most significant conservation and security developments on the group ranches over the past decade has been the formalization of an entity called the Naibunga Conservancy Trust (NCT), which acts mainly as a security organ; its status as a land management body is contentious. Muthiani et al (2011:9) claim that NCT emerged in 2001 as an informal alliance among nine group ranches in order "to promote wildlife conservation and entrepreneurial culture among the communities in order to improve the locals' livelihoods." Formalized in 2007 under the leadership of a conservation group called the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), NCT's mandate is to enhance security in the area and to coordinate and streamline conservation initiatives (Pellis et al. 2015). In the past fifteen years, Kenya has experienced a large proliferation of conservation organizations called 'trusts'—non-governmental groups that link communities with tourism investors while funding natural resource management and security initiatives (Little 2013). According to the African Wildlife Foundation (2008), who have been leading proponents of the conservation trust model, trusts are intended to "act as a player in the private marketplace, creating economic incentives and brokering agreements to encourage the conservation-friendly use of private lands" (np). By working with land trusts, communities can "negotiate easements on private land for wildlife, compensate individual landowners for the opportunity costs, and even purchase land outright" (AWF 2008, np). Though trust groups like NRT represent themselves as helping to maintain the natural resources needed to sustain pastoralism in northern Kenya, land trusts, says Little (2013:76), also open land for tourism "without the political entanglements of creating additional national parks and reserves."

As the group ranches of Laikipia North have historically struggled with security, making the region safer for people and for wildlife has been NCT's dominant mandate (Pellis et al.

2015). NCT employs roughly 20 full time scouts from across all nine of their member group ranches. The rangers are housed at a large conservancy headquarters along the region's northern border with Isiolo County—the oft-perceived source of insecurity in the area. The ranger team patrols the group ranches daily by vehicle, and maintains observation posts throughout the area where wildlife and potential security threats can be surveyed. In addition to the rangers, NCT employs a conservancy manager and several support staff. The conservancy is led by a three-person executive team composed of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a Treasurer. The executive board are not paid employees, and are elected to three-year terms by NCT members' board. This board is composed of the Chairmen of the nine participating group ranches, plus an additional trustee from each group ranch and a representative from NRT.

With security improved, jobs created, and no discernible harm inflicted on the area, my appraisal of the partnership between the Naibunga Conservancy Trust and the Northern Rangelands Trust is positive, overall. But like numerous other trust organizations emerging in Kenya and throughout the continent, NCT's relationship with its funding and monitoring bodies present questions about its independence. In 2016, in an interview I conducted with NCT's operations manager, he expressed that, despite legitimate efforts by NRT to vest power in NCT board, the fact that NRT was the primary funding body for the conservancy gave it significant sway over all the board's decisions. Though funding for certain operational needs was handled by NCT's Treasurer, all conservancy employees at that time were hired, trained, and remunerated by NRT directly. The vehicles used by NCT are owned and maintained by NRT, and their conservation, security, and rangeland management work is planned and monitored by the group. NRT has been the subject of scrutiny in recent years, as this group has been behind the formation of dozens of community-based conservancies across northern Kenya. The work of

NRT will be discussed at several junctures in the thesis. Overall, critics are concerned that NRT holds an inordinate amount power over partner communities, and claim that it lacks the accountability measures of other NGOs funded by the US Government.[13]

Figure 6: Plaque on the headquarters building of the Naibunga Conservancy Trust (NCT), indicating support from the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) and USAID. Photo by the author.

Though the Naibunga Conservancy Trust is credited for having contributed to improved security in the area (Pellis et al. 2015), its success as a conservation entity has, said its Chairman, been much more limited. As NCT is a collection of nine group ranches with their own unique economic, political, and natural resource profiles, having these communities work together in

[13] See: http://newafricanmagazine.com/current-affairs/investigations/a-conspiracy-in-the-wild/

community-based natural resource management has been challenging in practice. For example, NCT employs a grazing manager charged with helping member communities to improve their rangeland management. This figure's role, however, is limited to trying to educate and influence group ranch leaders who must contend with their own grazing affairs. NCT's donors, furthermore, have heavily encouraged that the organization employ young people and women in management positions. Positive though this is, the thirty-year old Chairman of NCT claimed he and other young people working with the organization struggle to gain respect from local elders. Most of all, NCT's effectiveness as a land governance body is limited by the fact that participating group ranches are not accountable to NCT for how their natural resources are used. For example, NCT staff express opposition to sand harvesting due to the damage it causes rivers, but the right of each group ranch to use land as it chooses supersedes the authority of NCT.

Though similar conservation bodies funded by NRT have succeeded in building profitable tourism partnerships with group ranches in Samburu County, NCT has so far been unsuccessful in attracting long-term investment to the area. Unlike Ol Lentille which involves a lease agreement between Kijabe Group Ranch and a foreign investor, NCT's partnership with the nine group ranches is governed only by a memorandum of understanding that does not grant the organization the right to engage in for-profit activity. Attracting investors, said NCT's Chairman, has been difficult for the organization because they must ultimately refer potential partners to the member group ranches, few of which are large or picturesque enough to be viable for tourism. Group ranches, said the Chairman, are often unwilling to negotiate with partners as a group due to longstanding rivalries or conflicts between individual group ranches or their leaders. Recently however, the nine group ranches that make up NCT have agreed to a change in the organization's structure—one that will devolve this conservation alliance into three regional

units composed of three group ranches each. In February 2018, NCT's Chairman said he was optimistic that these smaller units could work together more effectively in courting investors. Each unit was also slated to receive its own grazing manager, improving the chances of NCT's land management programs being enacted.

Wildlife

Though wildlife is undoubtedly an asset to the group ranches when seeking investors or attracting foreign tourists, it is also one of the greatest challenges residents must contend with daily. While population density and a lack of pasture make the group ranches generally unwelcoming to wildlife, elephants are extremely active in the area, especially during dry seasons. As I will explain further in Chapter 2, several group ranches in Laikipia are currently struggling under the scourge of an invasive cactus species called *opuntia stricta*. As drought becomes frequent and elephants struggle to find food on neighbouring ranches, this large species is drawn to the group ranches to feed on the moist fruits of the cactus. As a result, many residents claim they live in a heightened state of fear as elephants encroach closer and more frequently on their homes. Elephants currently claim the lives of over a dozen group ranch residents each year, including young children who are vulnerable to elephants as they walk long distances to school. Kurum, a small settlement to the east of Ol Tome, has been especially impacted by conflict with elephants due to its location between two hills where elephants must pass to access a major river. In 2017, a child died from being trampled by elephants while walking two kilometres from her homestead to Kurum's school, an incident that her teacher claimed has been traumatic for this whole community. "Sometimes we go to sleep without eating," said the teacher, "because we

fear elephants when we leave our houses to go fetch water. Parents must always escort their children to school now. This takes lots of time away from work at home."

Though Ol Tome and other nearby group ranches have served as a migration corridor for elephants for many years, residents claim that elephants now remain in the area for longer periods of times, and that wildlife authorities have done little to mitigate the rise in human-wildlife conflict. Other species like hyenas, leopards, lions and baboons occasionally cause problems on the group ranches by preying on livestock, though the threat of these species pales in comparison to the threat posed by elephants. Though the ranger team operated by NCT frequently track elephant herds and attempt to warn residents when they are around, the size of the area and growing number of elephants makes conflict prevention challenging. Even when the rangers can keep an eye on elephants and warn residents to get out of their way, they are largely helpless in preventing elephants from destroying property. Residents of the group ranches show phenomenal restraint in not harming or antagonizing elephants. This restraint, as residents mentioned, is rooted in people's fear of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS).

Though conservation discourse often describes wildlife protection as a collaborative endeavor, the Kenya Wildlife Service are in fact the sovereign authority over wildlife in Laikipia. Unfortunately, as one women told me in the days after a young man was trampled near her home, "KWS do not care when elephants kill people. Their job is to protect elephants from us." Throughout my time in the area, as elephants claimed lives on roughly a monthly basis, I often asked witnesses to these unfortunate events if and how KWS had handled the situation. One man explained that when a neighbour of his had been trampled by an elephant some months before, KWS were called within the hour, at which point the victim had already died. Officers

did not arrive at the scene for a further four hours, at which point they simply documented the geographic coordinates of the attack, and left.

Though many people on Ol Tome recognize there is little KWS can do once an elephant attack has occurred, people are often reluctant to call them to begin with due to deeper tensions between wildlife officers and residents. Maintaining no regular presence on the group ranch except for when called to respond to an issue, KWS do have a series of camps and outposts nearby in Orghissi. As several of KWS's bush camps are within trekking distance of Ol Tome commercial centre, officers routinely absent themselves from their duties to shop for supplies and, often, to drink alcohol. Technically on duty, KWS officers come to Ol Tome town in uniform and carrying powerful automatic weapons. Shopkeepers in the town often expressed fear and frustration with these officers, who often became intoxicated, harassed local women, and consumed food or alcohol without payment. On one occasion, I witnessed a KWS officer threaten the life of a local shopkeeper. On another, I myself was intimidated by a group of wildlife officers into driving them to their camp at Orghissi. When I returned, friends in town claimed they had been fearful when seeing me drive off with KWS officers, claiming "those guys can do whatever they want to you—kill you…and they will make sure no one ever finds your body…" Though I believe that my friends were being dramatic in this instance and that I was in no imminent danger from these men, the situation demonstrated that Ol Tome residents hold very little trust in KWS.

In addition to the fact most officers were young and possessed an aggressive mentality, Ol Tome residents complained that the KWS officers they dealt with were frequently from ethnic groups that they perceived to have their own problematic histories with wildlife. "If you go to Kikuyu areas," said one man, "you will not find any wildlife there. Kikuyus killed or displaced

all the wildlife from their places years ago. Now, their sons have been given jobs in the government to protect wildlife. If anyone should protect wildlife it is us!" As pastoral lifestyles are accommodating of wildlife so long as land pressures are not too intense, Ol Tome residents are understandably indignant at being treated as threats to wildlife populations.

Conclusion

While Ol Tome Group Ranch is an impoverished community with little infrastructure and weak access to services, I have begun conveying the ways this community is nevertheless connected to the world. As I have explained, demographic pressures have led Ol Tome towards predicaments; challenges to pastoralism spell the need to create jobs, but conservation and tourism require long-term investments. In focusing on the social relationships needed for successful conservation in this region, this study moves beyond scrutinizing conservation on economic terms only. In Laikipia, conservation is economically productive; it is in this productivity that alienation happens. In some scenarios, alienation between communities and partners appears rooted in competing notions of value, or in incongruous sets of expectations about how value is created and measured. On Kijabe, for example, where leaders are unhappy that more community members are not employed by Ol Lentille, partners disagree on how the different benefit-generating aspects of this enterprise are prioritized. Though Ol Lentille's management have told group ranch leaders that the enterprise will fail if it employs only residents, the promise of employment for group ranch residents is the leading reason Kijabe entered into this agreement to begin with.

In discussing how Ol Tome is connected to the world by conservation discourse and newfangled markets, I am also not suggesting that this community would otherwise live in

economic isolation or lack broader consciousness. Engaging in cash-producing ventures has been of interest to Ol Tome and other group ranches across Kenya for decades, and the livestock economies pastoralists engage in are highly consequential for Kenya's national economy. But as the promotion of conservation in Laikipia occurs through logics that are firmly neoliberal, Kenya's government, its citizens, and people worldwide expect pastoral people to understand its benefits. Naturally, some pastoralists (and Kenyans in general) do not accept the promises of conservation at face value, but group ranch residents have had few opportunities to voice their concerns beyond the borders of their land. As Maasai in Laikipia have recently been connected to the world via Facebook and other social media, the spaces in which the future of this community can be debated have begun to grow. The 'politics of conservation', as I call it in this thesis, is a social process, not a firm configuration. The politics of conservation refers to how people of diverse positions debate the role that conservation will play in their own futures. At times, however, residents of group ranches like Ol Tome cannot participate freely in this debate. Intermediaries must sometimes speak for them; the next chapter of this thesis explains why that is.

Chapter 2: Corruption, cacti, and paths of least resistance: the case of a conservation pilot project.

When I first arrived on Ol Tome Group Ranch in August of 2015, Laikipia North was in the midst of a prolonged drought. With many residents forced to seek pasture for their livestock on neighbouring lands, the animal population on Ol Tome was reduced to elephants, baboons, and goats that fed off a fruit-bearing cactus called *opuntia stricta*, often known as 'prickly pear'. Native to the southwestern United States and imported to Laikipia by colonial officers in the mid-twentieth century, opuntia thrives in arid conditions and dominates the landscape throughout Ol Tome and several neighbouring group ranches (Strum et al. 2015).

Observing its deep green pads, bright yellow flowers, and glowing purple fruits, my initial reaction to the cactus was to remark upon its beauty. My host at Ol Tome, a young man named Nalio who worked part time for a conservation organization, informed me that the fruits of the cactus were edible and offered to harvest one for me to eat. Using a small handful of dried grass as an improvised glove, Nalio carefully plucked one shallot-shaped fruit from a cactus that stood at waist height. With his other hand, he fetched a small stick, and used it to scrape away at the surface of the fruit as he rotated it gently between his fingers. The reason for Nalio's caution escaped me, as the fruit looked benign. He handed me the fruit, and I sucked the moist insides through a hole Nalio had sliced in its top; I was amazed at how much water the fruit retained in this dry environment. I discarded the sticky skin of the fruit and Nalio and I went about other business, but within minutes, my hands were aggravated by an invisible itch. When I confessed to Nalio that my hands had been stricken by a mysterious irritant, he replied "Aha! You are beginning to learn of the many problems opuntia has caused us!"

During my year of fieldwork on Ol Tome and neighbouring group ranches, I learned of the many challenges that this invasive cactus was causing Maasai residents. Injuring livestock, hoarding precious water, and attracting elephants close to human settlements, opuntia was described by residents as a "terrorist" or the "al Shabaab of the Maasai." With the cactus serving as an increasingly attractive dry season food source for elephants, incidents of human-elephant conflict are on the rise, claiming the lives of several dozen residents each year. As the cactus also injures or kills the livestock group ranch residents rely on to subsist, *opuntia stricta* is regarded by many pastoralists as a leading threat to their future in Laikipia.

Though opuntia, like many challenges facing Laikipia's group ranches, has mostly been ignored by Kenyan authorities, the fact that it has catalyzed human-wildlife conflict has garnered it attention from conservation groups. In 2016, a US-based conservation organization called Tutapanda launched a pilot project to manually uproot the cactus from heavily infested areas on Ol Tome and neighbouring group ranches.[14] This effort was initially well-received by group ranch leaders because of the wages it would pay to residents. Group ranch leaders also considered manual removal preferable to the use of pesticides. Much to the disappointment of Ol Tome residents, however, the cactus removal project was soon mired in problems stemming from the actions of one elite man. Interference, corruption, or 'capture' by elites is often cited as a reason that community-based conservation projects in Kenya fail (Thompson and Homewood 2002); many residents of Ol Tome speak openly about the challenges that these trends have caused for their relationships with partners. A man I call Simon, with a strong education and a history of donor involvement in Laikipia, gained a leadership role in Tutapanda's project and appeared to undermine it for personal gain.

[14] Tutapanda, like most organizations in this thesis, is not the real name of this conservation group. Several details about this organization have been altered or withheld to prevent its identification.

Following Ol Tome's Chairman, named Wilfred, as he mobilized residents for this land care project, this chapter elucidates both the linkages and the disconnections that form some relationships between Maasai and their partners. As implementing conservation projects in pastoral communities can be logistically and politically challenging, some partners will vest significant managerial responsibilities for community projects in figures whom they trust. I will explain that relying on charismatic allies is advantageous and oftentimes necessary for foreign partners, though dangers can arise when one person's image comes to represent a community writ large. In this chapter, I call attention to the people and events that the 'global imaginary' of conservation can exclude—people without the language, technology, or social capital to represent themselves to partners on their own terms. In the process, I also show that conservation actors face their own barriers to engaging with stakeholders. They may lack knowledge of partner communities because they lack the time and resources to obtain it. Much as ecological challenges have allowed invasive cacti to spread in Laikipia North unabated, conservation partnerships hinging upon images have helped corruption propagate on Ol Tome.

History of opuntia

Native to arid regions of the southwestern United States, *opuntia stricta* was first brought to Laikipia in the early 1950s by members of Britain's colonial administration. Though some residents of the area believe opuntia was brought as a food crop or for beautification, the overwhelming consensus is that the cactus was used to build a fence around the home of a British administrator in the town of Dol Dol, not far from Ol Tome. Opuntia's usefulness as a fencing material is apparent in how aggressively the cactus spreads. The cactus pads, which cling together on small nodular anchorages, can easily be knocked loose by a passing animal or a brisk

wind. On desiccated ground, it takes a cactus pad only a few days to re-anchor itself. Small white roots erupt from its pores and jut firmly into the earth. Within a week's time the skyward facing nodes that once produced thorns will sprout an infant pad, which within a month's time will produce pads of its own.

As suggested by my own difficult experience in eating opuntia fruits, the cactus has nutritional value for some species, but can cause serious injury to others. Though elephants and baboons are able to consume opuntia fruits safely, cattle, sheep and goats are vulnerable to the small thorns found on their surface. For sheep and goats, foraging on the cactus often results in thorns being embedded in their eyes, ears and noses. The thorns cause infection, often preventing livestock from feeding resulting in death. Large amount of opuntia fruits can also be lethal when consumed by cows. As ruminants, who regurgitate food from their stomachs into their mouths for chewing, cows can become terminally ill when opuntia thorns are caught in their digestive tract. Livestock owners explained that keeping their animals from consuming opuntia is near impossible given its density and the lack of other food sources during times of drought.

Precisely how the cactus has become so proliferative in the group ranches of Laikipia is a contentious subject. The fact that elephants and baboons spread the cactus is evident in the abundance of cactus seeds in their dung, though birds, livestock, and humans have played a role in its dispersal too. Though many group ranch residents cite elephants and birds as the main propagators of the cactus, some of the households now affected most severely by the cactus deliberately transplanted it near their homes decades ago to be used in fencing, just as group ranch residents had seen the British do. Gabriel, my assistant who conducted a study on opuntia while in university, explained that many residents are reluctant to admit that their actions might have contributed to its spread. As conservationists and environmental authorities in Kenya tend

to blame pastoralists for ecological problems, emphasizing the role of wildlife in the cactus crisis is the community's best chance at prompting a response.

While Kenya's Government have so far failed to aid the group ranches in resolving the opuntia crisis, some owners and managers of ranches nearby recognize that the cactus, left unabated, poses a long-term threat to the region. Ambivalent as ranch owners sometimes are about the livelihood challenges facing Maasai neighbours, hardships in the group ranches invariably lead to larger ranches facing requests for pasture or other forms of assistance. By the late 1990s, several ranches including Orghissi had commissioned studies on the cactus, which had made small appearances within their own fence-line. Scientists recommended attacking the cactus using a beetle called cochineal. A parasitic insect that feeds on opuntia in its native habitat, cochineal could help curb the spread of the cactus and was cost effective to deploy. With the support of the Ewaso Baboon Project and several conservation NGOs, Orghissi provided Ol Tome and several other group ranches with cochineal 'kits'—small colonies of beetles housed in plastic buckets and nourished with food wastes. Proponents intended for the group ranches to appoint individuals as caretakers of the colonies, and to introduce the beetles onto the cactus in designated sites over the space of several years.

Unfortunately, efforts to curb the spread of opuntia using cochineal soon encountered problems. Group ranchers recalled that people were expected to donate their time and labour to the effort, and that some group ranch leaders accepted the kits without receiving thorough instructions. One conservationist who supported the program blamed its failure on the unwillingness of Maasai to commit themselves to a long-term goal. "People saw more value in an empty plastic bucket than in the chance of actually solving the opuntia problem for good," they said. Though residents agreed that efforts to combat the cactus using cochineal had fallen

short, many people claimed that cochineal was an insufficient answer to a problem of such tremendous scale. Several participants also testified that they feared the use of cochineal because of the potential ecological side-effects.

Figure 7: New pads emerge from a piece of *opuntia stricta* scattered on bare ground on Ol Tome Group Ranch, 2016. Photo by the author.

By the 2000s, as efforts to kill opuntia using cochineal continued in fits and starts, the African Wildlife Foundation launched a project to help women on Ol Tome establish a series of new livelihood initiatives. In addition to beekeeping, permaculture farming, and a small eco-tourism business, the resources were offered for women on Ol Tome to turn opuntia fruits into

commercial food products like jams and juices. Though the fruits of opuntia are injurious when eaten without care, when properly refined, they are as palatable as other fruits, and are potentially attractive to foreign tourists. Rather than chasing the seemingly futile goal of ridding the group ranches of opuntia entirely, AWF and other partners hoped that this pest could help women generate much needed income. Like with Ol Lentille—the tourism partnership AWF initiated between an investor and Kijabe Group Ranch—the livelihood project for women at Ol Tome hinged on an allotment of land where residents would be barred from grazing livestock. Allowing grass and other vegetation to regenerate was crucial for attracting tourists, said partners, and would demonstrate for residents that land can regenerate if managed carefully for a few years. AWF proposed that the opuntia refinement project be housed on the four-acre site—another attraction that tourists could visit and purchase opuntia products to take home.

While the prospect of new income source for women garnered support from neighbours like Orghissi, enclosing valued land for use only by women soon spurred resentment among male leaders. Nalio, the resident of Ol Tome who acted as my host in my early stages of fieldwork, first gained his job with a conservation group when he was hired to help negotiate with elders for the land parcel. Nalio said that male leaders had been hesitant to grant women exclusive use of a large piece of land, fearful that conservation organizations were trying to "grab" the land out from under them. A staff member of an organization called Global Wildlife Partnerships—which I will discuss at greater length in chapter four—claimed that men's hesitance to embrace the project was merely a symptom of the patriarchal social structures common in many pastoral communities in Kenya.

Though some men in the community may have been reluctant to embrace any initiative for empowering women, Nalio claimed the idea of turning opuntia into food products was

especially ill-received. Suffering from the damage that the invasive cactus was causing their livestock, male leaders feared that harnessing the plant for profit would risk turning the group ranch into a 'cactus farm'. Even women who were slated to benefit from the initiative claimed they were skeptical. "The money from selling juice is very small," said one female elder named Jennifer. "You cannot compare juice to something like this." As the opuntia refinement project was the sticking point in a proposal that had otherwise gained the needed approval, AWF scrapped the opuntia effort, and the cactus continued to spread unabated.

Figure 8: Elephant dung on Ol Tome Group Ranch exhibiting consumption of opuntia fruits. Photo by the author.

Donor discords

In the fall of 2015, as I became more acquainted with the challenges opuntia was causing Ol Tome, Nalio invited me to shadow him in a meeting of the donors who supported the entity called the Naibunga Conservancy Trust (NCT). As mentioned, NCT is essentially a satellite organization of the Northern Rangelands Trust, who train and pay the salaries of NCT staff and provide oversight on all their operations. Hosted in Nanyuki by the Laikipia Wildlife Forum, an association of large ranches and conservancies in the county, the meeting was intended to discuss a series of issues threatening the relationships between NCT and their donors. The meeting included representatives from the African Wildlife Foundation, the Northern Rangelands Trust, Ol Lentille, and the managers of several of Laikipia's largest ranches, as well as a representative from a US-based conservation organization called Tutapanda. The meeting commenced with attendees being asked to list the contributions they or their organizations had made to the group ranches who formed NCT in the previous three years. Attendees listed figures in the millions of shillings, and infrastructures like water pumps, solar panels, sports team uniforms, and computers for schools. Tutapanda's representative told the meeting that his organization did not have any inputs to report, but that they were currently in talks with local leaders about devising a plan to deal with opuntia.

After the various partners laid out what resources they had contributed to NCT over recent years, LWF's Executive Director (ED), who chaired the meeting, proffered that these resources had largely gone to waste. He explained that he was concerned that NCT's Treasurer, a man I refer to here as Simon, had been mismanaging the organization's funds and suggested that their donors mount a tough, united response. In speaking with the attendees of this meeting and residents of Ol Tome Group Ranch, I later heard that Simon's history of mismanaging donor

projects stretched back to the 1980s. Educated, charismatic and seemingly magnetic for donors interested in making inroads in the area, Simon had succeeded in positioning himself as a gatekeeper to several group ranches, including Ol Tome. When the meeting's chair raised Simon's name and suggested he was to blame for most of NCT's problems, one ranch manager exclaimed "its true! But good luck trying to get rid of him."

When the meeting paused for tea, I approached the ranch manager who had expressed frustration with Simon, and he recounted for me some of the challenges he had experienced with the man over decades. The manager claimed he once received funds from foreign donors to build a school in a group ranch near Ol Tome. Simon, as one of few educated people in the area, was chosen by the community as the school's inaugural Chairman, and was therefore responsible for overseeing the institution's construction. The ranch manager claimed that ground was never in fact broken on the school project, as Simon absconded with the project's money and told group ranch leaders that the donors had reneged. In the early 2000s, the same rancher helped Simon's group ranch develop a tourist lodge on the banks of their local river, which experienced a few years of success with a steady supply of patrons from a British Army training centre nearby. But as the Maasai women who staffed the business often struggled to communicate with guests, the rancher claimed that Simon would present himself at the lodge and offer to help facilitate communication. He alleged that Simon would collect payment from the guests, then disappear from the group ranch for a period of several weeks. With the loss of lodge income leaving staff unpaid and unable to maintain the facility, this community-owned enterprise soon collapsed, and the partners that had funded it were exasperated.

Once Simon's trust among European ranchers in Laikipia had eroded in the mid 2000s,

Nalio claimed that the man turned his sights on forging relationships with donors from abroad. The founder of Tutapanda, an American philanthropist named Philip Leary, met Simon on a visit to Laikipia in the mid 2000s and the two men, said Nalio, formed a close friendship. In subsequent years, Simon has acted as Leary's go-to man for several small-scale donor projects in Laikipia, most notably the purchasing of a brick making machine for the fledgling women's centre at Ol Tome. To purchase the machine, Leary allegedly wired 15,000 US dollars directly to Simon, who was responsible for purchasing the equipment in Nairobi and having it delivered to the women's centre. Constance, a Maasai woman and leader at the centre (whom I profile in greater detail later) confirmed they had been promised a brick-making machine, but assumed that Simon had kept the donor's money. As cell phones and internet remained inaccessible to group ranch residents in the mid 2000s, Constance said she had no way to contact the donor or to try to take recourse against Simon. The man would occasionally pass Ol Tome when donors or political dignitaries visited, but he otherwise avoided this area of Laikipia because, Constance said, "he had stolen from everyone."

Despite having crossed enough group ranch residents that he could barely show himself in Laikipia North, in 2012, Simon succeeded in securing a position as Treasurer of NCT. Simon's history of mismanagement was well known to members of NCT's board, Constance said, but Simon likely pledged to pay these leaders off if they granted him control over the group's coffers. But most of all, as Simon's ability to forge relationships with donors had been tested, his past indiscretions were seemingly overlooked in favour of the benefits he might bring in the future. Though it was technically the job of the Chairman, not the Treasurer, to build new links between the group ranches and donors, Simon's education, charisma, and experience made him appear as an asset to this body that needed badly to attract foreign funding.

By 2015, at which time Simon had overseen NCT's accounts for several years, the community-based conservancy, warned its partners, was on the verge of complete collapse. LWF's ED proclaimed in the meeting that a "culture of corruption" had taken hold in NCT, and noted that little land management was happening despite the resources being given for that purpose. Partners at the meeting were happy, like group ranchers, that NCT's security staff were proving effective, though Simon's mismanagement of resources intended for the ranger team threatened to undermine these gains, as well. When speaking with members of NCT's ranger team in 2015, I heard that millions of shillings in equipment had recently gone missing under Simon's watch. One donor, said the rangers, provided NCT with radios and night vision equipment for the team, which Simon had been charged with collecting at the post office in Nanyuki. Rather than delivering the equipment to NCT's headquarters in the group ranches, Simon allegedly hid the equipment, told the rangers it was damaged, and attempted to sell it. The rangers claimed they only received their equipment after a senior officer on the team threatened to summon the police to Simon's home.

After thirty minutes of NCT's donors exchanging similar stories and concerns about this man, LWF's ED urged donors to consider pulling all funding from this land management body. A halt to all non-essential funding was needed, said the ED, "to show local leaders that this behaviour can't go on." He pointed out that the salaries of NCT's ranger team and other staff would not be affected, as these were paid directly by NRT. Several meeting attendees, including the manager whose problems with Simon stretched back several decades, agreed that pulling funding from NCT would force the group ranches "to get their leadership situation sorted out." The Chairman of the Ol Lentille enterprise, however, claimed that pulling any funding from NCT was untenable, as, unlike the ranches, the enterprise he represented was situated on group

ranch land. “Our investor would completely understand the frustration you are feeling with local leadership,” said the Chairman, “but if we were to pull any funding to Kijabe, we could be driven from the place in no time.” Tutapanda, meanwhile, did not have a firm funding arrangement with NCT, and their envoy, a retired a US Forest Service employee, said almost nothing throughout the whole meeting. As the summit ended, with attendees pledging to consider the best way to hold Simon accountable, Tutapanda’s representative apologized for speaking little and explained he was struggling to overcome jet lag. He looked forward, however, to visiting the group ranches in the coming days, and he reiterated that he would be meeting with leaders to try and devise a solution to the opuntia problem.

Politics unearthed

Several months later, having heard little news out of NCT’s headquarters, I learned that a large-scale opuntia removal project would begin the following Monday on Ol Tome and several neighbouring group ranches. Wilfred, the young and recently elected Chairman of Ol Tome Group Ranch, told me the cactus crisis had made a strong impression on Tutapanda’s envoy that fall.

Wilfred said that funding would be provided for a 90-day pilot project, in which large amounts of cactus would be dug up using teams of hired laborers. The Chairman of each participating group ranch was asked to appoint a team of twenty people. Each team would work for a period of ten days, collect their wages, and another team would take over. Each team would be evenly composed of men and women, and would remove the cactus from some of the most infested areas of the group ranch. After 90 days, the success of the project would be evaluated, and

Tutapanda would consider initiating more funding to expand the project throughout the entire group ranch.

Away from the group ranch for the beginning of the week, I arrived on Wednesday anxious to hear how the project was going. As I entered Ol Tome town centre, I saw Wilfred sitting alone on some rocks, looking despondent. The week before, Wilfred had been enthusiastic about Tutapanda's opuntia removal project. He was glad people would be compensated for their labour and that the effort "seemed more about action than talk." When I joined him by the rocks, Wilfred told me that hundreds of people had lined up at his office on Monday eager for a chance to help in the project. They were attracted by the prospect of wages, but also wanted to see cactus eliminated for good.

Despite his community's initial enthusiasm for the project, Wilfred claimed that the work teams were already experiencing serious challenges. The tools that Tutapanda had provided, he explained, had begun to fall apart within the first hours of work. The handles of shovels and rakes were all broken, and the wheelbarrows the donor had provided had broken, in many cases, before arriving at the work sites. With a hardware market dominated by inexpensive Chinese-made products, acquiring good quality tools in Kenya is always challenging. I mention this to Wilfred, who responded that he understood, but said that the tools that had been provided for this project were uniquely inferior. Despite equipment problems, the Ol Tome team had managed to clear a significant amount of cactus in just a few days. The other problem they were now facing, said Wilfred, was how to dispose of the large cactus heaps. Wilfred said Tutapanda had provided no guidelines for how to dispose of the uprooted cactus, and that the group's coordinator had informed him that the tools were no longer Tutapanda's responsibility. Disappointed, I asked

Wilfred the name of Tutapanda's coordinator. I was surprised when Wilfred revealed the coordinator was Simon.

Following the meeting in Nanyuki months ago in which many partners had voiced their frustrations with Simon's actions as NCT's Treasurer, the Northern Rangelands Trust—NCT's parent body—ordered an audit of the conservancy's finances. The fact that NCT was nominally a community-led organization prevented NRT from dismissing Simon outright; however, NRT was free to present NCT's board with unassailable evidence of Simon's corruption and urge them to act. The audit was completed in early 2016, within a few months of the donor summit; it revealed that Simon and NCT's Chairman had embezzled millions of shillings from the organization's coffers. Wilfred claimed that he and other group ranch leaders had been shown a copy of the audit report by NRT in February, but this parent body did not make copies of the audit report public. Simon resigned as Treasurer of NCT soon thereafter. The resignation happened quietly, Wilfred said, so as not to bring shame on Simon and his family. Not only had news of his resignation from NCT managed to elude me, but it had also appeared to have eluded the attention of Tutapanda. Though Tutapanda's representative at the fall meeting had the chance to be privy to concerns about Simon, Tutapanda nevertheless enrolled him to act as the coordinator for their opuntia clearing project. Though some NCT partners might have hoped that Simon's resignation marked the end of his involvement in donor efforts, it in fact freed him up to assume a new position with an international conservation group.

Not only did Wilfred believe the damaged tools were a sign that Tutapanda's funding was being mismanaged, but he claimed that Simon had warned him and other leaders not to attract negative attention to the project. Wilfred claimed that Simon told group ranch chairmen that Tutapanda "does not want to the deal with local politics," and that any communication with the

donor had to be carried out by Simon. Furthermore, Simon allegedly told Wilfred and other chairmen about his close relationship with Tutapanda's leader, and warned them that funding for the project would be pulled if the participants showed signs of disagreement. Though Wilfred believed this was a ploy by Simon to consolidate his power over project resources, he pointed out that he had no way to voice grievances to Tutapanda, even if he wanted to. Though Wilfred owned a cell phone, he did not have the number of Tutapanda's office in Nairobi, and without a computer he had no way to access further information about this group or their governance structure.

As the biggest challenge facing the work teams was gathering the uprooted cactus into piles, Wilfred and I visited a metals shops in Nanyuki to see about having the wheelbarrows repaired. A tradesman at the shop, shown photos of the wheelbarrows, judged most of them to be beyond fixing, and claimed that they appeared to be of very poor construction. The tradesman told Wilfred he had done construction work in Laikipia North several years before, and that he had been successful in moving construction waste by piling it on cow skins and dragging it across the ground. As cow skins were widely accessible on Ol Tome, and much cheaper than new wheelbarrows, the tradesmen suggested that Wilfred use this more traditional method for moving the waste. Wilfred conceded that the man's suggestion might work, but claimed it was unfair to have to use such methods when their donor had promised them modern tools. "It is true," said Wilfred, "that Maasai people have used skins in this way for many years, but Tutapanda has paid for this equipment. It is unfair to us to work with any less."

A few weeks later, once the tools had all broken and most of the clearing teams were sent home, I agreed to Wilfred's request to send an email on his behalf to Tutapanda's Director in Nairobi. A young American who had only assumed his job in the last two months, the Director

had yet not visited Laikipia to see the clearing efforts for himself. Tutapanda, said the Director, was currently transitioning to a new operating structure in Kenya. This explained the fact that Tutapanda had been represented in the fall meeting by a staff member flown over from the United States and not, more practically, someone from in-country. The email I sent on Wilfred's behalf outlined the challenges the team were experiencing with equipment, and that group ranch leaders were awaiting word about how to dispose of the cactus waste. In response, Tutapanda's Director confessed to know little about the opuntia clearing project taking place in Laikipia. He knew the project was being handled by a man named Simon, but said he knew little about this man's role. The email I sent had encouraged Tutapanda's Director to visit the group ranches in person, or to communicate directly with NCT or group ranch leaders such as Wilfred. The Director explained that, regrettably, he would not be able to visit the group ranches anytime soon. The following week, Kenya would host a large ceremonial ivory burning, accompanied by a series of conservation summits that he must attend.[15] After that, the Director would be returning to the USA for a month of leave. He pledged he would speak to his superiors in Washington DC about finding more funding for the opuntia project.

Working on solutions

The removal team on Ol Tome continued to work for another week despite the poor quality of their tools. The heaps of uprooted cactus had grown large, with no clear strategy for how to dispose of them. Though group ranch chairmen did receive funds from Simon to pay the first round of laborers, Wilfred chose to halt the work so as not to risk indebting himself to a second team he might never be able to pay. For months, neither Wilfred or other group ranch

[15] See: https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160430-kenya-record-breaking-ivory-burn/

chairmen heard a word from Tutapanda. Wilfred's attempts to reach Simon were also unfruitful, as Simon normally resided in Nanyuki and would not answer his phone when group ranch Chairmen called.

By June, Tutapanda's Director had returned to Kenya, and came to Laikipia to put the opuntia clearing project back on track. Wilfred received an unexpected phone call late on a Sunday evening, asking if he and other group ranch Chairmen would come to Nanyuki to meet with the Director in person. Wilfred attended along with other group ranch leaders, as well as NCT's new Chairman, named Mamai. The group, said Mamai, explained their grievances to the American, who had since received more information about Simon by consulting other conservation organizations working in Laikipia.

Though Mamai, Wilfred, and other leaders in the meeting recommended that Simon be removed from the project, Tutapanda's Director explained that Simon would be kept on, albeit in a strictly symbolic role. The Director, said Mamai, seemed as frustrated as they that Simon would remain involved in the project. According to Mamai, Tutapanda's Director had uncovered more corruption by Simon in only recent days. As Simon's new role with Tutapanda came about only weeks after his resignation from NCT, he had not been formally removed, Mamai said, as a signatory on NCT's bank accounts. When NCT's new Treasurer met with Simon in Nanyuki months before to have Simon's signing rights transferred over, Simon convinced the new Treasurer that Tutapanda had demanded that Simon remain a signatory. According to Mamai, Simon told the new Treasurer about his close relationship with Tutapanda's founder and claimed the organization did not trust anyone with their money other than him. Threatened with the prospect of losing millions of shillings in funding, NCT's new Treasurer allowed Simon to remain a signatory on the organization's books. As Tutapanda's funding for the cactus-clearing

project was to be channelled through NCT, Tutapanda's accountant wrote cheques out to the group, and sent them to Simon to deliver to NCT. But as Simon had manipulated NCT's new Treasurer into letting him remain a signatory on their accounts, he was free to go to the bank in Nanyuki and cash the cheques without anyone knowing. Thankfully, Mamai said, most of the money was still accounted for by the time the problem was uncovered. Furthermore, Simon had been tasked with providing group ranch Chairmen and NCT staff with copies of Tutapanda's formal project proposal. This document laid out the details of how all money for the opuntia clearing effort would be spent, and specified that NCT, not Simon, would be responsible for managing the project. Mamai claimed that no one in NCT or its member group ranches were aware of this document. Simon had ostensibly concealed this document to safeguard his control over the project.

Figure 9: Members of Ol Tome Group Ranch work to clear *opuntia stricta* as part of a Tutapanda initiative, April 216. Photo by the author.

Despite being found, once again, to have acted with dishonesty and interfered with donor funds, Simon would continue to be the figurehead for Tutapanda's community-based conservation efforts in Laikipia. Wilfred and Mamai were offered no clear explanation as to why Simon would remain involved, but they were assured that he no longer had any access to funds and that he had been told to stay away from the work sites. Simon would continue to represent Tutapanda in formal meetings with NCT. Mamai, from what he gathered, believed this was because of the friendship Simon maintained with Tutapanda's founder.

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Perplexed by the systematic lack of communication I had witnessed among stakeholders in this cactus clearing project, I spoke again with several partners who had voiced concerns about Simon at the meeting in Nanyuki in the fall. Though Laikipia's large ranches certainly bring their own politics to bear on conservation efforts, the ranching community have been vocal about Simon's alleged corruption for several years. The Executive Director of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum looked beleaguered when I raised Simon's name; he explained he had had many discussions about Simon with a range of stakeholders in recent months. He was frustrated, like Wilfred, Mamai and many others, that Simon was still involved in donor activities, and said that the failure to hold Simon accountable for his behaviour with NCT was discouraging.

Analytically, however, the ED was not eager to blame Simon for the difficulties he appeared to cause, as the ED explained that figures like Simon are sometimes a "necessary evil" when working on group ranches. When I asked him what he meant, this middle-aged American, with a long career in development and conservation management, emphasized how challenging it is for NGOs to implement projects in a group ranch setting. Not only must partners gain

permission from a range of official *and* customary authorities, but it is challenging, he said, to disseminate information in a large area inhabited by pastoralists. As leaders, he explained, will criticize projects for not providing satisfactory benefits to group ranches, donors and partners must rely on their allies to help them build the necessary consent or consensus. Though Simon, he explained, had clearly lost some credibility among many group ranch residents in recent years, he was still an effective messenger for organizations looking to make inroads in Laikipia North. Other than the charisma that enabled Simon to form relationships with foreign partners, Simon's greatest asset was his off-road vehicle—a network building tool I myself had come to value. Though cell phones have made group ranch residents more connected to each other and the world than ever before, the ED stressed that a figure who is willing to cover ground building social networks for a project is an asset. Though Simon's loss of trust among group ranch residents had recently made him somewhat of a pariah, the man's global image remained of a figure with privileged access to key Maasai leaders. The ED assured me that many donors know that gatekeepers like Simon skim profits from their budgets, but that "it would simply not be possible for projects to happen" without involvement of people like him. For all the resources Simon is alleged to have misappropriated from donors in the past, the ED said the man was "the path of least resistance" for conservation groups seeking partners in the area.

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With Simon's access to project resources now in check and more funding available for tools and wages, Wilfred and other group ranch Chairmen were free to carry on with the opuntia clearing effort. Wilfred was concerned, however, that he would be unable to mobilize people

now that the effort had lost so much momentum. Together, we visited the clearing site on Ol Tome so Wilfred could consider how to resume the effort.

The large heaps of cactus uprooted months ago continued to fester in the blazing sun. The issue of disposal had been raised with Tutapanda's Director, who admitted that dealing with the cactus once uprooted had not been factored into his organization's initial plan. As we approached the large heap, Wilfred and I were reminded of how long the clearing project had been sitting stagnant. In places, the opuntia had re-rooted in the earth and was beginning to reproduce again. Wilfred showed me to a corner of the pile where, months ago, he had tried to set the cactus on fire using diesel. He explained he had grown frustrated as Simon refused to take his calls about the project, and he resolved to dispose of the cactus himself. He bought a can of diesel, lugged it to the site, poured it on the pile, lit it, and stood by. Despite having sat beneath the sun for weeks, the cactus was still saturated with water. The pile had only smouldered, and where it had been doused, we could see new cactus pads sprouting from the ashes.

Conclusion

Though Tutapanda's cactus clearing initiative was a pilot project and not intended to deliver large outcomes per se, this scenario is illustrative of the alienating effect that conservation efforts can have upon stakeholders. While Tutapanda can be commended for dedicating resources to a problem other partners have been slow to recognize, this organization's relationship with Ol Tome was, for a time, constituted by Simon and the images of consensus and cooperation that he evoked. Perceiving that the opuntia removal project in Laikipia was going as planned, Tutapanda provided Simon the space and the freedom to consolidate his power over project resources. Though Simon, as in other scenarios in recent years, appeared to mine

this project for personal financial gain, he also used knowledge as a form of power by keeping information about the project hidden. Even though Simon's freedom to benefit financially from the opuntia project was rescinded, he may, in the process, have advanced his own image as a harbinger of new global partnerships.

While Tutapanda's Director ultimately made strong efforts to understand and rectify issues with the project, he was only apprised of these challenges after I agreed to help Wilfred communicate with him directly. Tasked with a workload that stretched him from Laikipia to Washington DC, Tutapanda's Director was understandably naive about the political landscape within which the opuntia clearing project was operating. With access to a computer, I could communicate with Tutapanda effectively and help Wilfred to voice his concerns. Ordinarily, an actor with this type of capital might not be present in the context of a partnership, and actors like Simon might succeed in dominating a project's resources for many years. As a 'path of least resistance', Simon's role within the opuntia clearing project was not only to establish a link between new partners—he was needed to maintain the semblance of consensus a community-based project needs to carry forward.

Despite being outed for financial impropriety and withholding information from group ranch leaders, Simon was retained by Tutapanda as the figurehead for their efforts in Laikipia. That Simon would maintain a symbolic role within the project confirmed for Wilfred and Mamai exactly what Simon had told them all along: Tutapanda was not interested in working on Ol Tome unless Simon was involved. Tutapanda's Director, himself an intermediary between the group ranches and the donor world, had the unenviable role of holding Simon accountable while trying to keep the man's image intact. Precisely why Simon remained within the project was never made explicit by Tutapanda. Group ranch leaders believed it was because Simon was

indeed personal friends with Tutapanda's founder, while LWF's ED believed that Simon remained valuable to donors as an inroad to group ranch communities for future projects.

While the challenges encountered in the course of the opuntia clearing effort risked eroding group ranch residents' trust in Tutapanda, the Director's efforts to set the project right may have strengthened this organization's relationship with Ol Tome. "He is very smart and I think very honest," Wilfred told me of Tutapanda's Director following their meeting. "I think he also does not trust [Simon] but he does not have a choice but to work with him." Frustrated as Wilfred was with Simon's actions and the loss of momentum that the project suffered, he was emphatic about the need to do everything possible to maintain good relationships with foreign partners. Though I have characterized Wilfred as powerless at times to hold Simon accountable for his actions, Wilfred effectively used his relationship with me to chart a different path for achieving his own goals. In other contexts, however, actors like Wilfred may never find a way to hold actors like Simon accountable. Elite figures may misappropriate project resources for years while donors overseas remain none the wiser. In such situations, the image of the trusted local ally is reproduced in reports back to donors—consumed, as Igoe (2010: 378) says, "without reference to the relationships and context from which they [are] produced". Wilfred and other leaders were alienated in the course of their involvement in this project insofar as they struggled to represent themselves. Simon cast them as perfunctory and undissenting partners when, in fact, they were upset and asking to be heard.

Chapter 3: Sand and substance: the politics of dependency on Ol Tome Group Ranch.

On April 28, 2016, hundreds of people congregated on the outskirts of Ol Tome town to mark the opening of the new office of Loata, the co-operative association that regulates sand harvesting on Ol Tome and five group ranches nearby. With Laikipia experiencing a boom in construction stemming from investments in tourism and the presence of a British army installation, Ol Tome and other group ranches have become the region's main provider for the clean, fine sand needed to mix concrete. Founded in the mid 1980s to curb illegal sand extraction and channel profits to the community, the Loata Sand Cooperative marked their thirtieth anniversary with the construction of a new office—the most modernized building ever constructed in Ol Tome town. In addition to group ranch leaders, high profile public figures from throughout Laikipia County attended the ceremony. At the podium, Laikipia's Assistant Governor praised the Loata cooperative for committing sand profits to the education of Maasai children, and for helping to free group ranches from dependency on neighbours and "self-serving donors." As sand harvesting in the group ranches has achieved a high level of output and spurred an informal system of profit distribution, Ol Tome and other group ranches have come to see this industry as a sustainable pillar of their future. As Maasai communities have struggled to gain a stake in many aspects of Laikipia's economic success, sand harvesting represents an effective way to earn the cash needed to satisfy a range of modern needs.

Unfortunately, as I found in interacting closely with stakeholders in the Mukogodo sand industry, sand harvesting now poses a threat to the relationship between Ol Tome and its conservation partners. In addition to the negative and highly gendered impacts that sand

harvesting has had on group ranch water sources, profits from this industry have contributed to the popularity of a cheap, leafy stimulant called khat.

Though this appetite-suppressing substance is attractive for people in an often food-deficient community, some of Ol Tome's neighbours see khat as a signal that Maasai are intent on destroying their lands, minds, and bodies for short term gain. While khat use is generally stigmatized in Kenya for its association with criminality and idleness (Carrier 2007), sand harvesting and its informal profit distributions are similarly perceived by conservation actors as exploitative and wasteful. Though Laikipia's governor lauds sand harvesting for its ability to free the group ranches from dependence on donors, sand harvesting and khat consumption work together to form an image of Maasai people that some neighbours find unsettling. As sand harvesters gouge away at the land, leaving tire tracks and damaged rivers in their wake, khat chewing is perceived as its social facsimile—a drain on Ol Tome's limited human capital.

The chapter will begin by explaining the phenomenon of khat chewing on Ol Tome in the context of postcolonial debates about substance use and labor. I will explain how colonial discourse in Africa took a problematic stance regarding intoxication among laborers—stating that intoxication hinders laborers' health, when in fact, it made the workforce less productive and compliant (Ferguson 2015). I will then discuss the sand harvesting industry in Laikipia North and the local organization that regulates it, outlining both the benefits and problems that this industry has generated on Ol Tome Group Ranch. Finally, I will discuss the experience of an investor seeking to build an eco-tourism partnership with Ol Tome, and the role played by images of nature and khat chewing in his relationship with his group ranch neighbours. As this investor sees khat chewing and sand harvesting as conjoined problems that undermine his business, we glean that economies of appearance can have alienating affects for investors, too.

The flag of Ol Tome

In the heat of the day, Ol Tome town is often quiet and near devoid of people. Goats and mongrel dogs nestle against buildings, seeking shelter from the sun that beats oppressively on the town. Amidst the calm, large banana leaves rustle gently in the breeze as they hang from the awnings above the windows of small shops. These banana leaves are a signal to people passing by that the store has received its daily shipment of khat. Khat grows as small, purple, leafy twigs on a short tree called *catha edulis*. The twigs are harvested each morning in the nearby Meru region and wrapped in banana leaves to keep them cool and moist. Loaded into sacks, the khat is driven at breakneck speed to all corners of Kenya. Khat loses potency once it begins to wilt, and is ideally consumed within twenty-four hours of harvest.

As Ol Tome town is less than a three-hour drive from Meru, shipments of khat arrive each day between 10 am and noon. Men are often waiting when the trucks or motorcycles carrying the khat arrive, and gather anxiously in an attempt to catch a first glimpse of the product. The sacks are sometimes unbundled on the hoods of trucks or the seats of bikes. Local men plead with the drivers to cut out the town's merchants and sell the khat directly to them. But the khat trade in Laikipia operates through a robust kinship network. Many shopkeepers on Ol Tome originate from Meru, and maintain connections that ensure them a dependable daily supply of khat. Chewed into a bright green pulp and held within the lips, khat provides users a sense of euphoria, while significantly suppressing appetite and sleep. Kenya is among the few countries in the world where khat is legally grown and sold. Though international policing bodies were for many years unconcerned with khat due to its low potency and market value, its use among the East African diaspora has roused concern in countries like the UK, where authorities banned khat in 2014. Diasporic peoples from khat-producing nations express offence at the international

criminalization of this substance, as people see khat less as an intoxicant as an agricultural product with cultural significance.[16]

Figure 10: A man divides portions of khat to share among his friends, Ol Tome town. Photo by the author.

Group ranch residents say that khat has been available in Laikipia for over a century, but has only become popular in the last two decades. With a large population of unemployed people and few other places to spend the profits of sand, Ol Tome, say shopkeepers, is an ideal place to sell khat, earning them the income to support their children and relatives back in Meru. Alcohol

[16] See: http://theconversation.com/khat-and-its-changing-politics-in-kenya-and-somalia-after-uk-ban-62119

use is a social challenge in many rural communities in Kenya, including Ol Tome, where many men consume alcohol daily and, often, it would appear, to excess. Ol Tome's proximity to Meru, however, makes khat uniquely accessible and cheap. A half-pint of spirits can cost 300 shillings, while a day's worth of khat can cost less than a hundred.

Pushing their way through the crowds of Maasai men congregated around the vehicles delivering the khat, women haul the sacks inside their shops, and bar the doors behind them with a heavy metal clasp. Through the webs of chicken wire covering the shop window, the women barter with the men gathered beneath the awning to scrutinize the product and agree on a price. The women do not pass the khat through the wire until they are sure that the men have the money to pay. For the men, it is not always necessary, however, to examine the khat before deciding whether to buy it. Once the bale of khat has been carried inside and the shopkeeper begins to unwrap it, they reach their arms outside the shop door to hang one of the banana leaves used to pack the khat from the corner of their awning to signal the freshness and quality of their product. At sunset, the shopkeepers lower the withered leaves, and erect fresh new ones each morning. With Ol Tome town known in Laikipia North as a popular marketplace for khat, residents joked that these banana leaves are "the flag of Ol Tome."

I had little interest in trying khat in the early stages of my research, as I had been warned that the substance had a dreadfully bitter taste and that it caused significant sleep disturbance. But over many months of living on Ol Tome and joining residents in their daily routines, I began to see why chewing khat was attractive and sometimes necessary. In addition to the fact that khat was far less expensive than alcohol or other intoxicants, khat's powerful ability to assuage appetite enables it to act as a food supplement. I first used khat on a day spent with group ranch members driving throughout Laikipia North in search of open pastures where their livestock

might find relief from drought. Driving deeper into isolated and undeveloped parts of the county, it became clear I would need to go most of the day with little or no food. Among the male junior elders of Ol Tome, khat was one item that was rarely in short supply. They gifted me a *shroba*—a single portion of khat—and instructed me how to chew it. Soon my hunger subsided.

As taking care of livestock often necessitates that young herders go entire days without food, livestock owners claimed that giving their herders khat was an assurance they would do their jobs effectively. For other men, chewing khat enabled them to relieve food pressures on their households. As an adult man may consume as much food as his children combined, some men claimed that the price of a single *shroba* of khat was less than the cost of eating an actual meal. Maasai women I spoke to in focus groups, however, did not agree that their husbands' khat chewing saved them money. Several women whose husbands chewed khat regularly claimed they had to feed up to five children on only one cabbage and a kilogram of maize flour each day. A doctor working at the hospital on Kijabe claimed many children in the group ranches are malnourished, and that khat chewing causes many health issues in adults, including malnutrition, stomach ulcers, and kidney problems. Notwithstanding these health risks, the appetite suppressing qualities of khat are attractive to some, like young men who herd livestock for a living or work as laborers for the sand industry. Sand diggers claim that khat keeps them energized during lengthy, arduous work days that would otherwise require that they consume many calories.

Though I only chewed khat on the occasions when I felt I needed it to stave off hunger, the act of chewing khat exposed me to some of the social stigmas surrounding this substance and the people who chew it. Maasai women who saw me chewing khat would click their teeth in disapproval, claiming the substance had caused problems for their husbands or sons. Most Ol

Tome residents were surprised in general to see a *mzungu* (European) consume khat, and claimed they assumed all white people abhorred it. Not long after my first exposure to khat, when Nalio and I attended the meeting of NCT donors in Nanyuki, the subject of khat came up in conversation with the Manager of one of Laikipia's largest private ranches. Having made clear several times in the meeting that he was frustrated with the seeming ineffectiveness of group ranch leaders, the man warned me to be careful chewing khat, as it "is a huge reason for so many of the problems around that place."

In numerous interactions with landowners and conservation actors in Laikipia throughout the year, remarks about khat chewing often echoed statements about group ranch residents' ambivalence for natural resource management or entrepreneurialism. One conservationist, for example, claimed he was pleased with the tolerance for elephants Ol Tome residents had shown in recent years, but appended his remark by saying "so long as those jumbos don't try to eat their khat." When I sought clarification, the man claimed that using khat was uniquely hazardous for pastoral peoples, "just like the problems [that] alcohol has caused for native communities in America or Australia." The ranch manager at the meeting specifically stated that khat chewing "goes very well with the pastoralist lifestyle of doing nothing all day expect walking behind your cows." Another time, a biologist working on the group ranches claimed the prevalence of khat use in the group ranches had impacted his ability to hire Maasai as data collectors, as young men often spent their wages on khat and stayed awake too late to report for work in the morning. Though international drug classification indexes place khat amongst the least addictive and physically harmful of substances (Nutt et al 2007), participants on Ol Tome acknowledged that khat has a significant impact on their physical and psychological wellness. Once, when taking a group of Ol Tome residents on a trip to another part of Kenya, my companions soon claimed to

feel tired, irritable, and insatiably hungry. They confessed that these symptoms often manifested in people who were accustomed to using khat daily. This made it difficult, they said, to travel to other regions of Kenya, and even sometimes dissuaded young people from seeking employment outside the group ranches.

Figure 11: Women from Ol Tome gather food rations distributed tri-annually by Kenya's national government. June 2016. Photo by the author.

Frontiers of labour and dependence

To appreciate why khat consumption is disquieting for actors looking to build partnerships with Ol Tome, we must understand the political and personal importance that colonists, missionaries, and other foreigners to Kenya have invested in the notions of labour and independence. An isolated, drought-prone, and conflict-ridden region on the frontier of British imperialism in East Africa, the Laikipia plateau—as present-day group ranch residents confirmed—was a challenging and dangerous place for Europeans to settle. Not only were early ranches in Laikipia isolated from most organs of colonial administration, but ranchers often had to risk their lives to defend land from poachers, bandits, or cattle-rustlers (Fratkin 2015). Today, throughout the country, the white Kenyan community venerate their descendants who settled and thrived in Laikipia despite poor odds (McIntosh 2016; Uusihakala 1999). Though settler farms in Laikipia were heavily bankrolled by the colonial government in their early years (Van Zwanenberg 1975), white Kenyan literature represents the prosperity and beauty of this region as the product of labour and entrepreneurial spirit (Hughes 2011; Huxley 1935).

Of course, the labour that sustained ranches and plantations in colonial Kenya was predominantly African, and Kenya's colonial economy was largely designed to convert African populations into an agricultural workforce (Van Zwanenberg 1975). Maasai and other pastoralists presented a challenge for colonial administrators in that respect, as livestock permitted pastoralists to pay poll taxes without earning wages. As McIntosh (2016) explains, Maasai lifestyles have always been discomfiting to Europeans and some other ethnic groups in Kenya, because they are seen as involving "too little labour and too much movement" (55). According to Ferguson (2015:40), "both the European social democracies and their colonial extensions were built on the putatively universal figure of 'the worker'"—an able-bodied man

who leaves home to perform work and brings a salary back to his family. The continued discomfort some Europeans in Kenya feel with pastoralism as a livelihood is evident in the comments made by the ranch manager who sees livestock keeping as strictly unskilled work.

While colonial regimes and their European subjects were concerned with turning African people into laborers, intoxicants, says Ferguson (2015), played a significant but contradictory role in colonial labour systems. In South Africa, for example, Apartheid authorities publicly denounced the use of alcohol among migrant laborers, and formally encouraged men to save their earnings for their families or for sound investments. Simple though this was, intoxicants also helped to fuel the low wage labour force, which was made up of overworked and demoralized men, often isolated from their homes and families (Comaroff and Comaroff 1987). Similarly, in Kenya, the consumption of intoxicants has fuelled low-wage labour since colonial times (Willis 2002). Though drinking and khat chewing were denounced by British authorities who warned that these behaviours weakened the workforce (Anderson and Carrier 2009), khat use is common in some less-skilled labour groups, including among the men who make a living digging sand from riverbeds in Mukogodo.

Those who have and those who have not

The leader of the Loata cooperative explained that sand harvesting has been taking place in the group ranches since the 1970s. Word spread among contractors throughout Laikipia that the sand in the riverbeds of the group ranches was ideal for mixing concrete, and local leaders were amenable to letting sand be harvested, oftentimes at very little cost. In the early 1990s, Laikipia commenced a period of growth spurred by foreign donorship and investment in the tourism sector. Many hotels and housing estates sprouted up around Nanyuki, often to

accommodate the families of British soldiers stationed at military bases near the town. With a growing number of contractors arriving in the Mukogodo region each day seeking sand, the five group ranches with sand deposits formed an organization to regulate the industry and ensure that residents received a fair share of the profits. The five group ranches harmonized the fees they charged prospectors for a load of sand, and facilitated harvesting by erecting road signs that directed lorries to the best collection sites. The name "Loata," in the Maa language, means "those who have"—chosen to underscore the blessing that sand represented for group ranch communities.

The harvesting of sand from the Sinyai River begins each morning at dawn. Arriving from Nanyuki or other urban centres in the region, lorries stop in Ol Tome town to collect a crew of diggers—required by Loata authorities to be members of the group ranch where the truck will harvest. The names of diggers are maintained on a group ranch roster, ensuring that each willing man has a chance to work. Most sand diggers own their own shovels, often improvised from scrap metal or the remnants of other tools. With the diggers sitting precariously along the railings of the flat bed, the lorry sets out towards the harvesting sites, descending from the town to the river valley on a series of treacherous roads. As the lorry nears the river, signs painted on rocks direct the drivers to the collection points. The trucks lurch violently into the riverbed, and are jockeyed into an optimal loading position with the guidance of the diggers on the ground.

For their labor, each digger is paid 300 shillings per load (approximately three US dollars), not an insignificant sum in this impoverished area. The work, however, is gruelling, as the young men shovel sand throughout the midday heat with basic tools and little food or water. When the loading is finished, the task of extracting the lorry from the bed of the river begins. Two wooden posts are unloaded from the roof of the cab and are jammed under the tires for

traction in the sand. As pushing would be futile, the loaders stand away and watch as the diesel engine struggles, exuding clouds of black exhaust as it claws its way out of the riverbed. Back in Ol Tome's centre, the driver pays the diggers, then continues to a check stop at the south end of town. The driver gives 1,500 shillings to a Loata clerk, and another 1000 to a tax collector from the county. The Loata clerk puts the cash inside an envelope. Every hour the clerk walks up the hill to the Loata office and transfers the collections to the Loata Manager.

In the months following the opening of Loata's new office, I became acquainted with a 35-year old man named Joseph who served as Loata's Manager of daily operations. Joseph was one of five members of Loata's executive committee, consisting of trustees elected from each of the five communities that make up the Loata cooperative. As the only member of the Loata committee required to keep regular business hours at the office, Joseph always appeared pleased at the chance to host me inside the new facility. Every hour, Joseph would receive cash from the clerk who had gathered it from lorry drivers on the roadway. Joseph sometimes placed the cash inside a small safe, but often rolled the bills together and stuffed them in the pocket of his trousers. When I asked Joseph about the cash, he explained candidly that the sand co-op "owed money" to various people around town. The proceeds of certain trucks, he said, belonged to individuals or groups in the community, and that his job as Loata's Manager was to ensure beneficiaries received their royalties as scheduled.

Joseph explained that all trucks that harvest sand from the group ranches have been earmarked for the benefit of certain community members. Whenever a truck comes to a group ranch to harvest sand, its beneficiary is entitled, said Joseph, to one thousand of the 1,500 shillings that Loata collects. Joseph claimed that most adult men in the group ranches have a truck designated for them, if they are listed on the group ranch register. Some trucks are also

earmarked to benefit institutions, such as the local school, the church, or the local sports team. Joseph claimed this distribution system ensured that sand profits reached all members of the community. He claimed that the money Loata retained was spent on administration and to provide education bursaries for local children. All members of Loata group ranches can apply for renewable annual bursaries of 45,000 shillings, enough to cover school fees for one student for a year.

Though Joseph and other leaders of the sand co-operative claimed that Loata provided a social service to the community, some group ranch residents accused Loata of pillaging sand for personal profit. In a series of focus groups conducted with women from Ol Tome and neighbouring group ranches, participants claimed Loata's pledges to support education were intended to distract from corruption in this industry. The women claimed that Loata's education bursaries were allocated mainly to the children of Loata committee members, many of whom attended private schools outside the group ranch. The women also expressed doubts about Loata's effectiveness in regulating sand extraction. They claimed most contractors collected far above their trucks' intended payloads, and that collectors felt that they could exploit the group ranches because Maasai have inferior business skills. The owner of a small ranch close to Ol Tome, who had once allowed sand to be harvested on his land, alleged that Loata's profit distribution system was a "code" that allowed elites to steal profits with impunity. Both the women and the rancher claimed that local men are zealously protective of the sand industry, as they fear that Kenya's environmental or tax authorities will someday shut it down.

Loata's leadership committee is composed of five trustees representing the five participating group ranches. Loata's leaders claim these trustees are elected democratically by their group ranches, though I could not identify anyone on Ol Tome who claimed to have

participated directly in the election of a Loata trustee. Among themselves, the five trustees are arranged into the roles of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, Manager, and Clerk. The Chairman is the most senior and ostensibly the eldest member of the committee, with the lower ranking and time-demanding jobs going to the committee's youngest or newest members. Loata's charter claims each group ranch may replace their trustee every three years, though the current Chairman stated that he had been a member of the Loata committee since the 1990s. Though the Loata Sand Cooperative maintains a written charter outlining their responsibility to member group ranches, focus group participants claimed that most tenets of this document were systematically ignored. Loata's charter, Joseph told me, had been drafted in English and had not been translated into other languages. Most group ranch residents could not read the document given low levels of English literacy, especially among women.

Women were especially untrusting of the profit distribution system that Loata had developed. Years ago, Loata announced that they had allocated trucks to all group ranch members, but most people were not informed of the tag number of their truck and had no way of monitoring the distribution system. Members of a local women's lending cooperative acknowledged that a truck had been designated for them, but that they had not received money in over a year and Loata's leaders had told them that their sand truck had gone out of business. In the meantime, many junior elders and older men in the community were receiving cash payments several times a week. Women also complained that their sons were discouraged from attending school, preferring instead to work as sand diggers or receive handouts from friends who received royalties. Moreover, women claimed that their husbands, sons, or brothers often spent their earnings on khat rather than assisting their families or saving for education.

Figure 12: “The flag of Ol Tome”—banana leaves used to wrap fresh khat hang outside a shop window in Ol Tome town, February 2018. Photo by the author.

But in fact, women's most pressing concern with sand harvesting in the group ranches was the fact that it undermined their access to water. The Sinyai, a seasonal river with several tributaries that flow through Ol Tome from the Mukogodo Hills, has been the primary water source for residents in this area for centuries. Though the river is dry the majority of the year—increasingly the case with rising climate change—water can be harvested from the river year-round by digging small wells in its sandy surface. Acting as an aquifer, the river's deep sands hold millions of gallons of water. The fine sand also acts as a filter, making the water that collects within the small wells safe for human consumption. On Ol Tome, as with many other pastoral communities in Kenya, water collection is among the most gendered of tasks. As my own living situation on Ol Tome necessitated that I collect my own water, male friends and associates rarely missed the chance to remark that I was doing "the work of a woman."

Though collecting water under ideal conditions is a manageable task for most local women, many claimed that sand harvesting was making it more difficult for them to collect water from the river. With the large beds of sand that line the Sinyai being steadily gouged down to rock and clay, women claimed they must now venture farther down river away from the sand collection points. In addition to lengthening the distance that women must carry their heavy water cans, women are vulnerable to attacks by elephants in more isolated areas of the river. In the past, water collectors have avoided certain low-lying areas of the river where wildlife congregate, but they are now being forced closer to these areas as sand harvesting pushes them farther downstream. When asked about this challenge, Loata's Chairman claimed that sand harvesting has no impact on women's ability to gather water, asserting that most residents prefer to use the borehole in the town centre, anyway.

To be sure, collecting water from the diesel-powered borehole in Ol Tome town is much more convenient for many families. The Ol Tome borehole was constructed in the 1990s by Orghissi as a charitable gesture. Though Orghissi will dispatch a repairman to fix the borehole pump whenever it malfunctions, the community is responsible for fueling the pump, requiring anyone collecting water to pay a fee. While the price is low, it is a major barrier for families with no access to cash incomes. Women claimed that their husbands often refused to give them cash for water, telling them to collect water from the river instead. Women also claimed that the water pumped by the borehole is salty and unsuited for human consumption. Many women said their children often become ill from drinking the water, but that they often allow them to drink it as collecting water from the river is now too challenging.

Figure 13: A digging crew prepares to harvest sand in the bed of the Sinyai River, Ol Tome Group Ranch, June 2016. Photo by the author.

Siphoning sand

One of the most impactful non-governmental organizations working in Laikipia North is the Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF), an association representing the county's largest landowners, many of them foreign or of settler backgrounds. Founded in the early 1990s to help landowners coordinate conservation efforts across the region, the Laikipia Wildlife Forum's mandate includes supporting communities in developing or maintaining crucial water sources. As demonstrated in the previous chapter—wherein LWF gathered NCT's partners together for a summit—this organization's mandate also involves managing relationships between investors, conservationists, landowners, and Laikipia's group ranch populations. Speaking with me at the LWF's offices on the outskirts of Nanyuki, the group's Executive Director was pleased to hear that a researcher was studying the sand industry, but was doubtful I could learn much about it. Disappointed at what he saw as the "pillaging" of the community's natural resources, he referred to Loata co-op as a "cartel" that group ranchers were powerless to challenge.

The ED explained that LWF and the landowners it represents are greatly frustrated with the sand harvesting industry in Mukogodo. Not only did he fear that Loata's leaders were not distributing sand profits fairly, but he alleged that Loata were undermining LWF's efforts to conserve water sources in the group ranches. According to the ED, the donor community recognizes the immensity of water challenges in pastoral communities, as well as the fact that water collection is a responsibility borne entirely by women. In recent years, LWF have allocated funding to assist group ranches in building water infrastructures called sand dams. Consisting of a short concrete wall built across the width of a dry river, the dams accumulate thousands of tons of sand during the rainy season and retain a significant amount of water within them. In the dry season, women must only breach the surface of the sand to form a pool of clean water they can

then gather for household use. The ED claimed these sand dams are the cheapest and most effective way to assist group ranch communities in attaining water security. In the past ten years, the LWF has constructed roughly a dozen sand dams across the group ranches, including several in the five group ranches that are members of the Loata Sand Cooperative.

But the ED claimed that LWF had suspended all plans to build more sand dams in light of news that dams in several groups ranches had been quietly allocated by group ranch leaders for sand extraction. As the dams were built in accessible areas and had accumulated large, fresh sand deposits, group ranch leaders, the ED claimed, had succumbed to Loata's pressure to allow prospectors to harvest sand from the dams under the cover of night. Seeing this act as a breach of trust between the LWF and the group ranches, the ED immediately called a meeting with group ranch leaders, who allegedly did not see any problem with using sand dams as extraction sites. Group ranch leaders assured LWF that the sand would be replenished by the next rains, and that it was crucial that the group ranches maintain consistent access for harvesters so that Loata could fulfill its royalty obligations. Though the ED conceded that the sand dams would indeed be replenished in future months, he was extremely concerned that group ranch leaders had come to view sand as a renewable resource. Sand extraction, the ED said, is "making leaders feel okay with the damage they've done to their own rangelands," and that leaders are not interested in curbing erosion as sand harvesting lets them "reap its downstream benefits." While the ED acknowledged that sand harvesting was one of few ways for the group ranches to generate cash, he claimed this industry "was probably the most irresponsible use of land" he'd witnessed in his lengthy conservation career. He explained that all LWF funding for water infrastructures in the group ranches of Loata had been halted, "until their leaders decide what exactly they want the future of their area to be."

Robert's ranch

One of the several dozen landowners LWF represents is a man in his early sixties named Robert. In 2005, Robert purchased a 400-acre parcel of land along the eastern border of Ol Tome Group Ranch. This small ranch's previous owner was a Maasai man whose family were once influential in the area; the man succeeded in securing a private plot in the seventies when the *ndorobo* reserve was split into group ranches. In the autumn years of a highly successful career in Kenya's safari tourism industry, Robert—a white Kenyan—was constructing a new home on the land—a six-bedroom complex at the base of a large hill. The home's crowning feature was a complex of water storage units built into its foundations. All rainwater that fell on the surrounding rocky hills would be captured by a series of aquifers, and stored beneath the home for use in the dry season, which oftentimes lasts more than nine months of the year.[17] Though Robert had the economic resources to successfully build a home in this challenging landscape, his decision to buy land so close to the group ranches raised eyebrows among some other Europeans in Laikipia. "I don't know why [Robert] would want to spend a fortune on that land," said another LWF member. "He's put himself right there in the middle of the community. Within a few years, his view of Mount Kenya will be blocked by tin shacks."

Hospitality appeared instinctive for Robert, who often invited me to join him for a beer or tea when I passed his land. As we overlooked the site of his emerging home from a tent atop the hill where he stayed during the construction, Robert explained he was growing frustrated with the steady stream of sand harvesters appearing at his doorstep. Robert claimed that when he first purchased this land, sand harvesting was confined to areas of the river farther upstream, near Ol

[17] Laikipia County is characterized by bimodal rainfall pattern—a long rainy season between March and May, and short rainy season in October or November. From 1975 to 2005, the mean annual rainfall in Mukogodo was 507.8 mm (Huho and Kosonei 2013).

Tome town. But as the more accessible stretches of the Sinyai River have now been depleted of most of their sand, Robert claimed extractors are moving farther down river and up the tributary that forms the border between his land and Ol Tome Group Ranch.

Keeping sand lorries off Robert's property was the responsibility of his security guard named Francis. Francis was a relative of the man from whom Robert had bought his small ranch. Francis attended several of Laikipia's best schools before withdrawing at age 16. Francis explained to me that his father had taken ill, and pressured him to find a wife so that he could bless the marriage before passing away. Francis claimed he was not a successful student anyway, and was content to return to Ol Tome Group Ranch and carry on his life in "the traditional Maasai way." The following year, Francis was walking alone down a road in the group ranch when a truck pulled up beside him with a white man in the window. The man claimed he was looking for land to buy in the area, and Francis informed him that he had an aging relative who was considering selling his plot.

Within a year, Robert became the owner of the ranch, and offered to hire Francis as his security guard as a show of thanks. Francis, his wife, his mother, and his three children moved into a small house at the corner of Robert's property, where he was free to graze his cattle and use Robert's water supply; he would also receive a salary of 20,000 shillings per month. In addition to keeping would-be thieves from stealing Robert's home-building materials, Francis was responsible for ensuring no sand collection took place along the border between the ranch and Ol Tome. Though Robert had no legal right to restrict sand harvesting from the group ranch's side of the river, he struck a deal with Wilfred, the Chairman of Ol Tome, to make their shared border a no-collection zone. In exchange for Wilfred's commitment to not allow Loata to

allocate this area for sand extraction, Robert would make annual contributions to Ol Tome's public school and advise and assist the group ranch in developing new tourism enterprises.

Robert claimed the cessation of sand harvesting near his land was important, first and foremost, for the protection of elephants. He claimed the riverbeds near his home were in fact a crucial migratory corridor for herds moving northward to the Samburu National Reserve (Graham et al. 2009). With large herds of elephants often moving quietly through the narrow and serpentine corollaries of the river, Robert claimed it was an unsafe area for digging crews. Furthermore, Robert claimed that group ranch leaders had a vested interest in keeping the natural waterway undisturbed. Its natural beauty and attractiveness to wildlife made the riverbank a potentially attractive site for an eco-lodge.

As Robert continued to work as a safari guide and maintained several other homes around Kenya, he sometimes left his ranch for weeks at a time, leaving Francis to oversee the property and the construction of his new home. While the home's construction proceeded as scheduled in the hands of a team of stonemasons from Nanyuki, leaving the ranch made Robert anxious about what Francis was up to in his absence. Knowing I had formed a friendship with Francis and lived near his age-mates in Ol Tome town, Robert sent me messages on several occasions asking for information about Francis's whereabouts. Though Francis did have permission to take leisure time while his boss was away, Robert feared that Francis was shirking his duties and going on weeklong khat-chewing binges.

Though Francis was a charismatic individual, and his presence in the town centre always pleased his age-mates, in his absence, many claimed to be worried that Francis was squandering the opportunities Robert had provided him. "Robert," said one of Francis's age-mates, "is being very generous with [Francis] because he wants to make him loyal. Working for a *mzungu* would

be very difficult, but over many years a *mzungu* will make you rich." Though white citizens are sometimes viewed with resentment by Africans in Kenya, many junior elders on Ol Tome spoke of Robert with considerable reverence. Wilfred and many elders had recently been given a tour of Robert's building site, and claimed to be highly impressed by the water collection features he was incorporating into his home.

Despite amiable relations between Robert and a core circle of Ol Tome leaders, some of Francis's age-mates claimed they were intimidated by Robert and preferred to avoid him when he passed through town. Though generally friendly, Robert had a reputation for taking strong offence to anyone chewing khat. Several of Francis's age mates claimed Robert castigated them whenever he saw them chewing, calling it a "filthy, wasteful habit" and urging them to spend their money to "on more constructive things." The fact that Francis was an especially avid khat chewer made his age-mates concerned for his future with Robert. Though Francis usually abstained from chewing khat while on duty at the ranch, his friends claimed he was squandering most of his salary, and was frustrating Robert with frequent requests for assistance with his children's school fees. Not only was Francis's appetite for khat making him complacent on the job, said his friends, but he had allegedly taken bribes from sand harvesters who came to Robert's ranch when the owner was away.

I did not reveal any of these allegations to Robert, nor did I relay information about Francis's activities that could compromise their professional relationship. But by my final visit with Robert in the summer of 2016, he had noticed tire tracks and other signs of sand extraction along the border of his land after his most recent sojourn from Laikipia. Robert suspected that Francis had been somehow complicit in the illicit sand extraction. He was more frustrated, however, with group ranch leaders, who were not holding up their end of their agreement. Robert

then explained that he had overestimated Maasai leaders' interest in being business partners. With the input of LWF, Robert had recently drafted a proposal to construct tourist lodgings on Ol Tome land across from his property atop the riverbank. Robert was offering to put up all of the capital for the project, and to market and manage it in the longer term, if Ol Tome would agree to his proposal. The group ranch would be entitled to a large share of the enterprise's profits, and the lodge would be staffed exclusively using labour from Ol Tome. Robert claimed he had been discussing the prospects of this venture with group ranch leaders since first acquiring the property. Initially, said Robert, leaders seemed interested, but now, they "only seem[ed] interested in sand."

Speaking to Ngila, a former Chairman of Ol Tome with whom Robert had been discussing potential tourism partnerships for years, I heard the man praise Robert's skills as a home-builder and someone "committed to good relations with his neighbours." Ngila also mentioned that Robert was making generous annual contributions to local schools; Robert's decision to buy land near to the group ranches had been "a blessing", in Ngila's words. The elder was indeed ambivalent, however, about joining Robert in an eco-tourism partnership. For starters, Ngila said that several families' *bomas* sat within the land Robert had requested be reserved as a no-settlement zone around the site of the proposed lodge. Convincing families to move from the area would be challenging, Ngila said, even though Robert had offered to pay for the construction of new homes elsewhere. Regarding the fact that sand harvesting was continuing along the border of Robert's land, Ngila believed that harvesting sand generated more profit than hosting tourists could. "We want businesses that are ours," Ngila said. "We need to be thinking about our own future. I do not think that visitors are so interested in this area. Maybe [Robert] only wants to keep people from building their homes on the hill. I think he does not want to see

Maasai people. But our community is growing so much, and we have few places to build homes and few ways to get money."

Frustrated at the unwillingness of group ranch leaders to embrace the prospects of a business partnership, Robert also felt that his employee, Francis, was partially responsible for the situation. Not only did Robert believe that Francis had allowed sand prospectors to harvest on his land, but he also believed Francis had missed the opportunity to apply soft forms of pressure on his leaders. As Francis was a very charismatic man from one of Ol Tome's most influential families, Robert told me he had hoped that Francis would act as his "ambassador" to the community. He explained that this was why he offered Francis a generous salary and other benefits—as a signal to his neighbours that Robert valued hard work and believed that staff should be fairly compensated. But now, Robert feared that his generosity has only enabled his worker's bad habits, and said it was clear that Francis spent his free time and extra money on khat, and little else. Increasingly frustrated as he recounted this assortment of disappointments to me, Robert wrung his hands and said "sand, khat and cows—it seems, around here, like a holy trinity."

Conclusion

Faced with significant challenges to pastoralism and low employment among group ranch members, Ol Tome's 'affair' with sand, as some would have it, is a logical response to livelihood predicaments. This industry permits able-bodied men on Ol Tome to earn cash daily digging sand from local rivers, while other segments of the community appear to profit in the form of royalties. Many women on Ol Tome claim the sand harvesting industry has enflamed social and

environmental challenges in their area, while male leaders regard sand extraction as a sustainable source of much-desired income.

Though Robert and conservation actors like the head of LWF decry sand harvesting for the environmental damage it causes, this industry is also offensive to conservation actors in an aesthetic and symbolic sense. Sitting with Robert on the hill above his land gazing west towards Ol Tome, we observed many roads being blazed across the hills, filled with large, grunting trucks spewing smoke from diesel engines. As this hillside serves as the backdrop to the image Robert wants to curate for his guests, sand harvesting is threatening to his stake in the global economy of appearances. The border between Robert's land and Ol Tome is a place where two economies conflict: one in which value is extracted from the landscape, and another in which the landscape is made profitable in situ. Though tourism, as Robert has described to Ngila, could provide employment and investment opportunities for Ol Tome, Robert can only make the group ranch a promise—the potential of ecotourism in the area is unproven. In asking local leaders to curb sand extraction from the deposit-rich river near his home, Robert is asking his partners to pass responsibility for their future on to him. If alienation, as Jaeggi (2014:12) says, is "the inability to meaningfully identify with what one does and with those with whom one does it," then curbing sand extraction in favour of eco-tourism could be alienating for Ol Tome's leaders and young male population.

Frustrated as his neighbours' ambivalence for conservation seems to grow, Robert associates sand extraction with other social features of the group ranch that offend him. While employers in any context are right to be discomfited by substance abuse among their workers, for Robert, khat consumption helps explain an ambivalence for conservation that is otherwise illogical. Though we do not know for certain whether Robert's worker, Francis, has helped or

hindered this man's chances at a partnership, sand harvesting and khat chewing clearly drive a wedge between Robert and his neighbours. Though leaders like Ngila are indeed ambivalent about the potential for tourism to support their people longer-term, he and other leaders hold Robert in high regard, associating him with hard work and ingenuity. Robert's skills in the collection and storage of water are particularly impressive to neighbours like Wilfred, who suggested that "maybe Robert can assist us in building some systems like that for ourselves." As Robert's interests in eco-tourism require that he make the appearance of his land a priority, he must stand stalwart against sand harvesting, and seek new ways to demonstrate its damage. Aware as Robert is of the economic reasons why sand harvesting is attractive for his neighbours, the choice to not pursue conservation—in his mind—is irrational enough to be equated with intoxication.

While the previous chapter described the challenges of 'doing conservation' across vast social and communicative distances, this chapter has shown that similar challenges can prevail within relationships that are more intimate or abiding. Though Robert—being white and invested in tourism—might seem to resemble foreign interests in this setting, he is in fact, much like Simon, 'a path of least resistance' attempting to link Ol Tome to patrons across the world. While Simon styled himself as a valuable ally by projecting a charismatic image of his person, Robert attempts to curate images of *nature* that foreign visitors will pay to see. As for the women who struggle daily to find water in the bed of the Sinyai, they claim neither Robert or male leaders were genuinely concerned about the challenges they faced. "How will we get water if more elephants are around the river?" said one woman. "And most men have never seen the damage to the river. They just to go to Loata's offices and collect their money."

Figure 14: A woman from Ol Tome harvests water from the bed of the Sinyai River, while a digging crew harvests sand in the background, June 2016. Photo by the author.

Chapter 4: "Building the women is not like building a house": the global (dis)connections of eco-tourism.

By 8am on a clear morning in November of 2015, dozens of Maasai women had gathered at the Napishana Women's Centre in preparation for a day of tremendous importance. Aboard a small aircraft somewhere in the skies between Nairobi and the airstrip in Laikipia's county capital, Nanyuki, the Fundraising Director of Napishana's largest donor organization was on route to visit the women's centre for the first time. Occupying a 40-acre parcel of land straddling the group ranches of Ol Tome and Ol Kilil, the Napishana Women's Centre was founded in the year 2000 as an effort to help women in these communities diversify their livelihoods.

Knowing that poverty threatens to make pastoral communities less tolerant of wildlife, the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) negotiated with the leaders of Ol Tome and Ol Kilil in the late 1990s to allocate a parcel of land that Maasai women could use to generate income. In addition to a set of small guest cottages—one of which was my home during my fieldwork in Laikipia—Napishana hosts a bead shop, a small honey farm, and an aloe crop harvested twice a year and sold to an overseas cosmetics company. At the centre of Napishana, a series of earthen homes demonstrate for visitors how Maasai lived before the advent of modern building materials. The earthen structures surround a meadow where women perform songs and dances for the guests or dignitaries who pass through. Though the land Napishana sits on remains the property of Ol Tome and Ol Kilil group ranches, the enterprises within it are owned by an alliance of women's cooperatives that are referred to collectively as 'the Napishana Women'.

In recent years, the Napishana Women's most significant partner has been a Kenyan non-governmental conservation organization called Global Wildlife Partnerships (GWP). Founded in the early 1990s by a Nairobi-based wildlife conservationist, GWP maintains several community-

based conservation projects throughout Kenya, all staffed by Maasai people and located in proximity to significant wildlife habitats. As Laikipia's group ranches are an important habitat and migratory corridor for elephants, making area residents tolerant of wildlife is crucial for conservation in Laikipia, more broadly (Douglas-Hamilton et al 2005). To help Ol Tome gain a stake in tourism, thereby inspiring residents to tolerate wildlife, GWP funded the construction of several guest cottages and other facilities at the Napishana Women's Centre in 2012. Like most smaller-scale non-governmental conservation groups operating in Kenya, GWP rely greatly on the donorship and support of benefactors in Europe and North America. In Laikipia, foreign visitors to eco-lodges or conservancies also sometimes leave generous donations in their wake. In other cases, visitors return home and mine their own social or professional networks for further support for initiatives like the Napishana Women's Centre.

At Napishana, GWP's interests are represented by a forty-year-old Maasai woman named Constance. One of the few women from Ol Tome or Ol Kilil who completed secondary school and speaks fluent English, Constance was hired by GWP in 2012 to act as the centre's Hospitality Manager. Married with four children and living in a small homestead nearby, Constance's job is to help Napishana forge and maintain the relationships needed to gain more partners and attract tourists. Unfortunately, ever since the centre's guest accommodations opened for business several years ago, the Napishana Women have struggled to fulfill the expectations of GWP and several other partners. Some women struggle to dedicate time to the centre amidst domestic duties, while others face backlashes from men who see the centre as an affront to traditional gender roles and a misuse of group ranch space.

In this chapter, I will describe the experience of Constance and other women at this centre as they were visited by a donor whose wealth and decision-making power is highly

consequential for the future of this enterprise. The generosity and effort that this partner exhibits in supporting the Napishana Women is commendable, though her experiences at the centre show precisely how conservation and eco-tourist enterprises can be alienating. Not only are this donor's desires for Napishana informed by tastes her partners struggle to comprehend, but the donor, spending very little time on Ol Tome, has limited power to see her intent through. GWP, the conservation group this donor represents, maintains the partnership once the donor leaves; this group also desires to see the centre thrive, but it must also keep larger funding goals in mind. In this chapter, I will compare the experiences of the Napishana Women with nearby communities that also pursue tourism, suggesting that Napishana's success has been inhibited by some of the very actors that pledged to support it. I will also discuss the challenges that these women face in gaining access to the global handcraft market, explaining how the fetishization of Maasai handcrafts can distort the images of the people who make them. Though conservation enterprises have provided women in pastoral communities valued opportunities to earn new incomes, I show that the global economy of appearances presents unseen challenges for vulnerable stakeholders.

Donors touch down

At 10am, as women began to gather at Napishana wearing the jewelry and colourful clothing they reserve for special occasions, Constance received a call from GWP informing her that their Canadian donor and her GWP chaperon had landed safely in Nanyuki. Ensuring that their partner's first impression of Napishana was strong, some women rehearsed the songs they would perform, while others combed the centre collecting small pieces of household trash that had blown in from settlements nearby. The Napishana Women's Centre had not received any

guests in several months, and Constance confessed that she and her colleagues had fallen behind on the centre's maintenance.

Soon an off-road vehicle pulled through the centre's gate, and a middle-aged Canadian woman named Sheryl emerged into the late morning sun. Barely 10 hours off her 24-hour journey from Western Canada, Sheryl was red-eyed from jetlag but visibly appreciative that such a large group had gathered to greet her. Before formal introductions could be made, the women pulled Sheryl by the arms and led her to the meadow. The women performed a song and dance lasting over twenty minutes, with Sheryl clapping her hands and smiling broadly throughout. When the dance ended, Sheryl's chaperone from GWF, a Kenyan woman named Grace, introduced her to Constance and several others. Sheryl made a statement of appreciation to the crowd, which Constance translated from English to Maa. Though Constance had never met Sheryl before and claimed not to know precisely what her role within GWP was, she was told by GWP that the Canadian would be helping the organization decide how funding for Napishana would be allocated in the coming years.

By the time of Sheryl's visit, I had been residing at Napishana for several months. It was indeed the only facility in this area offering guest accommodations, and the fact that the cottages were often underused meant they were quiet and in generally good condition. A GWP staff member contacted me several days before Sheryl's visit to suggest that I participate in the event. GWP were aware that I was studying community-based conservation efforts on Ol Tome, and felt Sheryl's visit would be an opportunity for me to learn more about this organization's work. I was initially hesitant to participate in Sheryl's visit, fearing I would obstruct her interactions with her hosts, but GWP's representative suggested I would be helping by demonstrating for the donor that Napishana was succeeding in their hospitality ventures.

Sheryl did indeed seem pleased to see me when I joined the welcome ceremony unfolding in the meadow. She said she was glad that my presence at the centre was helping generate some income for the women, and naturally we spoke about our shared country of origin. Soon, Sheryl and I were both welcomed into one of the dark and smoky homes surrounding the meadow where we sat on the floor and were served tea. Sheryl explained that Napishana was the first stop on a tour that would take her throughout Kenya over the next six days. She and Grace would be spending only one night at Napishana before boarding a plane in the morning and heading to another of GWP's community-based conservation projects near the Masai Mara.

Sheryl told me she was thrilled to have finally returned to Kenya since her first visit almost twenty years ago. As a graduate student, she had come to Kenya and met GWP's founder, who took her on a sightseeing journey around the Rift Valley in a small one-engine aircraft. Fearing her host had locked the aircraft into a crash landing, Sheryl was relieved when the plane set down gently in a dry riverbed filled, as she described, with dozens of elephants. The experience, Sheryl explained, had been so powerful that she made a pledge to use her social resources to support GWP's conservation work. In 2009, Sheryl established GWP's Canadian office, which she runs out of her home in North Vancouver, British Columbia. Sheryl explained that she and her husband were well connected within this affluent neighbourhood. Her husband's income, Sheryl told me, enabled her to be a stay-at-home mother; fundraising for GWP part time, she said, was personally fulfilling and fit her schedule well. In addition to hosting annual fundraising dinners at her home, Sheryl worked to build GWP's profile among socially-minded businesses that might be interested in selling jewellery and various other products made by the Napishana Women.

The Napishana Women's Centre, along with Ol Lentille, Koija Star Beds, and other projects around Kenya, was a product of the swell of funding made available for community–based conservation enterprises by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) beginning in the nineties (Little 2013). The logic behind AWF's initiative, says Sumba et al (2007:2), is that "people will act to conserve and sustainably use [natural] resources" if they "can receive benefits that improve their livelihoods from a viable enterprise linked to biodiversity in their area…" While Kijabe Group Ranch, the site of Ol Lentille, was partnered with a single, private investor, Napishana was linked to an alliance of partners, including GWP and the private ranch Orghissi. As smaller, more densely populated group ranches with less wildlife than Koija or Kijabe, Ol Tome and Ol Kilil were deemed inauspicious for high-end safari lodges. The creation of Napishana nevertheless involved the creation of a forty-acre conservation zone, a move that was vehemently opposed by men in these group ranches. In addition to making the land around the centre more attractive for visitors, allowing vegetation to recover was intended to teach residents that their land, however damaged, is not beyond repair. Constance said that AWF had had confidence in Napishana's potential because the area had a reputation for well-organized women's lending groups. Many partners recognized that Napishana possessed a wealth of human resources. All the centre needed to succeed as a tourism enterprise was infrastructure.

Partners in the centre agreed to contribute different aspects of the needed infrastructure. Orghissi funded the construction of the fence around the facility, and built a piping system to ensure the centre had access to water. World Vision Canada funded the construction of a beadwork shop. A local NGO specializing in sustainable agriculture initiatives established a small aloe plantation at the centre, and agreed to connect the women to overseas buyers for their

harvests. Global Wildlife Partnerships were an original proponent of the plan to build a facility for turning opuntia fruits into food products, though after this was scrapped, the NGO decided to invest in guest accommodations.

After spending time with Constance learning about Napishana's history, Sheryl was given a tour of all the centre's income generating programs. The tour began with the aloe farm, as it was Napishana's largest and most high-profile enterprise. The cosmetics company that purchases the women's aloe featured Napishana prominently in its global product catalogue. Sheryl claimed she and her friends had recently purchased skin products made from Napishana aloe at a boutique in Vancouver. The person responsible for the aloe plantation was a twenty-five-year-old Maasai woman named Mary. Mary was paid a salary by the NGO that had funded the aloe farm. Aloe is among the very few crops that can be grown effectively in this arid region. Frequent droughts, however, make growing even this hardy crop challenging, and Mary has struggled to fulfill the quotas needed to sell the aloe to the cosmetics company. Recognizing that an increased frequency of droughts was stifling the success of Napishana's aloe business, GWP allocated money in 2013 to purchase a large vinyl tank to store water for irrigating the crop. GWP arranged to have the tank delivered from Nanyuki, and hired a team of labourers to build a concrete platform to provide a sturdy base.

Frequent droughts not only posed challenges for growing aloe at Napishana, but also made it difficult to keep the centre ready to receive guests. Along with the two guesthouses, GWP had funded the construction of a bathhouse facility complete with a system for providing hot showers using water heated by a wood-burning oven. Though the water piping system, under ideal conditions, did enable guests to take hot showers, the borehole that fed the bathhouse often broke down, leaving not only the centre but the whole group ranch without water. As group

ranch leaders appealed to Orghissi to send a technician to repair it, residents flocked to Napishana with their jerry cans to collect water from the centre's storage tanks. Constance often tried to prevent the water from being taken, but found herself in confrontations with her own closest neighbours. Why, one woman asked, "should water be saved for visitors when so few people come? We live here with our children and our livestock who are dying. If there is water at Napishana, then we must use it."

Throughout the thirteen months I resided at Napishana, witnessing tourists and visitors come and go, challenges with water often precipitated harsh judgements against Constance and her colleagues. When visitors arrived, Constance was forthcoming about the water challenges the centre faced. Rather than apologizing for the lack of water as though it was a standard that Napishana failed to meet, Constance would explain how water is always scarce in pastoral areas and that learning not to take water for granted was part of the educational experience they were providing. Though guests often claimed to understand the issue and vowed to be judicious with whatever water was available, short supplies of water wore quickly on guests and soon they often took their frustrations out on Constance. A British man, for example, who spent two days at Napishana while passing through the area on a mountain biking trip, gained the impression that the centre was "not being run as a real business." "When they have such nice showers and no one is able to use them," the man told me, "it sends the message that the people don't care about the place and that they would rather just keep it for themselves." Having witnessed Constance and other women put under stress by the need to provide guests with water, I opted to bathe at the home of a friend and told them not to worry about my water needs. Seeming relieved, Constance placed a padlock on the door of the bathhouse to conserve it for when more important guests came.

On the morning of Sheryl's visit, I awoke to find Constance and several colleagues outside the bathhouse looking distressed. They had just learned that the bathhouse had been badly damaged in the previous days. It appeared that someone, in desperate need of water, had broken the padlock on the bathhouse door, snapped off the showerhead, attached a rubber hose, and used it to funnel water into jerry cans. Though Constance was sympathetic to the fact that people in the area struggled to access water, she was crestfallen that there was not enough time to fix the problem before Sheryl arrived.

Knowing of how disappointed some visitors had been with Napishana's water problems, Constance was understandably nervous as Sheryl and Grace toured the centre. Not only would the visitors inevitably learn about the damage to the bathhouse GWP had funded, but they were also likely to detect some of the centre's other issues. When it came time for Sheryl and Grace to tour the aloe plantation, Grace approached the water tank GWP had paid for, stood on her toes, and peered inside. The tank was dry, as it had been for several years. Apologetically, Constance explained that the labourers who built the tank's platform had not mixed the concrete according to specifications. As the tank was filled and the weight of the water pressed down on the platform, a section of the support system collapsed and a piece of iron rebar punctured the base of the tank. Overhearing the explanation, Sheryl joined the women and assured Constance that this damage had not been her fault. Grace agreed, but was disappointed GWP had not been informed that a new water tank was needed. Though the aloe crop had managed to survive several recent droughts, the whole venture, Grace remarked, "could have been lost only because people were afraid to ask for help." Seemingly comforted by the assurance that she was not responsible for the damaged tank, Constance took the opportunity to explain the problems with the bathhouse that had just arisen. Unperturbed by the news, Sheryl told Constance never to fear

being reprimanded for bringing problems to GWP's attention. "A few water tanks or showerheads are not expensive," Sheryl said. "It is much more important that you have all the materials you need."

The right materials

While several years of inconsistent business led men in the community to doubt the centre's future, Constance claimed Napishana's partners were largely to blame for the lack of visitors the enterprise was suffering. With limited resources for promoting the centre within the tourist market in Laikipia, Napishana relied on neighbouring ranches, tourism enterprises, and conservation groups to furnish them with clients. Though some of their partners, like the large ranch Orghissi, had brought guests to Napishana in past years, they had recently ceased this practice without offering Constance or her colleagues any explanation. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Orghissi has recently tried to make its own foray into ecotourism; Napishana could therefore be valuable as a site where Orghissi's guests could buy handcrafts or pay to interact with Maasai. The Napishana Women's Centre, as I often heard, was deliberately designed to curate such experiences. That was part of the reason, Constance explained to me, that Orghissi agreed to partner with the centre in the first place.

I made frequent attempts over a ten-month period to speak with representatives of Orghissi, and only succeeded after flagging down a community liaison for the ranch in his car on the road to Nanyuki early one morning. When I asked the man (African, but not Maasai) about the status of Orghissi's partnership with Napishana, he confirmed that his ranch's Director of Tourism had put a halt on bringing any ranch guests to Napishana. He claimed one group of Orghissi visitors had been disappointed at their visit to the centre, as the women were

disorganized and the centre was clearly in need of basic maintenance. Orghissi was partially responsible for helping Napishana to maintain its facilities, but the man claimed that Orghissi was hesitant to help because "the community were not doing their part." In the past, for example, Orghissi sent a worker to repair the centre's fence when it was damaged by elephants, but recently, the man said that the fence was being cut to allow livestock to be grazed inside. The man claimed to understand that Constance and other women were being forced to work with limited resources, but said "the fact there is no one taking care of it sends the message that no one cares if it fails or not."

Another partner of Napishana, the NGO that supports them in their aloe farming, offered me a similar explanation for why their support for the centre has recently been scaled back. In addition to connecting small scale farmers with international markets for their niche products, this NGO also runs workshops in sustainable farming that are popular among visitors from overseas. In past years, this NGO has helped Napishana by hosting its workshops at the centre. The Napishana Women earn income by providing room and board for the students, while also earning money from selling handcrafts. But the year that I was staying at Napishana conducting research, the NGO's leader decided to host their annual workshop elsewhere in the county. Over coffee in Nanyuki, he told me that his last workshop at Napishana had been mired in problems. Water posed a challenge, but he was also disappointed that women had not been interested in interacting with the students. "Even if Maasai women cannot speak English," said this Maasai man, "it is very important that they interact with my students so that they understand we are a true social enterprise." Though Mary is the only woman at Napishana compensated for the time she spends farming aloe, this NGO leader explained that all the women should "see the value in building relationships with people from other countries."

Another partner that had pledged to support Napishana in recent years was the Naibunga Conservancy Trust, which assigns security staff to the women's centre wherever a sizeable group of visitors are present. These guards are important, Constance told me, to make visitors feel safe at the centre, as well as to ensure that they are not bothered by community members who might spoil their time. By mid 2016, the Chairman of NCT was a thirty-year old man named Mamai, assigned to the job after the former Chairman was forced out for colluding with Simon. Mamai's role as Chairman was in fact to attract new tourism investors to the area, and though he was young, he was chosen for the job because he had worked for ten years as a guide in some of Kenya's flagship safari parks. Mamai claimed to have an affinity for the Napishana Women's Centre—indeed, his wife and several of his sisters were closely involved in the enterprise. The challenges the business was now facing, he believed, was truly no fault of the women involved. Mamai felt Napishana's partners had made "careless assumptions" about Maasai hospitality.

When I asked that he elaborate, Mamai explained that foreign tourists "must not be pushed too far outside of their comfort zone." Challenges with water, reasonable though they were, had been an undeniable hindrance to Napishana's success. But more importantly, Mamai felt that the centre's partners assumed that the women did not require training. It was assumed that the women's domestic skills would lend themselves effortlessly to taking care of tourists. "It is true," said Mamai, "that Maasai women know very well how to take care of their house, but the house they take care of is a *Maasai* house, not a *mzungu* one." Mamai explained he was present years ago when Napishana hosted its first grand opening, and representatives from the Dutch Embassy in Nairobi came to sleep in the cottages GWP had built. Though the cottages had been furnished with good quality beds, none of the women responsible for the cottages were familiar with how to put linens on a bed. "How can we expect women from this area to take care

of tourists," asked Mamai, "if they have not been trained to know what tourists want?" Over the year, Constance often raised the issue of training when we spoke about the challenges that the centre was facing. All Napishana's partners agreed that hospitality training would help, but none had so far offered to make this a reality.

The final stop on Sheryl's tour of Napishana was the large bead shop, constructed with funding from the Canadian faith-based NGO, World Vision. Inside, large tables displayed thousands of items of jewellery, as well as figurines, baskets, an array of textiles, and traditional Maasai weapons. Constance explained that the different tables in the bead shop belonged to the many women's cooperatives that were all stakeholders in the centre. As all proceeds from the items sold had to be remitted to the people that had made them, what appeared to be a room simply packed with items was in fact a strictly organized display system. When guests entered the shop, Constance and her colleagues had to watch over shoppers closely as they browsed. Picking an item from one table, giving it a look, and setting it down elsewhere could cause problems. One woman, named Eunice, explained to me that guests sometimes interpreted their vigilance in the bead shop as sales pressure. "They think we are looking because we are going to tell them to buy," she explained, "but if they buy something and we do not know who made it, that woman and her group will be angry with us."

After browsing through the items, Sheryl, Grace, Constance and several of her Napishana colleagues took seats around a table in the middle of the bead shop. Sheryl announced that she was especially interested in this artistic aspect of the women's business, and that she had come with recommendations for how to make Napishana's beadwork enterprise more successful. Sheryl explained to the women that consumers in Western countries were increasingly interested in buying products that had been sustainably sourced from underprivileged communities like Ol

Tome. Though affluent consumers in Western countries have often been exposed to African jewellery before, Sheryl said, consumers are increasingly concerned that the designs of these products have been appropriated from the communities or cultures they belong to.

In recent years, as the Northern Rangelands Trust has made inroads with communities across northern Kenya, this organization has commissioned other women's groups to make beaded jewellery for sale in foreign markets.[18] In 2016, I visited a women's group in Samburu County that were partnered with NRT in a beadwork initiative, and spoke to several women as they finalized their orders to deliver to an NRT office near Archer's Post. The women explained to me that beadwork commissioned by NRT had to be made according to strict specifications. One woman produced a photograph that NRT had given them to show them precisely which designs to make. Though these women seemed intent on continuing to work with NRT in this beadwork initiative, they explained that selling beadwork to NRT was far less lucrative than selling it to tourists directly. Normally, women's groups would band together to purchase a supply of beading materials, but in this case, all the beads, wires and other supplies were being provided by NRT. Therefore, NRT was only compensating women for their labor; women claimed they were disappointed that they were not able to make a profit on materials, too. Once NRT receives the beadwork and deems it up to standard, the women are paid and the jewelry is packaged for sale in Europe, North America, and in boutiques in Nanyuki and Nairobi.

While NRT is a partner of Napishana insofar as it is the parent organization of NCT, Constance said NRT had so far refused to buy or commission any beadwork from the centre. Constance claimed NRT had told her that their beadwork was not up to the standard found in communities farther north. Constance was forthcoming about the fact that handcraft skills had

[18] See: http://www.beadworkskenya.com/; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHq6U2_fjaw

recently declined among women on Ol Tome. Fewer households were polygamous, and women now shouldered a larger range of domestic duties. Many women also faced the pressure, she explained, to earn income working in the town. These factors, together, left less and less time for young women to learn and practice traditional arts.

Sheryl knew about NRT's beading program and said she was impressed by the model. Unfortunately, she expected that Napishana would continue to struggle to convince this NGO to buy their products. Nevertheless, Sheryl believed that handcrafts presented a financial opportunity for Napishana. Sheryl explained she had spoken with the owners of several shops in her home city who had expressed an interest in selling Maasai jewellery, and would remit the profits to the women's groups. Though Constance and the colleagues gathered with her in the bead shop were excited by this news, Sheryl pointed out that their beadwork would need to be modestly improved. Constance pointed out that much of the handcrafts in their shop were modelled on what foreigners were known to buy. The tables of the bead shop featured small, colourful bracelets, figurines of wildlife, keychains, and sets of beaded spoons. Sheryl confirmed that these items were popular, but advised that women try to "harness their imagination and creativity." Consumers, Sheryl explained, will be more attracted to products "if they feel the item reflects the personality of the woman who made it." Sheryl expanded by suggesting that each woman try and see her handcrafts as if they were "her own brand," and "to make the kinds of things they would make for themselves or to give to their own children."

Constance, who was responsible for translating Sheryl's advice to her colleagues, turned back to Sheryl and explained that the women were having trouble understanding her instructions. As Sheryl stood up and began gathering a sample of handcrafts to help make her point, Constance interrupted and confessed that many of the items in the shop had not been made by

the Napishana Women at all. Several years before, when the centre hosted a ceremony to mark opening of the guest cottages GWP had built, there had not been time to make enough jewellery to stock the bead shop, that had also just been finished. Concerned that an empty bead shop would not reflect upon them well, the Napishana Women dispatched several members to Nairobi to purchase several large sacks of miscellaneous handcrafts from a downtown factory. Surprised by this revelation, Sheryl apologized for the pressure that the women had been under at that time, and commended them for acting so quickly in holding up appearances for their foreign partners. Sheryl said she would need to think about whether new partnerships involving Maasai handcrafts was feasible, after all.

Il Ng'wesi

As I spoke with conservationists and landowners about the challenges group ranches in Laikipia face in developing successful tourism businesses, I consistently heard references to an enterprise located on a group ranch called Il Ng'wesi. Located fifty kilometres from Napishana near Laikipia's north-east border with Isiolo, Il Ng'wesi claims to maintain the only "upmarket lodge" in Kenya "that is both owned and run by [a Maasai] community."[19] Built in 1996 atop a hill with sweeping views of snow-capped Mount Kenya, Il Ng'wesi's lodge has succeeded in attracting a steady stream of foreign visitors for over twenty years. Today, members of Il Ng'wesi Group Ranch claim that tourism has made Il Ng'wesi the best group ranch in Laikipia to be a member of. Profits from this lodge have primarily been invested in educating the children of group ranch members. As a result, Maasai from Il Ng'wesi are well represented in the ranks of Laikipia's County Government, as well as the development and conservation sectors in the

[19] See: http://ilngwesi.com/content/visit/2016/04/04/the-il-ngwesi-story/

region. When asking Laikipia's largest landowners and leading conservationists what they felt was needed for Ol Tome group ranch to succeed in tourism, participants often claimed that all pastoral communities needed "to take a page from Il Ng'wesi's book."

Though Il Ng'wesi Group Ranch has indeed succeeded in maintaining a profitable tourism enterprise, the story of their success often omits the many supports it has received from well-resourced partners. As Il Ng'wesi Group Ranch neighbours on Lewa, one of Kenya's most successful ranches-cum conservancies, this community has profited from the financial and social capital that Lewa attracts. Owned for generations by white settlers with a close relationship to Britain's Royal Family, Lewa gained the status of a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2013. With several of its own high-end lodges attracting thousands of deep-pocketed guests each year, Lewa has been able to support Il Ng'wesi using resources and expertise on hand.

Though Il Ng'wesi's lodge and the land it sits upon are the property of the Maasai community, the enterprise spent its first years in business overseen by Lewa and managed by a team of tourism consultants (Little 2013). Training Kenyan people in hospitality skills is a significant cottage industry in Kenya, especially for expatriates and white Kenyans versed in the tastes and expectations of foreign tourists. Robert, for example, the tourism entrepreneur I discussed in Chapter Three, has a sister who trains safari cooks to prepare European-style meals in minimalistic settings. After several years of working closely with consultants and having their bookings organized by Lewa, Il Ng'wesi took full control of their lodge in the mid-2000s. In mid 2016, I placed a phone call to Il Ng'wesi lodge to see about visiting and speaking with their staff. I found the number easily on the lodge's website, and was greeted after the first ring by a young woman speaking impeccable English. "Thank you for calling Il Ng'wesi reservations. This is Felista speaking. How may I assist you?"

Though Il Ng'wesi's lodge has created jobs and provided education bursaries for some residents, Il Ng'wesi members claimed that the benefits of conservation and tourism are not distributed equally among group ranch members. Markus, a young member of Il Ng'wesi Group Ranch employed by a large conservation NGO, told me that profits from tourism had supported him in his education, but that the same cannot be said for many others. Markus said that Il Ng'wesi, like many other group ranch in Laikipia North, is a complex amalgam of families competing for status and resources, especially jobs and education bursaries. Markus claimed that Il Ng'wesi Group Ranch is politically dominated by two or three families, all of whom have been amenable to working closely with Lewa over the years. Markus claimed that members of Il Ng'wesi's elite families have gained preferential access to jobs in tourism, as well as the bursaries that allowed members like him to attend university. Like Ol Lentille and most other community-based conservation enterprises in Kenya, Il Ng'wesi's lodge is built within an area where grazing for group ranch livestock is restricted. Markus said many residents, including his family, are happy with this land use trade-off, but families without members employed in tourism or receiving school bursaries are discontented. The Il Ng'wesi community are now split, Markus said, between those who embrace conservation, and those who would prefer to focus on livestock and remain self-reliant.[20]

Though the Napishana Women's Centre has not succeeded in generating income on the same scale as the lodge on Il Ng'wesi, this enterprise also appears to have deepened social fissures in the Ol Tome community. Initial plans to build the centre, as I explained in Chapter Two, were received poorly by male leaders, who were concerned about land enclosure and were

[20] I ultimately did not visit Il Ng'wesi lodge in person as their lodging prices were prohibitive. The lodge's manager regretted he could not invite me to the lodge for a meeting, as they were constantly busy with visitors.

unwelcoming to the prospect of female empowerment. Since a fence was built around the centre a decade ago and vegetation within it has recovered, some men unfortunately see the Napishana centre as a symbol of conservation's indifference to their needs. "We know," said one man, "that if we leave the grass alone, it will return in only a few years. But at Napishana, the grass is back, and we still aren't allowed to use it. Why do we save grass if it is never used?"

Truth be told, many families gain the right to graze livestock inside the centre at the driest times of year. Goats and smaller livestock belonging to women were often found grazing inside its fence. Wilfred, however, the group ranch Chairman, whose wife is a friend and colleague of Constance, said it mattered little to most men in the community what the land was or was not used for. "Many men never expected that [Napishana] would last long," Wilfred said. "Now, they are just waiting to have the land back. Many don't believe that it can ever succeed." The centre is also located in an area close to the Sinyai River, and Constance claimed that leaders of the Loata Sand Cooperative wanted to open the area for sand extraction. Though Wilfred, Mamai, and some men on Ol Tome appeared to support their wives working at Napishana, Constance claimed that being involved in the centre caused domestic problems for others. Many men, Constance said, were under the impression that the centre was earning steady money, and demanded a share of their wives' earnings, which were often small or non-existent. Constance said that most who helped at the centre were rarely compensated directly; most contributed out of duty to their cooperative, or as a chance to socialize with friends.

Efforts pay off

By late afternoon, jetlag was taking a visible toll on Sheryl, who had spent the majority of her day listening closely to Constance and jotting down notes in the hot sun. Napishana was only

the first of many projects she would visit that week. Tomorrow, she would visit a similar enterprise funded by GWP near the Masai Mara. The next morning over breakfast Sheryl commended Constance on the comfort and cleanliness of the accommodations. She was especially appreciative that the rooms were equipped with solar lights, but had also written up a list of small items she felt could make the cottages more comfortable. Guests need hooks, she explained to Constance, to keep their clothes and towels off the floor, and small cans of insecticide to ward off the spiders hanging above their beds. Sheryl's departure was marked by further song and dance, though with far fewer women in attendance than Constance had managed to muster for Sheryl's arrival. Constance apologized that more women had not come to bid Sheryl goodbye, explaining that many were working to catch up on household duties they had forsaken the day before.

Around Christmas, I paid a visit to Constance at her home, which was busy as her children had returned from boarding school. Constance often told me how much she valued education, not only to ensure a bright future for her sons, but for her daughters also. Her husband, she explained, helped pay her sons' school fees with proceeds from livestock, but her daughters' education had to be paid out of her own pocket. Constance explained she was only able to educate her daughters with the help of the salary she earned from GWP. Her earnings had also allowed her to open a small food shop in Ol Tome centre, where she was proud to offer flexible payments options, especially to women.

Offering me tea, Constance explained she had recently heard news from GWP regarding its decision on how new funding for the women's centre would be allocated. GWP's Programs Officer told Constance that Napishana had been the highlight of Sheryl's week in Kenya, and that the Canadian was insisting that the women's centre be made a bigger priority among GWP

programs. Pleased by this news, I congratulated Constance, who did not seem as enthused by this development as I expected. “They have decided,” Constance explained, “that they want to build more cottages and also a kitchen so that larger groups will come.” Given the challenges Constance and her colleagues were already facing, news of these investments made her fearful that her workload would soon become unmanageable. Though GWP would pay for the new structures, and would invest more resources in online marketing, the plan still did not include any resources for hospitality training.

Weeks later, in Nairobi, I scheduled a meeting with GWP’s Programs Officer—a woman from a Maasai community in southern Kenya with several years experience in tourist hospitality. She confirmed that Sheryl’s visit to Napishana had been among the highlights of her trip, and that their decision to schedule Napishana as the first stop on her tour had paid off. As Napishana, said the women, was much “barer bones” than the other accommodations Sheryl stayed at in the country, it would have been challenging for the Canadian to see the value in the women’s centre after staying at a high-end lodge. The GWP staff member then explained that Sheryl had worked hard in recent months to raise money specifically for Napishana—30,000 USD raised from friends in just the holiday season.

The decision, however, to build more guest accommodations at Napishana had been GWP’s—intended, said the woman, to guide the centre in what she called a “more practical direction.” For too long, she explained, GWP and other partners had envisioned Napishana attracting foreign guests, when, realistically, the centre could not compete in Laikipia’s high end tourism market. The Programs Officer explained that GWP would now market Napishana towards domestic markets—schools and church groups, team building retreats, probably for customers from nearby Kenyan cities. The support of foreign partners like Sheryl would remain

crucial for Napishana, said the woman, but that satisfying the needs and tastes of foreign tourists was too high an expectation to place upon the centre.

Back in Laikipia, contractors had already broken ground for the new buildings at the Napishana centre. Among the small tents where the laborers slept, new guesthouses, a kitchen, and an extra bathhouse slowly took shape. In Ol Tome centre, men spoke frequently of the construction, even though very few of them had come and seen the building site first hand. "For years, no one has bothered to visit that place," one man said. "Why have two useless cottages when you can have four?" Constance bore the brunt of such comments on GWP's behalf. Indeed, her skin was thick from years of being criticized by men for her work at Napishana. She was also aggravated by the burden the construction process was placing on her. The workers from Nanyuki were often demanding that women at the centre fetch them water and prepare food—things that the contractor was supposed to be taking care of. Constance looked forward to the construction being over, but also feared the burdens that the centre's latest revitalisation would bring.

Constance told me she had spoken with GWP's Programs Officer in recent weeks about the need to provide hospitality training for women at the centre. GWP encouraged Constance to conduct her own research into what training for Napishana might resemble. Constance claimed she had reached out to Orghissi, appealing for the ranch to let two Maasai women shadow their kitchen staff. Unfortunately, Orghissi's Manager told Constance that the ranch was unequipped to help. Their staff were not local, did not speak Maa, and would not be effective in training Maasai women. Orghissi's Director of Tourism also told Constance that taking on trainees involved too much risk, as the ranch was in the early stage of building its own profile as a tourist destination.

Though Constance was grateful that Sheryl's experience at Napishana had resulted in new funding, she was frustrated that GWP and other partners continued to underappreciate the human resource challenges that the centre faced. Constance agreed that refocusing efforts on the domestic tourist market was sensible, but feared that she and her colleagues might now face harsher criticisms at the hands of Kenyan patrons who look down on Maasai people. "Our partners have always wanted to build things for us because you can take photos of them and show people they have helped," Constance said. "But the women need to be trained or educated if they are expected to succeed. Building the women is not like building a house."

Conclusion

While the Napishana Women's Centre has provided some women on Ol Tome a much-needed chance to diversify their incomes, this case is illustrative of the challenges pastoral communities face in gaining a meaningful stake in the eco-tourism sector. Reliant on discerning donors for even the chance to access tourist markets, Constance and her colleagues are expected to conform to unforgiving expectations. Though resources shored up by donors like Sheryl can make a real impact in group ranch communities, some donors are naïve to the challenges Maasai women face in earning incomes in unconventional manners. Not only has working at Napishana made Constance and her colleagues subjects of male scorn, but these new responsibilities have also put pressure on work schedules that are growing by the year. According to Dorothy Hodgson (2001), new livelihoods for Maasai women are often conceived through patriarchal perspectives; projects aim to professionalize domestic forms of work, rather than instilling new marketable skills. This approach to improving the lives of Maasai women is sensible and cost

effective in places like Ol Tome, though it can, Hodgson says, be burdensome for women and is not a structural response to inequality.

Though Sheryl, Mamai, and other partners in Napishana claim to comprehend the challenges these women face, these actors are also part of an appearance-driven economy and must engage Napishana on its unclear terms. It has been careless, Mamai said, to assume that Maasai women will excel in hospitality without training; he feared GWP had set Napishana up to fail, leaving member women looking lazy and incapable. Sheryl, operating under her own constraints, demonstrated empathy during her visit with the women; she was concerned that Constance appeared intimidated from raising crucial resource issues with their partner, GWP. Sheryl's conversation with the women in the bead shop ruptured the image of Napishana the Canadian had held. Bead-working is indeed a culturally rooted practice Maasai women can use to earn income. However, Sheryl saw that her expectations of the women had been shaped by her own foreign tastes and frames of references.

While it was against Sheryl's values as a donor (and consumer) to ask that women make products that did not reflect their creativity, the Northern Rangelands Trust appears to have honed the mass production of Maasai jewellery for Western tastes. The generic mass production of Maasai jewellery is not negative if it provides fair and sustainable incomes for communities, though women who were participating directly in this initiative had doubts about its equity. As consumers of such goods might see, as Sheryl hoped, the image of Maasai women represented in their works, these products are fetishized insofar as they are "purchased and consumed without reference to the relationships and contexts from which they [are] produced" (Igoe 2010:378). To her credit, Sheryl recognized that upscaling Napishana's beadwork business might not be as

feasible as she had once thought, and her alienation from these women was partially resolved as she gained a more lucid view of what their lives entailed.

While some of Napishana's partners seem frustrated that these women hold the centre below its 'true potential', I have attempted to shed light on the contradictions and constraints Maasai face in making eco-tourism enterprises succeed. While this centre's shortcomings might appear to some as failures to appreciate the importance of appearances, the actions of these women at the time of Sheryl's visit testify strongly to the contrary. Constance and her colleagues worked arduously in preparing the centre for Sheryl's visit, sacrificing their own time and resources in ensuring that this donor's experience was positive. Later, recognizing that she and her colleagues might face growing expectations from their partners, Constance reached out to Orghissi for help with hospitality training. Though Orghissi's reasons for declining to help Napishana are perhaps understandable given its constraints, it is apparent why Napishana are struggling to succeed while, nearby, Il Ng'wesi has found long-term success. Not only are eco-tourism and the handcraft trade imbricated in an arcane global economy, but they also have the power to alienate different social segments of the group ranch from each other. On Il Ng'wesi, it appears that embracing eco-tourism has generated division in this community, which has reproduced itself over generations as families on the winning side of conservation thrive.

The social distance Sheryl and her resources passed to reach the Napishana Women's Centre is vast, and similar to the 'paths of least resistance' travelled to Ol Tome by partners like Tutapanda. Sheryl's support for Global Wildlife Partnerships was secured decades ago through her own carefully framed and vividly recalled experience in Kenya—being shown the beauty of the country from the air and impressed by the commitment of people who dedicate their lives to protecting it. It is also notable that my own presence at Sheryl's visit was a deliberate part of

GWP's efforts to curate a positive image for this donor. In addition to demonstrating the merits of this centre through Constance and the women it supported, GWP believed that Sheryl's experience might be enhanced if another Western figure was included in the picture. In the next chapter, as I discuss another community-based conservation effort that links Ol Tome with discerning global partners, I will show that capitalizing on global connections is indeed far easier for some than for others. The image of the Maasai indeed holds value on the global market, though this image, as I discuss in later chapters, can serve to undermine a community's interests, too.

Chapter 5: Home field disadvantage: the case of the Maasai Cricket Warriors.

In 2015, British filmmaker Barney Douglas released a documentary profiling a sports team from Ol Tome called the Maasai Cricket Warriors (MCW). The film, titled *Warriors*, begins with the sun emerging over Mount Kenya, and dew glistening over the savannahs of the lush Laikipia plateau. The low morning light casts silhouettes in all directions. Giraffes cut an unmistakable mark against the landscape, and migrate across the screen as gentle, African rhythms awaken viewers to a new day in one of Kenya's most picturesque locations. As the sun ascends and the wildlife are roused, Laikipia's human residents commence their day as well. Statuesque Maasai traverse the savanna dressed in bright red-checkered *shukas*, guarding their cattle with great iron spears. Staring out over the savanna, a young warrior recounts the pleasures and the challenges of being Maasai in the 21st century. Devoted to their community and intimately connected to land, Maasai, he explains, also struggle with the tyranny of tradition. One example the young warrior cites is how the health of Maasai women is threatened by the customary practice of female genital mutilation (FGM).[21]

The film then turns to the testimonies of young Maasai women who have themselves experienced FGM. They recount the pain inflicted by this ritual, and explain the dangerous complications it can cause women during childbirth. Male elders then explain how FGM is crucial to the socialization of Maasai women, and that ceasing the practice would be an offence against god. While the health and freedom of Maasai women appear very bleak at this stage of the film, the documentary then rejoins a group of young Maasai men who are congregating on a

[21] Reasons for the practice of FGM in African pastoral communities are contextually specific and beyond the scope of this chapter. For an in depth anthropological study of this practice, see Boddy (2007).

dusty field. Over their *shukas* they strap shin pads and protective masks, setting down their spears in favour of cricket bats. With a soundtrack of modern, Afro-inspired jazz stoking the audience's anticipation, the bowler hurls a ball down the dusty pitch, which is knocked into the sky with the strike of a bat. Modestly acclaimed on film festival circuits throughout the world in 2015, *Warriors* follows this group of athletes as they leave their homes on Ol Tome Group Ranch on a journey to the United Kingdom to play an exhibition match at the famous Lord's Cricket Ground. They perform traditional songs and dances by the gates of Buckingham Palace, and pose for photos with tourists attracted by the spectacle. Inspired by the kindness of the British people, the team returns to Kenya empowered to tell their elders that Maasai "must change or they will perish."[22]

I became acquainted with the Maasai Cricket Warriors in late 2015 as I spent time on Ol Tome and surrounding group ranches in Mukogodo. Formed in 2007 by a conservationist wanting to make a social contribution to Ol Tome, the Maasai Cricket Warriors have become icons for community-based conservation in Laikipia North. Established as an informal effort to engage young people in after-school sports, MCW have captivated supporters around the globe to the plight of Maasai people, specifically the challenge Maasai people face in maintaining tradition in the face of modern pressures. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the opportunities made available to young Ol Tome residents by this sporting organization, while highlighting the challenges these players face in acting as Maasai ambassadors in a region as socially fragmented as Laikipia.

This chapter will describe the experience of this sports team as they participated in a charitable tournament hosted at one of Laikipia's largest and highest profile ranches-cum-

[22] *Warriors*. 2015. Heavy Soul Films.

conservancies. Ol Pejeta, renowned around the world for the conservation of rhinos, hosts an annual cricket exhibition involving donors and participants from around the world. In 2016, the Maasai Cricket Warriors were the headlining draw for this event, as they represented the potential for conservation to effect positive change in pastoral communities. Accompanying this team as they interacted with partners and athletes from across the world, I saw that the opportunities MCW provides are accessed more easily by some athletes than others. In participating in this tournament, these young group ranch residents are required to conform to strict aesthetic expectations, while their image as proud and stoic warriors is harvested and shared for purposes beyond these men's control. I will show how social media provides opportunities for conservation actors to curate images for use within their discourse, a fact that will be highlighted again in later chapters of the thesis. Though this cricket team has potentially provided life changing opportunities to some young members, this case also shows that the playing fields of livelihoods in conservation are uneven.

Leading by example

Ol Tome Group Ranch has been an important site for primate research for several decades, especially on the part of a conservation organization called the Ewaso Baboon Project (EBP). For years, EBP has employed young interns and graduate students from abroad, including a South African named Ruth McCall, who was also an accomplished cricket player. McCall began teaching cricket to several of the young men and boys who worked for EBP as trackers or assistants. Soon, this activity evolved into an organized sporting club. McCall and the players convinced Ol Tome's leader to allocate a space within the group ranch to build a cricket field. The club managed to attract the support of leaders at the British military installation in Nanyuki,

who sent a team of combat engineers to construct a pitch. With her many connections to South Africa's cricket community, McCall was also able to secure sponsorship and funding for the team from an organization called Last Man Stands (LMS). Founded in the UK in 2005 by a group of amateur cricketers, LMS's mission is to make cricket accessible for lower income communities by promoting a simplified version of the game. LMS helped the Maasai Cricket Warriors obtain uniforms and equipment, and flew them to several cricket exhibitions in South Africa. While in Cape Town in 2012, the Warriors attracted the attention of British filmmaker Barney Douglas. Douglas asked the team to be the feature of his new film, and flew them to the UK to play an exhibition at Lord's Cricket Ground. Given the modest or underprivileged lifestyles members of this team maintain on Ol Tome, the opportunity to play cricket in this famous venue was presented in the film as life changing for the young Maasai.

By the time I met members of the Maasai Cricket Warriors on Ol Tome several months following the release of Douglas' film, the exposure the team had gained through the film had yet to have much direct impact on their lives. Some members of the team worked as laborers in the sand harvesting industry, while a few were fortunate to be studying at university in Nairobi or elsewhere in the country. Of course, none of their lives bore much resemblance to the way they were presented in Douglas's film. Their Maasai regalia was reserved strictly for when they played important matches, or when representing the team at important events. The team claimed that they had an agreement with Douglas to share in the proceeds of the film, though they did not possess a clear picture of what the project's financial windfall might be. The team's trip to the UK had been lucrative for one member named Lewassa. This player had formed a romantic relationship with a young British woman who sent him money to buy the motorcycle he was using to run a small ride-for-hire business.

As Douglas's film and media coverage of the team emphasized their efforts to combat FGM, child marriages, and other practices that marginalize Maasai women, I was eager to learn more about these efforts as I got to known the team early in my research. Through interacting with Constance and other women working at Napishana, I had heard that child marriage was a particularly serious problem in the area, as the Location Chief had been hesitant to stop it. *Warriors* depicts a female politician in Laikipia saying the improvement of women's rights should "be achieved through [the Warriors]," though the film offers few substantive details about their advocacy work.

Olenku, the team's captain, explained that the team's efforts in advancing women's rights had encountered challenges. He professed that their gender focus had been McCall's idea, and that the team's relationship with its founder had declined. Without McCall's leadership, the team had not been as confident in carrying out its gender mandate, though it continued to be a feature of the team's image that media figures like Douglas were drawn to. Furthermore, uprooting longstanding social practices was not as simple of a task as Douglas's film depicts. FGM and child marriage have declined across Kenya in recent years, though they remain common in some pastoral communities (Cloward 2015). Olenku said that elders would not respond well to the young athletes denouncing these traditions openly; he recognized that the team were also not qualified to be educating young people on complex health issues.

As trying to address FGM head on could cause unwanted problems for the team, Olenku said that the Warriors were trying instead to effect positive change simply by example. He claimed that he and other members of the team had made a pledge not to permit FGM to take place within their own homes. Though effecting long-term change on an issue of this delicacy through soft measures is very sensible, some women claimed that the team's support for female

rights was strictly a tool in their self-promotion. One member of the Napishana Women was recently subject to death threats from men in the community after giving shelter to a twelve-year-old girl who had run away from home after being forced to marry. "There was a time," said the woman, "when I was in fear that men would harm me for helping these girls. If the cricketers cared they could have helped me then. But they did not want to be involved."

Lacking in the resources or social standing to realize the more challenging dimensions of their mandate, the Maasai Cricket Warriors continue as they started—a chance for young men to play sports in their free time. MCW practiced at the Ol Tome field on Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons, and I often spectated at their games and helped them unpack their equipment in a small clubhouse constructed with funding from the Embassy of Australia. Though the team's mandate to promote conservation was also challenging given their limited time and resources, they took great pride in their efforts to keep their pitch in an impeccable state of care. A small fence kept goats and other livestock off the two acre-plot, and the team had managed to clear the area around the field of *opuntia stricta* through manual removal. Small amounts of water gathered off the roof of their clubhouse were used to nourish a row of aloe plants lining the sides of the pitch to prevent erosion. Ledama, the team's assistant captain and de facto leader in environmental efforts, explained that in light of Ol Tome's tremendous ecological challenges, even the smallest efforts to conserve land mattered. "Many people in the group ranch are waiting," said Ledama, "for someone to come and to make our land better for us. But nothing will come for us if we wait too long. Our cricket team, in that way, is trying to be a good example."

Last Male Standing

Gathering with the team for their practice one Sunday afternoon in April, I heard from Olenku that MCW had been asked to participate in a fundraising tournament at Ol Pejeta, a world-famous private conservancy near Nanyuki. The event was being organized by Last Man Stands, the organization that had supported the team on several trips to South Africa in recent years, and would pit the Maasai players against some of the best amateur cricket clubs in Kenya. The majority of the funds generated by the tournament would go towards supporting rhino conservation at Ol Pejeta, though some, Olenku said, would go towards the development of sports programs in less-advantaged communities like Ol Tome.

The 2016 tournament would mark the third year that MCW were invited to participate in this event—called 'Last Male Stands' in reference to its main sponsor, but also to Ol Pejeta's most high-profile rhinoceros. Since 2009, Ol Pejeta has been home to Sudan, the last surviving male of the subspecies known as the northern white rhinoceros. Born in present-day South Sudan in the mid 1970s, the rhino spent most of its life in captivity in the Czech Republic. Struggling to breed the rhino, Sudan's Czech owners relocated him and several females to Kenya, in what was described as a "last chance" for the species to survive.[23] Attempts to breed the rhinoceros in Kenyan were not successful, although Sudan has become Ol Pejeta's largest tourist draw, elevating the profile of this ranch-turned-conservancy. International celebrities and high-profile donors are frequently photographed alongside Sudan to help raise awareness for rhino conservation. Sudan came to the attention of Western newsreaders in 2017 when the dating website Tinder dubbed him the most eligible bachelor on the planet—a clever tactic for raising awareness of conservation among younger generations in the West. The Maasai cricket team had

[23]https://web.archive.org/web/20120103184657/http://olpejetaconservancy.org/sites/default/files/NWR_FAQ_FINAL.pdf

also posed for photos with Sudan in the past—images that have been widely used to promote the Last Male Stands tournament.

Despite having failed to maintain a rigorous training schedule in recent months, the cricket team claimed they were eager to showcase their skills in an event that routinely garnered significant media attention. The players were excited by the return of their star bowler Kuri, an energetic player who was coming off a six-month suspension from the team. Informal though this sports club appeared when its players were home on Ol Tome, the team maintained a strict code of conduct while attending tournaments or travelling overseas. Kuri had allegedly become intoxicated during the team's trip to South Africa for the premiere of Douglas's film. Olenku told me this behaviour was forbidden under the team's constitution. Naturally, I asked to see a copy of this document, but the team claimed that all physical copies of the document were lost. This did not matter, Olenku said, as he and other senior members of the team were conversant in its tenets. Olenku explained that the most important rule their constitution outlined was that no player should ever put himself before his teammates.

The week before the tournament hosted by Land Man Stands at Ol Pejeta, Ledama, the assistant captain, approached me to ask if I would serve as the team's driver for the event. Ledama said the organizers had offered to pay for the team's transportation to the tournament, and proposed an arrangement that he said could be beneficial for both the Warriors and me. LMS, said Ledama, had agreed to provide the team with funding to hire a mini-bus, but if I agreed to donate the use of my vehicle, the team would be able to keep this money for themselves. I had previously told the team that I was interested in knowing more about their work in conservation, and this tournament, said Ledama, would be a perfect opportunity to see them in their role as conservation ambassadors. Ledama and I would need to keep our stories

straight, however, as the tournament's organizers would not fund the team's transport if they knew someone else was assisting in this capacity.

The following Friday, I rendezvoused with the cricket team at the Ol Tome pitch early in the afternoon. Several members were delayed in attending to their own obligations before preparing to leave for the weekend. Large athletic bags packed with equipment donated by LMS were lashed to my truck's roof. Most members of the team had already adorned the *shukas* and the jewellery that they always wore while representing MCW. Members of the team often recounted one of MCW's most memorable misadventures abroad—it happened on their journey home after visiting the UK to shoot Douglas's film. As the team gathered at Heathrow Airport to catch their flight back to Kenya, they attracted attention from dozens of travellers who began cueing up to take pictures with them. The spectacle dragged on, and the team ended up missing their flight back to Kenya, and were shocked to learn that they would need to wait days before new airlines seats could be secured. Though Douglas had sponsored the team during its stay in London, they were transferred to Amsterdam where they had to wait 36 hours for a flight to Nairobi. With no money for food and no one to reach out to for support, the team survived in Schiphol Airport by posing for photos with travellers in exchange for small gratuities.

Though Saturday and Sunday's cricket matches would take place at Ol Pejeta, the tournament would commence with a kick-off party on Friday evening at a popular pub on the outskirts of Nanyuki town. I was certain to deliver the players on time as we were told they would be the guests of honor. Along the dusty potholed road that snaked from the group ranches towards the greener areas of the county, I drove the truck of tightly packed cricketers through a late afternoon rainstorm that had developed around Mount Kenya. We arrived at the pub to find that rain had brought an intense chill. As the team were required to be bare-chested in their

traditional regalia, they huddled for warmth beneath their red *shukas* while I and other guests donned jackets and fleece jumpers.

The lead organizer of the weekend's tournament was an Australian amateur cricketer named Ken. Ken was the leader of Australia's LMS chapter and had crossed paths with MCW on several of their journeys outside Kenya before. Ken had strong personal connections to Kenya, having grown up in Nairobi when his father had worked for the United Nations in the 1990s. As many attendees to the weekend event were delayed by rain and traffic from Nairobi, supporters of the tournament were outnumbered in the venue by a group of European locals for whom this pub was a common Friday haunt. I recognized some of these men as members of Laikipia's oldest landowning families. One group of men sat drinking beers around a table under the awning of the pub's outdoor seating area. As staying near the building was the best chance for the Maasai cricketers to stay warm, Ledama and several other members of the team assumed seats against the wall of the building near the men.

Seemingly annoyed as the young athletes chatted, told jokes, and made noise near them, one man turned away from the table and began addressing the Maasai in Kiswahili. "Hey! Maasai guys… yes you," he said. "Go play with my kids. They're playing over there!" The man gestured towards a group of Caucasian children playing across the rainy yard with a soccer ball and some plastic cricket equipment. After glancing at his teammates for some suggestion on how to respond, Ledama politely explained that they were cold and that they would play with the children later. The man chuckled at Ledama's response and said "It's cold? You call yourselves warriors…", and turned back to his table.

I witnessed this brief confrontation from close by and went to join the team. I showed my face to Ledama and rolled my eyes in recognition of the man's rude behaviour. Suddenly the

man turned around again— this time yelling at the players in English. At top of his voice, the man called the players "a bunch of lazy cunts," and accused them of being ungrateful to the people attending the event. The man said "you Maasai are the reason these people have all come out," and threatened to contact his "friends in the media" and tell them "that the Maasai Cricket Warriors are a joke."

The tirade ended after several minutes and the cricketers and I sat in shock. Slowly Ledama and the others rose from their seats and filed through the pub and out towards the gravel car park. Ledama leapt anxiously into the passenger seat of my vehicle, visibly upset by what had taken place. "Who is that crazy man?" Ledama asked in hushed exasperation. "How can people talk to us like that? We did not come here to play with children. We are athletes!" I expressed that I was also mortified by the encounter, and observed that the man had seemed intoxicated. Other players who had not sought shelter on the porch of the pub were oblivious to what had gone on, but word of the confrontation was spreading and some had come to join their teammates in the car park. I returned to the pub a short while later and was confronted by Ken, asking where the Maasai cricketers had disappeared to. He reminded me that the players were the "guests of honor" and that there were many attendees who wanted to meet them. I reluctantly gave Ken a short summary of what had just taken place beneath the awning, but his reaction was not one of shock as I had expected.

"Ehh," he scoffed, "these boys have had a good ride. Let them take care of themselves." I told Ken that several of the players were now asking to leave the event. This news convinced Ken that he would need to intervene, but not before voicing more frustrations with the players.

"Man. Let me tell you," Ken said, "we [LMS] have paid for these guys to travel all over the world, and they've got a good deal on their hands. Is that old guy a wanker? Yeah, he is. But I

can't be looking after them. They're big lads." Ken then summoned the pub's manager, a middle-aged European woman, and asked her to approach the man who had berated the team to request an apology. After a few minutes the owner informed Ken that the man had agreed to buy the cricketers sodas, but would not apologize. Ken went to the parking lot and returned several minutes later with Ledama and the other cricketers in tow. Ken attempted to work past the awkwardness the incident had created by walking the players around the yard and introducing them to important attendees. The Australian High Commissioner had just arrived from Nairobi, and had recently read about MCW in an Australian sports publication. The Maasai players who had not been directly privy to the man's tirade were pleased to accept the drinks he had paid for. Ledama refused the offer and spent most of the event empty-handed, until Ken came forward and offered him a beer.

Ol Pejeta

As night finally fell on the event and the MCW members continued to shiver beneath their *shukas*, Ken suggested that the team and I proceed to our accommodations on Ol Pejeta. The organizers had booked us into Ol Pejeta's lowest budget accommodations, which were very comfortable by Kenyan standards. Ken, the other organizers, and most of the attendees were staying at luxury safari camps in tucked away corners of the ranch, and would not see us before the first match on Saturday morning. Our entry onto Ol Pejeta involved passing through a fortified series of gates featuring barbed wire, watchtowers, and heavily armed personnel. As rhinoceros are among the species most targeted by illegal wildlife traders, the fact that Ol Pejeta hosts several dozen rhinos requires the park to maintain tight security. Sudan, the last surviving male of the northern white rhinoceros species, is kept in a special enclosure on Ol Pejeta under

constant guard by heavily armed rangers. Ol Pejeta was first claimed in the 1920s by high-profile British settler Lord Baron Delamere. The ranch, at that time, measured 54,000 acres, but has since grown to 90,000 acres through the amalgamation of bordering lands. In the 1970s, Ol Pejeta became infamous as an asset of the billionaire Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi.[24]

Figure 15: Content posted on Ol Pejeta's Instagram account on September 22nd, 2016, listing the conservancy's security assets and the costs associated with rhino protection.

[24] Adnan Khashoggi (1935-2017) was the uncle of the late Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi (1958-2018). This family is noteworthy for its relationship with Saudi Arabia's royal family. The Khashoggi family—originally Turkish—gained wealth and status in Saudi Arabia as physicians and advisors to several kings.

In 2004, Ol Pejeta was purchased by the UK-based conservation group Flora and Fauna International. In addition to tourism, Ol Pejeta generates income through the production of high-quality beef. The ranch maintains several large herds of Boran cattle, and their beef products are available in high-end butcher shops around the country. Ol Pejeta's marketing literature claims that raising cows alongside wildlife shows that conservation and pastoralism can be harmonious—a message that is positive, but also belies other streams of conservation discourse in Laikipia. Some ranches in Laikipia refuse to form grazing agreements with pastoral communities, claiming that cattle upset the experience they are seeking to curate for guests. True though this may be, Ol Pejeta's handling of this cattle question is revealing. Tourists will accept (and even value) seeing livestock alongside wildlife if they are told it is productive and sustainable.

In recent years, group ranch residents in Laikipia have felt resentment towards some commercial livestock efforts in the region, including a program by the Northern Rangelands Trust called 'Linking Livestock Markets to Wildlife Conservation.'[25] In order to incentivize communities in Samburu and other northern counties to be wildlife friendly, NRT offer to purchase cattle from communities at a price the group claims is above the market average. The cattle are then moved to Laikipia and quarantined on private ranches (the precise terms of these arrangements are unknown). Once fattened, the cattle are taken to Ol Pejeta where they are slaughtered at the ranch's industrial abattoir. The meat is then sold onto market in Nairobi and elsewhere. NRT claims that this program benefits communities by enhancing their access to livestock markets, though pastoralists in Laikipia, as well as some ranchers, claim that this program is inequitable. As mentioned, private ranches in Laikipia are often under pressure to

[25] Recently, the name of this initiative has been changed to LivestockWorks.

make land available to group ranch livestock, and typically cite ecological reasons for why these lands can't take on more cattle. In recent years, however, large ranches like Loisaba, El Karama, and others have taken on thousands of NRT cattle, quarantining and fattening the livestock before they are moved to Ol Pejeta for slaughter. Hearing that these ranches have taken on many cattle bought by NRT, group ranch residents feel that their neighbours have been dishonest about their capacity to share pasture with them. In 2016, the Manager of Mpala Ranch told me he was frustrated and disappointed with NRT's cattle purchasing program, and said that if he "had to take on cattle, they must be from our closest neighbours, or we are just inviting political problems." NRT has also offered to buy cattle from Ol Tome, said residents, though the prices the conservation group offer are well below the local market price. An NRT staffer explained that the group's buying prices had been set for markets farther to the north, and it was infeasible for NRT to make different arrangements for group ranches in Laikipia.

Figure 16: Banner in a high-end butcher shop in Nairobi promoting beef products from Ol Pejeta, January 2018. Photo by the author.

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The following morning, the cricket tournament got underway on a plateau in the centre of Ol Pejeta. A large circular pitch had been mowed by a combine, and wickets had been erected at either end. A crowd of European spectators congregated around a large white tent where food and beer was sold. Herds of Cape Buffalo, Zebra, and a few black rhinos grazed to the sides of the pitch. A disc-jockey played a mix of British pop songs from the 1990s, with snow-capped Mount Kenya providing an idyllic backdrop.

The Warriors took to the pitch in their finest Maasai regalia, over which they strapped shin pads, helmets, and protective gloves. The Maasai played two matches on Saturday— one against a team of middle-aged white Kenyans from Nairobi, and one against a team of African players from western Kenya. The Warriors lost both their games, and were extremely disappointed by day's end. Olenku admitted that several of the team's older players had not practiced with the team for several months as they had been away at school. Consequently, the team was not performing at its best.

To ease their disappointment, the white Kenyan team offered to buy the Warriors a round of drinks. The team from Ol Tome joined the mass of players and spectators gathered in the big white tent. Interactions between the MCW members and their European opponents were cordial, though the men from Nairobi did not hesitate to put the young Maasai on the spot with intrusive questions regarding Maasai customs. Olenku was asked to reaffirm, for example, that Maasai men acquired wives through payments of cattle. He was also asked to comment on the pros and cons of polygamous marriage. He pointed out that this practice was uncommon among men of his generation. The white men's joviality suggested that their ignorance on this topic was feigned, and that they saw it instead as an opportunity to share in some jokes with their

competitors. Olenku and a few other members of the team looked content to participate in the banter. Ledama looked far less comfortable, however, perhaps due in part to the negative experience he had suffered at the tournament's opening the day before. The man who berated the team the night before was present at the reception, though the crowd was large enough that Ledama and his teammates might not have noticed him. Nevertheless, Ledama was the first member of the team to excuse himself and return to our guesthouse when night fell.

As the reception continued, I spoke with Ken and a South African cricket coach named Johann who had hosted the Warriors in Johannesburg on several occasions. They were extremely emphatic about how valuable an opportunity it was for the young men from Ol Tome to be able to participate in events such as these. They stressed that playing cricket allowed the young men to travel, to broaden their perspectives, and to build relationships with people in foreign countries. Johann emphasized, as Ken had the previous day, that significant funds had been dedicated to transporting the Warriors abroad and positioning them as members of a global sporting community. I asked them to explain by example how that exposure was beneficial, and Ken responded as frankly as he could.

> At an event like this one, you've got powerful and wealthy people not just from Laikipia but from all around the world— diplomats, blokes from South Africa and the UK. These guys can see the Warriors play and if they like what they're made of, not just as athletes but as individuals, they could help these guys out with some sort of opportunity that could change their lives forever.

The sponsor-driven mobility Ken was referring to is not a mere abstraction for rural Kenyan communities. It is not uncommon for wealthy foreigners visiting Maasai group ranches to adopt a family or an individual—especially a charismatic young person with academic or athletic

promise. Whether a Brit sending money to help with school fees or a white ranch owner offering someone a job as a tour guide, patron-client relationships are common between group ranchers and foreign actors, and are often sparked by fleeting or casual encounters (see Holmes 2012). In the minds of Ken and his South African counterpart, the young Warriors—mingling with attendees just a few feet from us—were standing on the edge of a tremendous opportunity. All they had to do was project the right image, and their lives could be changed forever.

Back at the guesthouse, our dinner was followed by a debriefing on the day's matches led by the captain Olenku. Most of the team were somber from suffering a double loss, and Olenku stressed that they would need to perform better or risk the embarrassment of leaving the tournament as the poorest performing team. The only player not somber at the debrief was a 23-year-old named Lewassa, the man who had succeeded in forming a relationship with a British woman during the team's visit to the UK. Though the loss of both games coupled with the unease stemming from the previous night was clearly affecting Ledama, Lewassa reminded his teammates of the networking opportunities available to them at the tournament. While Ledama and some other players seemingly struggled to interact with the tournament's attendees, Lewassa had befriended a group of Swedish athletes who stopped through the tournament as part of their week-long tour of Laikipia. Lewassa was hoping that the team might ask him to join them as their impromptu tour guide for the rest of their trip. The Swedes were travelling by private bus, Lewassa said, and needed "a real Maasai to show them around."

Internal competition

On Sunday morning, the team was well rested, and arrived at the pitch anxious for their first match. But as we approached the field, I sensed agitation among some players directed

towards a group of two men and one woman sitting by the field dressed in Maasai regalia. As it turned out, one of these men was in fact a suspended member of the team—a former captain named Kasana who had been featured prominently in Douglas's documentary. Kasana was a student at the University of Nairobi majoring in Communications, and for several years had been the person responsible for the team's website and email account.

A few months earlier, a dispute had erupted between Kasana and other team leaders because, while at school, Kasana had spoken to journalists about MCW without allegedly including or referencing the team's other members. According to Olenku, Kasana had violated MCW's constitution by "using the team to benefit himself." Olenku was forthcoming about the fact that Kasana's strong digital literacy put him in a position of power over the team. Olenku said that the team trusted Kasana to use his skills to promote their organization, but he feared that Kasana was attempting to enhance his own image instead. More educated and articulate members of MCW do indeed appear to parlay their spot on this cricket team into other social opportunities more easily. Lewassa'a success in forming relationships with foreign actors in the context of this team, for example, is undoubtedly rooted in the fact that he has some of the strongest language skills among the team. I pointed out to Olenku that having Kasana promote the team while at school was probably to their benefit. He agreed, but reminded me that the most important tenet of MCW's constitution was never to put oneself ahead of the team, and that failure to do so was grounds for suspension.

Since his dismissal from the team several months before, Kasana had in fact tried to establish a new cricket team composed of Maasai players in another area of Laikipia where his family had roots. Kasana had only been able to recruit a few players so far, but among them was a young woman named Beatrice, who had accompanied Kasana to the tournament. Kasana had

also brought along a team of journalists from an online Kenyan news source that had contacted him through the team's email account wanting to do a story on their involvement in the event.

Olenku, Ledama, and other members of the team grew agitated as they realized that the journalists intended to photograph and film them as they competed in the tournament. The team were due to take the field for their first match, and didn't have the time to confront Kasana and rehash the details of his suspension. Focused on setting up their equipment in preparation for the match, the journalists would have struggled to detect the conflict taking place among the Maasai players. Ken arrived at the pitch just moments before the match was to begin, and Olenku anxiously asked the Australian if he would have Kasana and the team of journalists removed from the event. Seeming more aware than I had been of rifts within this cricket team, Ken reacted to Olenku's request with frustration. "I don't care about your politics," Ken said firmly. "We're trying to help all of you. If Kasana has brought the media then I say good for him. If you don't want to speak to the media that is your choice, but that's the whole reason you've all come here." Without time to debate the issue further before the day's match was to start, Olenku joined his team members on the pitch. Since they had lost both their preceding games, the Warriors would compete for a consolation title against a team of young British expatriates working in the technology sector in Nairobi.

When the Warriors took to the field, I had an opportunity to speak with Kasana and hear his side of the story. He was hesitant at first to speak with me as I was clearly an associate of his estranged teammates, but when I explained that I was a researcher interested in the politics of the team he became forthcoming. Kasana explained that he was disappointed by the conflict that had enveloped the team in recent months. He verified that he had been conducting media relations without the inclusion of his teammates, but as he lived in Nairobi and possessed connections

through his university, it only made sense for him to market the team in his own capacity. And since he believed he had acted in the team's interests by speaking to the media, he did not want to acknowledge their decision to dismiss him. That is why he had come to the tournament in defiance of his suspension.

Kasana further explained that the conflict between him and his former teammates was also rooted in issues with the team's efforts to raise awareness about FGM. He explained that Beatrice, the young Maasai woman accompanying him to Ol Pejeta, had joined his new team to help him push forward with the advocacy of women's issues that he felt MCW had so far neglected. Kasana claimed the Warriors had not been genuine in their pledge to improve women's rights, and that his dismissal from the team would likely have been overturned had he and Beatrice not recently conducted a workshop in a neighbouring community to inform people about the risks of FGM. Kasana claimed that he informed the team of his plan to hold this workshop, but that they dismissed him and would not lend their support. When the workshop went ahead, Kasana claims that his former teammates were furious that their own sisters had not been asked to participate. I was interested, of course, in what Beatrice had to say about this drama, though eliciting any comment from her was challenging in Kasana's presence. Articulate in English, Kasana answered on Beatrice's behalf when I asked her about why she had joined the cricket team. He said, "she wants to help her sisters and sees the good work the cricket warriors have done in the past."

As the Warriors played on, I spoke once again with Ken, who had clearly been aggravated by what he saw as an attempt by Olenku to politicize the tournament.

> We give these guys such amazing opportunities and all they do is fight amongst themselves. For us, we just measure our success by how many young people are playing

> cricket…that's it. As far as I'm concerned, Kasana and these guys are all on the same page. If I tried to side with one of the teams it would all fall apart. No sponsor wants to work with people that are divided. The Ol Tome guys are the core of the team but Kasana is still the public face, so neither of them is more important than the other. They need Kasana very badly but none of them realize it.

Ken and I returned our attention to the pitch as the Warrior's match neared its end. The Warriors clinched a victory in the intense final minutes, and the crowd was pleased to see them redeem themselves after Saturday's defeats. As the strongest teams played their final matches, the Warriors spent the afternoon resting by the pitch, with a few members—especially Lewassa—socializing with attendees and members of the rival teams.

As tournament near an end, Ledama was anxious to speak with Ken about the money LMS had allocated for transport. When Ledama approached Ken, the Australian's body language indicated that he was very displeased. The organizers had clearly not expected that the team would be driven to the event by a foreign friend, and Ken had had ample opportunities over the weekend to infer that I was not charging the team for transportation. I was in earshot when Ledama spoke to Ken, who was clearly annoyed to hear Ledama request 20,000 shillings. Ken shifted his body closer to me, so that I could hear what he was going to say to Ledama. Ken told Ledama firmly that any money given for transportation would not be available for future travel, and urged that Ledama speak to me one final time before submitting his expense request. Though Ken may have understood the team's desire to access money, he appeared offended that Ledama would treat him as naïve or try to take advantage of LMS. Already frustrated by the team's conflict with Kasana, Ken's patience was clearly wearing thin. Ledama told Ken he understood and approached me to discuss the matter. As the transportation reimbursement issue threatened

to cause irrevocable damage to the Warriors' relationship with LMS, I advised Ledama to request only 5,000 shillings and to tell Ken it was for diesel. He reluctantly agreed.

The tournament concluded with a photograph session, with each of the teams and many attendees requesting a photo specifically with the Warriors. As the team assembled by my truck preparing to leave Ol Pejeta, Lewassa announced that he would not be joining us back to Ol Tome as he had indeed been invited to accompany the Swedish footballers. The rest of us left the conservancy through its fortified gate. Our ID cards were checked against entry records, and the vehicle was searched again for weapons or illegal animal products. Deprived since Friday of most affordable amenities, the players immediately asked to stop at a roadside stall so they could purchase phone credit, cigarettes, and other sundries. Ledama divvied up the 5,000 shillings among the eight members present, who sat silently as we drove north across Laikipia towards the group ranches on the drier margins of the county.

Back on Ol Tome, as the Warriors gathered their equipment and belongings from my truck, I opened the Instagram application on my smartphone, and had a look at Ol Pejeta's account page. Ol Pejeta made significant use of social media in promoting and publicizing its activities, and I was anxious to see how their social media curators had chosen to represent the weekend's tournament. I expected to see photos of the Maasai Cricket Warriors competing on the field with Mount Kenya in the backdrop, but, in fact, Ol Pejeta's social media team had used my image along with the Warriors. The day before, as rainclouds moved over the tournament in the hours leading up to the evening reception, I and a member of the team named John sat silently near pitch, huddling for warmth. A Spanish photographer working for Ol Pejeta approached and asked John and me if he could take our photo. The photographer told us to maintain our poses, quickly took the photo, said thank you, and left. On social media, the photo

that was captured was accompanied by this caption: “This weekend, people from all walks of life have converged on Ol Pejeta for the Last Male Standing Rhino Cup. The photo below illustrates the unifying power of sports and the positive social impact that can be realized when people have a shared purpose.” Surprised at having myself been included into a globally circulated image of the team, I showed the post to John and other players before they set off across the group ranch on foot. Olenku chuckled, but was not surprised to see the team’s image circulated in that fashion. “It is okay with us as long as people are using our image for a good cause,” he said.

Conclusion

Originating in a pastoral community facing many social and environmental predicaments, the Maasai Cricket Warriors have indeed provided young men from Ol Tome with potentially profitable, life changing opportunities. For Kasana, his involvement in the team has allowed him to build connections in his field of study, while Lewassa used his charisma to parlay the tournament into a temporary job as a tour guide, in addition to a longer-standing, lucrative relationship with a foreign woman. Though competing internationally and appearing in the media has brought visibility to this sporting organization, is it clear that taking advantage of its benefits is easier for some members than for others. Ledama, though the player who appears the most committed to the team’s conservation work on Ol Tome, was less comfortable than his teammates socializing in the context of the tournament, foreboded, perhaps, by the tirade he suffered at the hands of the white rancher at the pub. As we see, the team’s image as strong and noble Warriors bears within it a predicament: the challenge of being respected as able, modern Kenyans, while also capitalizing on the image of tradition. The problems that the cricket team encountered on their journey home from London exemplifies this well. In fulfilling the

obligations that come with acting as ambassadors for Maasai people, the team may lose direct control of their image and struggle to fulfill more mundane obligations. However, when faced with a desperate situation—stranded without money or people to depend on—their image as Warriors proved valuable indeed, providing them the income they needed to survive.

Figure 17: Content posted on Ol Pejeta's Instagram account, June 19th, 2016, featuring the author and a member of the Maasai Cricket Warriors.

While members like Lewassa comfortably relate to the charismatic image that the team projects, Ledama—as he voiced in the lot outside the pub—was frustrated that the team were not seen as athletes. As the team's lack of athletic preparedness did indeed limit their success in competition, the team members were divided over whether the real game was being played on the pitch, or in the big white tent. Though the opportunity to promote themselves is the primary benefit this team provides its players, that pillar—paradoxically— stands against the tenet that no member should put himself above his colleagues. Kasana, in using his own social capital to advance himself and promote the team's image, was playing the precise role that their partner Ken desired for him. However, Kasana's teammates perceived he had betrayed them, and that he was contributing to the exploitation of their image. That the benefits of this team are not accessed equally does not mean it is not a force for good. This is an issue, however, that the Maasai Cricket Warriors must resolve if they want to rebuild unity in their organization. As conservation transforms these Maasai men into "capital of a more convertible and globally ramifying kind" (Garland 2008:62), their image is consumed "without reference to the relationships or contexts from which [it is] produced" (Igoe 2010:378).

While the event described here was perhaps a valuable social opportunity for some members of the team, its setting at Ol Pejeta also brings larger socio-political issues into view. As explained, Ol Pejeta is one of Africa's most renowned private conservation areas, and appears to profit from images of Maasai people in various ways. However, Ol Pejeta takes a hard line against pastoral communities living on its borders, and is a prime example of how conservation today is heavily militarized, both in substance and appearance. With its status as a leading rhino sanctuary affording Ol Pejeta strong symbolic power, conservation has been seamlessly combined with beef production in a way that impresses tourists and urban consumers. Though

vastly different ecological conditions on Ol Tome make the balance of cattle and conservation challenging, it matters—as I will show in the thesis's final chapter—how the relationship between livestock and land is represented. The team's willingness to support conservation efforts has led the landowning community in Laikipia to embrace them, though the use of their image (as well as my own) exaggerates the unifying power of conservation in this region.

While I argue that the relationship between Maasai communities in Laikipia and large ranches like Ol Pejeta are not as abiding as these ranches' PR representatives would have their social media followers believe, relationships between ranches and their neighbours are unique and often more nuanced than this chapter reflects. Though Ol Pejeta does not accept foreign livestock on their land and uses Maasai images with significant liberty, some ranch owners in Laikipia build relations with their neighbours in a more intimate manner. While working with Maasai communities under the banner of conservation can be politically beneficial for some ranches, politicians in Laikipia also deploy images as they compete for support in this starkly divided county.

Chapter 6: Maasai group ranches, minority landowners, and the political landscape of Laikipia North.

On an afternoon in the spring 2016, I and several members of Ol Tome Group Ranch sat on a small, grassy knoll behind the row of shops lining the main street of Ol Tome town. From the top of the windswept hill where the group ranch's main commercial centre sits, we gazed across a barbed-wire fence at the hills of Orghissi, the 60,000-acre ranch that lay to the south. Rogei, a junior elder from Ol Tome Group Ranch, pointed across Orghissi's fence line and asked if I could spot a herd of grazing cows. Not far beyond the boundary where the group ranch gives way to greener, more lustrous pastures, a small cluster of cows grazed along the periphery of this private wildlife reserve. As Orghissi maintains herds of breeding cattle in order to qualify for agricultural tax exemptions, I assumed the cows were property of the ranch, and were, as locals called them, *uuasin o lashumbai* (white people's cows). Rogei explained that the cows in fact belonged to an elder from Ol Tome Group Ranch, who had paid one of Orghissi's security guards to sneak them past the fence for a few hours of grazing. Though watching this small illegal act unfold was amusing for Rogei, he pointed out that the elder who owned the cows was placing Ol Tome's relationship with Orghissi at risk. One of the reasons Orghissi maintained grazing agreements with Ol Tome Group Ranch was precisely to deter their neighbours from violating the ranch's fence line in this manner.

Despite the efforts that larger ranches in Laikipia make in codifying their natural resource relations with their neighbours, these systems of exchange also involve forms of social capital that are harder to quantify. With ecological and demographic pressures on Ol Tome Group Ranch forcing residents to look beyond their boundaries for pasture, the ability or willingness to

share resources with neighbours can spell social or political windfalls for landowners down the line.

In late 2015, as drought in Laikipia coincided with the selection of parliamentary candidates for Kenya's 2017 General Elections, politicians began to compete intensely for support among residents of the county's group ranches. As Carrier and Kochore (2014:147) point out, the recent devolution of Kenya's political system has turned many pastoral regions of northern Kenya into "battlegrounds in the ethnicized contest for control of territory and economy". While most large-scale ranches in Laikipia are owned by expatriates, white Kenyans, or conservation groups, two ranches near Ol Tome are owned by families of Samburu and Somali origin. As political tensions in the county tightened as the 2017 elections approached, the daughter of the Samburu family—Sarah Korere—began vying for a chance to unseat the local parliamentarian named Matthew Lempurkel. Lempurkel had built his reputation on the promise to vacate Europeans from Laikipia, and was blamed for instigating numerous small conflicts throughout the county. As the daughter of a landowning family, as well as a member of the Maa-speaking community, Korere's goal was to use her dualistic image to secure herself a seat in Kenya's house of parliament.

But as I learned in interacting with another family, led by a Somali ranch-owner named Sayed, the electoral landscape near the group ranches had recently been complicated by conservation efforts. In recent years, a large portion of Sayed's land was subdivided and sold to an investor, who uses this newly demarcated ranch as the site of a successful eco-tourism business. Its owner, a white Kenyan woman named Barlette, not only succeeded in building a profitable business, but was also succeeding in forming strong relationships with her Maasai neighbours. Though this ecotourism enterprise is not a 'partnership' with the group ranches in a

formal sense, Barlette is dependent on her neighbours for labour and the security needed to make her land viable for tourism. But as Korere and Lempurkel competed for support among Maasai group ranch residents, Sayed increasingly resented Barlette for generating profit from the land that had once been his. While Korere launched her campaign by trying to bridge racial and ethnic divisions in the county, Lempurkel tried to alienate Sayed from his neighbours and use him (and his land) to bring latent tensions in the county to the surface.

In addition to exploring the political risks of dedicating land to conservation in Laikipia, this chapter destabilizes the black-white dichotomy too often used to depict this part of Kenya. I discuss the role that several ethnic groups have played in Laikipia's recent history—Samburu, Somali, and also the Turkana that make up much of the county's ranching labour force. I will show that each of these communities' relationship with the group ranches is complex, and sometimes mediated by the Europeans who are the dominant landowners in the county. Not only are relationships between ranchers and pastoralists maintained through a complex and long-term exchange of capital, but relations across certain ranch borders have political repercussions for the county as a whole. Overall, this chapter shows that conservation can help in building ties between pastoralists and ranchers, but that the success these partnerships produce can also be fodder for divisive politicians.

Marley

Born in the late 1930s near Dol Dol town in Laikipia District, Elijah Lekorere was a Samburu of the *Mpisigishu* clan, whose family migrated seasonally between Laikipia and the Matthews mountain range in present-day Samburu County. During the later years of British rule in Kenya, Elijah, like many Samburu, was recruited into military service, and spent a decade

patrolling Kenya's Northern Frontier District. Sarah, the eldest daughter of Elijah, describes her father as possessing great physical and mental strength due to the hardships he endured as a soldier. According to Sarah, her father's military duties included escorting cattle convoys from the Ethiopian border to Isiolo, a month-long trek through dangerous terrain, during which he subsisted on only the little milk produced by the cows. With a military salary and strong knowledge of northern Kenya's cattle economy, Elijah developed a sizeable herd of his own, and acquired three wives from various parts of Samburu-land. As some European ranchers sold their lands and departed Laikipia in the 1960s, Elijah purchased a ranch called Marley, an 18,000-acre parcel with access to a permanent river. Sarah explained that land was relatively cheap at that time, as few Africans appreciated how valuable land in Laikipia would become. Elijah lived on Marley until his death in 2011, and fathered a total of thirteen children.

Over the long term, Elijah's family has clearly profited from his decision to invest in a large and well-watered parcel of land. Elijah maintained large herds of breeding stock at Marley, while also fattening and selling cattle he acquired as far away as the Ethiopian and Somali borders. Elijah's wealth enabled him to send all his children to school, including his daughters, which Sarah explained was atypical for Samburu families in the 1980s. Peter, his eldest son, became a decorated officer in the Kenyan Armed Forces, while Sarah attended the University of Nairobi and earned a job with the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK). Though members of the Lekorere family are now scattered throughout Kenya, many congregate at Marley during holidays, as the ranch remains, as Sarah put it, "the heart of the family." Livestock also remains crucial to the identities and social lives of many family members, who keep their cattle at Marley year-round under the care of Elijah's third son, Michael.

I first met Michael in September of 2015, as Laikipia's Maasai group ranches were in the grip of a six-month drought. As negotiations for pasture are often most successful when an appeal is made to a ranch owner in person, my appearance in the group ranch in an off-road vehicle had me facing a barrage of requests to help men travel to ranches like Marley. One of my interlocutors, a junior elder named Dixon, appealed to me to drive him to Marley to negotiate for pasture. Dixon was privileged in comparison to other group ranchers, as he received a regular salary from his work as a field officer for a non-governmental organization. Modest though it was, Dixon's salary enabled him to purchase access to pastures outside the group ranches, when other group ranchers were forced to illegally graze on neighbouring lands, and to therefore risk being fined or having their livestock impounded.[26]

As the homestead on Marley was far from Ol Tome and other commercial centres, Dixon explained that visitors to the ranch should always bring the ranch owners small gifts. Michael owned a truck, but it was often low on fuel and he very rarely ventured off his ranch. We drove through Ol Tome's dry and rocky landscape, reaching the base of a tall escarpment, the top of which was the boundary between the group ranch and Marley. Cresting the steep hill, the land quickly changed from dry, dusty, and wooded to flat and open grassland. Though the boundary between Marley and Ol Tome Group Ranch is discernible through contrasts in vegetation, the line is not marked by a fence, which is increasingly uncommon for private ranches in Laikipia North.

We arrived at the homestead near Marley's centre, a series of stone buildings and wooden livestock pens encircled by a fence made from cactus and acacia branches. Welcoming us to his outdoor dining area adorned with a collection of elephant bones, Michael explained that he and

[26] For a detailed study of how pastoralists in Laikipia engage in 'illegal' grazing practices, see Wade (2015).

Dixon had gone to school together, but had not spoken in several years. Nearing fifty but youthful in appearance, Michael wore a set of British army fatigues and an Australian cattlemen's hat. When I complemented his attire, Michael remarked that foreigners are often surprised to see "an African dressed like a cowboy." Described by his siblings as successful in school, Michael forewent higher education to spend his life caring for his family's livestock. Michael extolls the virtues of ranching life, and claims that he becomes depressed if he is away from Marley for an extended time. Though his livestock are herded and cared for mainly by young members of his family, Michael claimed that managing the ranch is a demanding job. Livestock remain a pillar of the family's identity, and Michael's brothers throughout Kenya often call him for news about their herd, or to organize brandings, castrations, slaughters, or sales.

After introductions, Dixon explained to Michael the toll that the current drought was taking on the group ranches. He explained that Orghissi was resistant to accommodating additional livestock, as the ranch was now investing in its tourist business and needed to keep its land looking pristine. Dixon had not only come to Marley seeking pasture for his own herd, but also for those of several junior elders, all of whom also had access to cash incomes.[27] Before the negotiations proceeded, Dixon retrieved a parcel from his jacket that contained a kilogram of fresh khat. Michael was extremely pleased with the gift, and suggested we sit on a *kopje* (a rocky hill) near his homestead and chew the khat while overlooking Marley. As Michael and Dixon discussed possible grazing agreements, I gazed through Michael's binoculars over the vast ranch, seeing no human development in any direction.

[27] Dixon proposed that each cattle owner pay Michael 200 shillings per cow to graze on Marley for a period of one month, with the option of extending the agreement if the drought continued. The number of cows would total about 300 head, a profitable opportunity for Michael.

Though Michael and his siblings acknowledged that their family were indeed Samburu, Michael claimed that living in proximity to Mukogodo Maasai had destabilized the family's ethnicity over time. Because his father had a strong relationship with Maasai elders in the group ranches, Michael and his brothers participated in coming-of-age rituals, such as circumcision, alongside Maasai boys. Though moving to Marley in the 1970s had been an economic opportunity for the family, it also left the Lekoreres isolated from their Samburu kinship networks. Elijah would often permit his neighbours to graze in Marley during times of drought, and Dixon and other group ranchers claimed that this was the reason that Marley sees less illegal grazing than other nearby ranches. Later, as Dixon and I drove back to Ol Tome, he explained that our mission to Marley had been a success. Not only had Michael agreed to accept cows from half a dozen Ol Tome members, but he would not charge Dixon a grazing fee, as the two appeared to have rekindled their friendship. Michael was also sympathetic, Dixon explained, to the trouble that the drought was causing for group ranchers, and that Michael "understands how pastoralists think" given his own family's Samburu heritage.

As the drought of 2015 persisted well into October, Dixon's and other group ranchers' cattle continued to graze on Marley. Several of Dixon's weakened heifers (young, female cows) fell victim to lions and hyenas, though he expressed relief at being able to graze on Marley when many other group ranchers were suffering far worse. I often went with Dixon to monitor his herds in late 2015, always passing by the Marley homestead so that Dixon could deliver small gifts to Michael. These were sometimes khat, but also soda, cigarettes, or phone credit—any item that could only be acquired in town. We often found Michael reading alone in his small, one-room house, or sitting on the kopje overlooking Marley through his weathered set of binoculars. Though married, Michael claimed his wife could not handle the isolation of the ranch; his wife

and children therefore lived in Dol Dol, where his son was enrolled in one of the Laikipia's best private schools.

By December 2015, after rains had fallen on the region, the Lekorere family converged on Marley for the Christmas holidays. Michael's eldest brother, Peter, was on leave from an African Union peacekeeping mission abroad, and the family was eager to discuss their sister Sarah's emergence as a parliamentary candidate in the 2017 General Elections. Stipulated in Kenya's new constitution that was approved by referendum in 2010, political parties can nominate 'special interest' representatives in select ridings as an affirmative action measure to have minority groups better represented in parliament (Kanyinga and Long 2012). Sarah represented William Ruto's United Republican Party (URP) before it formally merged with Uhuru Kenyatta's Jubilee Alliance party in 2016.[28] URP's performance in the 2013 election meant they could appoint three 'special-interest' parliamentarians country wide, and Sarah claimed her party wanted to buffer against the Orange Democratic Movement whose success in Laikipia North had been unexpected. What special interest group Sarah represented was not stated clearly by her party, she conceded. Sarah's nomination did help improve representation for women in Kenya's parliament, though her family believed her appointment was strategic—to position Sarah to unseat Lempurkel in the summer 2017 General Election.

While Sarah was honored to receive this appointment, she had found the position of Nominated Representative came with little actual power. Without the ability to allocate federal spending and facing the prejudices of a male-dominated political system, Sarah claimed she felt shackled by her inability to confront the crises she believed had been induced by her elected

[28] The Jubilee Alliance refers to the coalition of political parties made up of Uhuru Kenyatta's National Alliance, William Ruto's United Republican Party, and several others. This alliance was victorious in Kenya's 2013 election, placing Kenyatta as President and Ruto as Vice President, a position renamed as 'Deputy President'.

counterpart, Lempurkel. Amassing support in 2013 by promising to repatriate white-owned lands to Maasai, Lempurkel had since lost favour in the group ranches after allegedly instigating a string of violent conflicts along the Laikipia-Isiolo border.[29] With no executive power at her disposal, Sarah explained that she had spent her time in parliament positioning herself to challenge Lempurkel in the 2017 election. She gained the reputation as a champion of women's rights when she breast-fed her daughter in parliament in 2015.[30] The European community in Laikipia regarded Sarah favourably as she comes from a well-entrenched landowning family with a history of public service and "respect for law and order."

Figure 18: Dixon sprays his cattle for ticks in a *boma* on Marley Ranch, November 2015. Photo by the author.

[29] *Kenya News Agency*, "'Maa' speakers from Isiolo and Laikipia Counties agree to keep peace," 16 December 2016.
[30] *The Standard*, "MP Sarah Korere – Why I breastfed my baby in parliament," 19 February 2015. See: https://www.sde.co.ke/thenairobian/article/2000152252/mp-sarah-korere-why-i-breastfeed-my-baby-in-parliament

But if Sarah was to gain the Jubilee nomination and challenge Lempurkel in the 2017 parliamentary poll, she would need to convince her party that she held sufficient support on the Maasai group ranches. As Peter, her eldest brother, was a successful military commander and respected by many in the area, Sarah was looking anxiously to him to help her formulate a campaign strategy. In the days following Christmas, Sarah and Peter spent hours strategizing inside the Marley ranch house. Soon, Sarah announced that the family would host a party on New Year's Day publicizing to group ranch leaders Sarah's intention to challenge Lempurkel. They would rent a large white tent, a public-address system, and provide food for as many attendees as possible. To cover the expenses, Michael and other brothers sold several of the family's cattle. Michael explained that the family maintained a special herd allocated to support Sarah's political ambitions.

The following week, I agreed to help collect Maasai elders from throughout the group ranches and deliver them to the event, held in the meadow near the Marley homestead. From late morning until the sun set, many key Maasai supporters delivered lengthy speeches on the challenges facing Laikipia, urging that Sarah—despite her gender—was better positioned to address them than anyone. With his livestock healthy despite a year of drought, Dixon was eager for his turn at the microphone, and boasted for nearly an hour of Sarah's desire to support Maasai people. By late afternoon, several of Sarah's brothers began distributing khat and small bottles of alcohol among the crowd. To an audience of several hundred elder men, Sarah herself finally spoke, warning that Lempurkel had steered Laikipia towards violence and economic ruin. "I know it is hard," she said, "for Maasai people to support female leaders. But we must separate politics from tradition. Politics is more important than anything else."

With her brother maintaining the political investments their father made in the Maasai community years ago, Sarah drew upon her family's social capital to muster an organized political following. While Sarah's membership in a landowning family made her attractive to Laikipia's white minority, she could not be a viable parliamentary candidate in the riding without broad support among the Maasai population. Though Sarah's ability to gain support among this patriarchal community was challenged by her gender, her appeal for Maasai men to "separate politics from tradition" demonstrates that Kenyan politicians today not only compete for supporters, but also "over the basic rules that shape the electoral arena" (Schedler 2002). In addition to convincing her prospective supporters that her potential to succeed was not hindered by her gender, Sarah worked to broker the interests of pastoralists and elite landowners. Straddling these diametrically opposed communities would be, for some candidates, a near impossible task. But with her family's ranch located decisively at the interface of Laikipia's European and Maasai areas, Sarah sought to convince both communities that she understood their interests and was positioned to advance them in Kenya's parliament.

Mukenya

While Elijah Lekorere spent the later years of British rule patrolling Kenya's Northern Frontier District, a Somali from Garissa named Ahmed Hawar earned a livelihood travelling this territory trading dry goods from the back of a donkey kart. Ahmed spent months crossing from Kenya's coast to the Rift Valley, maintaining a chain of trade relationships that enabled him to make the journey safely and at a profit. Like Elijah, Ahmed saw the departure of Europeans from Laikipia as an opportunity to acquire land, in his case near his trade route between Isiolo and

Maralal. With earnings from his trading business and the help of family members, Ahmed purchased a 17,000-acre ranch near Marley named Mukenya.

Hawar's acquisition of Mukenya in the 1970s came at a time when Kenyans of Somali origin had few opportunities for mobility. The *Shifta* conflict, a Somali secessionist struggle that gripped northeast Kenya from 1963-67, led many Kenyans to view Somalis with suspicion, and the Kenyan Government to view them as a threat. Throughout the 1970s, Kenyans of Somali origin were required to carry special identification documents and their ability to travel or settle outside of the Northern Frontier District was largely restricted (Hornsby 2012). Though Somalis faced prejudice throughout the country, including in Laikipia, this group maintained robust economic networks in the Mount Kenya region, centered around the town of Isiolo. The colonial government had settled many Somalis in Isiolo in the 1930s, and this town has remained an important trade link for livestock between central Kenya and the country's northeast (Elliot 2016). Though settling on Mukenya also partially isolated the Hawars from their kinship networks, Laikipia North was an auspicious place for a Somali family to build a livestock business.

Today, the proprietor of Mukenya Ranch is Ahmed Hawar's second son, Sayed. Like Michael, who forewent educational opportunities to remain on his ranch and care for family livestock, Sayed also oversees his family's ranching interests while his siblings have pursued lives and careers elsewhere. I visited Sayed on an afternoon in early 2016, accompanied by Michael who claimed I would get lost if I attempted to find his house alone. The road between Marley and Mukenya had been washed away by erosion, and Michael explained that he had not visited Sayed in several years. Like the homestead at Marley, the ranch house at Mukenya is built atop the highest and most central hill on the property, reflecting concerns former settlers

had with security on their ranches. The buyers of these properties often occupied the colonial ranch houses with few significant alterations. With thick stone walls and a low thatch roof, Sayed's home was reminiscent of a public house one might have seen in the medieval English countryside.

Figure 19: Sarah Korere addresses men gathered at her ranch for a pre-campaign rally, January 1, 2016. Photo by the author.

After a long period of knocking at the ranch house door, we were greeted by a young, soft-spoken man who identified himself as Sayed's servant. He informed us that Sayed had been sleeping, but that he would meet us if we sat and waited. We crouched through the doorway and into the stone house. Despite its limited height, the house's footprint was immense. There was a large communal area with a massive stone fireplace, and narrow darkened corridors jutting off into different wings of the building. A century of fires and cigarette smoke had left the stone walls blackened like charcoal. The sitting room was furnished with long, sectional couches, capable of seating several dozen people. Though their families spoke different languages and practiced different religions, Michael told me that he and Sayed spent considerable time together as children. As the only two households in a large geographic radius, the Lekorere and the Hawar families would often care for each other's children. Over time, the two patriarchs became close friends. As years went by, some members of the Lekorere family even converted to Islam after being exposed to the faith at the Hawars' home. When Sayed finally emerged, he was pleasantly surprised to see Michael. They reminisced at length about their childhoods together, while I explored the near hundred-year-old home. Sayed broke from conversation with Michael to beckon loudly for his servant. The man came moving quickly down the hallway, carrying a tray of tea with his eyes trained at his feet.

I proceeded to ask Sayed about his family's history, and of his experiences living at Mukenya. He explained to me his father's origins as a trader, and that Mukenya Ranch was only one of the family's many business assets. After establishing themselves on the ranch in the 1970s, Sayed's father then founded the first petrol station in Maralal, the capital of Samburu County. He claimed many of his siblings have businesses in Maralal, and that they visit Mukenya only rarely. Sayed informed us that he was married to a woman from a wealthy Somali

family, but that his wife and children in fact live in Nairobi, as staying on the ranch is too isolating. He explained that his main source of income was to fatten and sell cows that he acquired cheaply through his family's networks in Kenya's Somali region.

Sayed's workforce consisted of a small group of Turkana men who lived with their families in improvised shelters at the base of the hill near the Mukenya ranch house. During a period of intense conflict with Pokot and Karamojong in the late 1970s, many Turkana migrated southeast to Laikipia in search of employment and safety (Hendrickson et al. 1998). Willing to forego wages and work in exchange for food and shelter, Turkana soon became the favoured workforce in Laikipia, especially as herders on large cattle ranches. Not only was employing Turkana economically advantageous for ranchers, but Turkana were regarded as being more trustworthy, obedient, and harder working than Maasai. Today, many ranches in Laikipia still employ Turkana whose parents migrated to the region years ago. As Turkana families in Laikipia have had little access to formal education, Turkana are among the least socially mobile ethnic groups in the county (Nyambura et al. 2013). With the push to earn wages for school fees and other needs driving Maasai to view occupational herding as a desirable livelihood, preference for Turkana labour may be cause for resentment among Maasai in the region (Yurco 2017).

When I asked Maasai residents in nearby group ranches about their relationship with Sayed and the Turkana he employed, many believed that the ranch owner exploited his workers and had even forced them to convert to Islam. Several people claimed that exploitative labour practices were characteristic of Sayed's Somali heritage. Though the social and labour conditions on Mukenya were unattractive to group ranch residents, they believed such conditions were acceptable to Turkana who "are okay to work without money or freedom." Dixon, for example, attributed Sayed's unwillingness to form relationships with his Maasai neighbours to the fact that

he was Somali, as he believed that Somalis were especially untrusting of other ethnic groups. Michael disagreed, citing his and Sayed's good relationship, but pointed out that his own family's Maa-speaking background made building relationships with Maasai much simpler.

As my discussion with Sayed at the Mukenya ranch house continued, he remarked that the ranch had recently undergone substantial subdivision. According to Sayed, several of his siblings' businesses in Maralal had encountered financial challenges in recent years and the family owed money to several banks and creditors. The decision was made that a portion of the family's ranch would be sold in order to rescue the family's more profitable ventures. Sayed cursed and shook his head as he explained the land sale, claiming it was foolish for his family to sell the land at a time when land prices in Laikipia are climbing so dramatically. Though livestock represented only a small portion of his siblings' businesses activities, Sayed claimed that livestock were his primary source of income and that the subdivision of the ranch had significantly undermined his business.

While the Lekorere family has used its land to forge both social and economic relationships with Maasai, the Hawars have used their land to underwrite other businesses and have formed few relationships with their Maasai neighbours. Though employing Turkana as ranch labour has been common in Laikipia for years, the Hawars' isolationism is increasingly problematic as employment and natural resources in the group ranches grows scarce. As Rutherford (2004:550) explains in his study of white-owned commercial farms in Zimbabwe, employing poorer neighbours helps landowners establish a public "index" of their "morality and political legitimacy." Though Sayed and his family are unequivocally African and their land tenure is not as easily politicized as whites', their use of Turkana labour and alienation from their neighbours leads some Maasai to view them as exploitative outsiders. While his landholdings

would presumably align Sayed with Laikipia's white minority at the time of an election, the subdivision of Mukenya risked making it a conduit for anti-white sentiment in this corner of the county.

Ematua

In the 1990s, a young woman named Sandra Barlette distinguished herself as one of Kenya's leading safari guides. From a family of European descent with a farm near Mount Kenya, Barlette succeeded in securing a place in Kenya's male dominated safari industry. Having earned a large nest-egg by the mid 2000s, Barlette wanted to establish a home where she and her husband could eventually retire. But as Laikipia was burgeoning as a destination for deep-pocketed safari goers, it was also an opportunity for Barlette to establish her own business free from the regulations faced by safari companies in Kenya's state-run conservation areas.

Sayed explained that Barlette first came to see him in 2005. Word had gotten around Laikipia that the Hawar family intended to sell some of their land, specifically a well-watered section of the ranch frequented by elephants and other large fauna. Though Sayed was displeased at being forced by his family to sell the most valuable section of Mukenya, he claimed that Barlette expressed no intention to develop the land, and promised that Sayed's livestock would maintain access to major water sources on the new parcel. Since the subdivision and sale of a significant portion of Mukenya, this new land parcel—now called Ematua—has indeed undergone little infrastructure development. But the land has yielded significant profit for Barlette, who uses it as the site of a high-end safari business. Receiving its first customers in 2008, her company has gained a reputation as the one of the best safari experiences on the continent. Barlette has won several awards from safari industry associations, who praise her

ability to provide guests exclusive access to this picturesque corner of Laikipia. Further, Ematua is a habitat for several endangered wildlife species not found in parks like the Masai Mara, such as the Grevy's zebra, Gerenuk antelope, and African wild dog. Barlette and a large team of Maasai porters guide small groups of visitors on horseback safaris around Ematua, sleeping in small, semi-permanent camps featuring luxurious amenities.

By the time I met Sayed in early 2016, Barlette's safari business was fully up and running. Ematua was nearly always flush with tourists, except for when the business closed in May for the rainy reason. I called Barlette to ask if I could visit her at her property, and she told me I was welcome if I could navigate the kilometres of unmarked landscape that lay between her camp and the Mukenya ranch house. Though subdivided, the 9,000-acre ranch remained large and challenging to navigate. I arrived at Barlette's camp around noon, finding about a dozen Maasai staff cleaning linens, fixing tents, and changing the oil on a Toyota Land Cruiser. I inquired of Barlette's whereabouts and was directed across a meadow towards a series of large safari tents whose doorways opened onto views of Mount Kenya.

I explained to Barlette that I was interested in learning about her businesses, and her relationship with her various neighbours. She began by explaining that the Maasai group ranches were an important source of labour for her safari business. She pointed out that it was increasingly difficult for group ranchers to subsist on pastoralism alone, and that a growing desire to send children to school means "younger Maasai people are interested in finding jobs." Barlette claimed to be disappointed at how difficult she found it to hire and to keep female employees. She explained she had hired many Maasai women in recent years, but that none remained with her for long because their husbands generally resist having women working outside the home. Barlette claimed to employ upwards of a hundred people during the peak

tourist season for duties ranging from night watchmen to wildlife trackers, cooks, cleaners, porters, and mechanics. She explained that she hired staff not only from the group ranches that border Ematua, but from as many group ranches in Laikipia as possible. She also employed a member of the Hawar family as a security guard, and had convinced Sayed to allow several of his Turkana laborers to work for her on a casual basis in order to earn extra cash. In addition to a salary that she claimed is well above the local average, Barlette's staff receive gratuities from visitors, which she claimed are often generous.

In subsequent months, I became acquainted with several of Barlette's employees, including a forty-year old Maasai man from the group ranches named James. When James was young, his family made great sacrifices to send him to the best school in the district. With strong language skills, James secured work for most of his twenties as a tour guide in the Masai Mara. Like Barlette, James was eager to return to Laikipia; he began working for Barlette when she launched her safari business in 2008. Though the job was demanding and required a strict code of conduct, James claimed to enjoy working for Barlette. James's job was to guide guests on horseback safaris, making him especially well positioned to earn gratuities. With his earnings James built a permanent house in the group ranch, and was able to send his children to an upper tier school. Though working for Barlette kept him apart from his family during the tourist season, James could walk from Ematua to his home in less than ninety minutes.

I met several more men who worked for Barlette at a series of ceremonies marking the graduation of young Maasai men from warrior to adulthood. With the rainy season looming, Barlette's business had been shut down, and most employees were given a month of leave. As a gesture of respect for this culturally significant ritual, Barlette gave her employees charge of several of her safari vehicles, which were used to transport elders to the ceremony and to deliver

food and firewood that Barlette had donated. Though she and her family opted not to attend the ceremony in person, Barlette's presence was felt as the trucks blazoned with her company's logo punctuated the event with deliveries of goods and people. One man, Mpati, who worked for Barlette as a cook, claimed that though she was white, Barlette respected her Maasai neighbours' culture. He pointed out that Barlette was fluent in the Maasai language, and that she had encouraged him and other workers to speak Maasai with her children in the hopes that they would be fluent in Maa also. Overall, Barlette utilizes her workforce as a bridge to strong relations with the Maasai community. Though she holds a title deed and is, legally speaking, entitled to use her land how she pleases, Barlette recognizes that her future on Ematua will depend on the willingness of her Maasai neighbours to respect her borders and to provide her with labor.

The politics of privacy

While her wealth in land and concern for women's rights suggested Barlette would support Sarah at the ballot box in the 2017 election, members of the European community in Kenya rarely speak openly about their political affiliations. Though white Kenyan citizens have an equal right to participate in all facets of the democratic process, Sarah told me, in 2016, that she could not court white landowners like Barlette as publicly as she courted Africans. While it is not uncommon in northern Kenya for elites to influence how their subjects vote, it would be dangerous, Sarah explained, if Barlette were perceived by politicians like Lempurkel as trying to shape the political affiliations of her workers. Violence against white farmers in Zimbabwe in the late 1990s was indeed catalyzed when Robert Mugabe learned that whites were pressuring their workers to vote against his party (Hughes 2010). Though Sarah claimed that white landowners in

Laikipia rarely speak publicly in support of candidates, she hoped that the support of a few respected whites would ingratiate her to this whole community.

Though Barlette's strong relations with her Maasai staff go a long way to securing her from anti-white rhetoric, cooling relations with her ranch's former owner in 2016 were an opportunity for politicians to enflame racial divisions in the county. In July 2016, during one of James's days off on Ol Tome town, he claimed to be worried by a series of conflicts between Barlette and Sayed he and his colleagues had caught wind of. Though James was as aware as I that Sayed had been displeased with his family's decision to subdivide Mukenya, he claimed that Sayed had recently grown resentful of Barlette's visibly successful tourism business. In the preceding weeks, Sayed allegedly instructed his workers to erect obstructions on the roadway through his property. As Barlette had to cross Mukenya to reach Ematua from the public road, this blockade forced her to contact Sayed, who informed her he would now charge a fee each time she or her guests crossed his land. James felt Sayed's actions were unreasonable, as the man was already benefitting from Barlette's safari enterprise. He claimed that Barlette paid Sayed handsomely to tour her guests across portions of Mukenya, and that the security team she employed had drastically reduced illegal grazing on Sayed's ranch. Finally, according to James, Barlette was especially displeased by the fact that Sayed had moved cattle onto Ematua and was ignoring her requests to remove them. Keeping land clear of cattle is a priority for landowners engaged in tourism, and with the summer tourist season approaching, Barlette feared Sayed was threatening her business.

Though I could not reach Barlette as she and her staff prepared for the approaching tourist season, I did visit with Sayed to try to gain clarity on the emergent conflict with his neighbour. In the months since our first meeting, Sayed had become less indignant about the land

sale, and instead was adamant that the subdivision was never legitimate to begin with. He explained that while he and Barlette had discussed a land sale, Sayed had not agreed to sign the legal documents, and that his brothers came from Maralal to sign them in his place. Though the Ministry of Lands surveyed the new ranch and Barlette was granted a title deed, Sayed claimed the sale could be overturned if he brought a case against Barlette in court. He claimed Barlette had acquired the land under false pretenses, citing the fact that they had not declared their intention to use it for commercial purposes. Though Sayed acknowledged he was receiving benefits from Barlette, such as security and cash payments, he also claimed that the ranch was now worth much more than the little money his family had accepted from Barlette in 2005.

Nearby, the Lekoreres were also concerned about Sayed's belligerence with Barlette, as they feared the man was now vulnerable to (or motivated by) the divisive rhetoric being churned out by Lempurkel, Sarah's main political rival. The Lekoreres believed that Lempurkel was among the people to whom the Hawar family owed money. The Lekoreres believed that the parliamentarian was grazing his own cattle on Mukenya, suggesting he and Sayed had made a political alliance. A series of large water catchments for livestock were built on Mukenya in 2016, which Sayed acknowledged were paid for by Constituency Development Funds, a portion of Lempurkel's discretionary budget intended for improving public infrastructure in his riding. Group ranchers like Dixon were incensed to hear that public money had been spent on a private ranch, especially as Lempurkel had thus far failed to deliver on many promises to the group ranches. James and many of Sarah's Maasai supporters feared that Lempurkel was investing in infrastructure on Mukenya because he intended to use the ranch to house his supporters and intimidate area residents as the 2017 polls drew close. Electoral contests are sometimes won in Kenya by importing voters from another constituency and enrolling them to vote for a lagging

candidate (Hidalgo and Nichter 2016). Sayed, meanwhile, claimed to be amenable to anyone who wanted to invest in his land, stating that he was tired of lending out pastures to people who could not offer him something in return.

Figure 20: Maasai warriors (*morans*) unload a bull donated to them by a European rancher at a ceremony marking the *morans'* rite of passage into elder-hood, July 2016. Photo by the author.

Conclusion

Like the relationships described in other chapters between group ranch residents and conservation partners, the political entanglements I discuss here involve divisive images of

people and of nature. Looking across these three distinct ranches that encircle a portion of Laikipia's Maasai areas, it is apparent that politics of this region are not adequately defined by a black-white, rancher-pastoralist dichotomy. Each of these ranches is distinct in terms of the level of engagement it pursues or accepts with group ranch communities—in some cases, these relationships have been built over decades, while others have only taken shape in recent years. Though Marley and Mukenya were sold in the 1970s by settlers who felt that political tides had turned against them, these lands gave families from throughout northern Kenya the opportunity to invest in their own political futures. The legal borders between the group ranches and the private ones may be largely static, but the politics across and within these landscapes have caused their social boundaries to undergo significant change. In recent decades, Marley has become a site for the bridging of racial and gendered cleavages in Laikipia, while Mukenya and its subdivision, Ematua, may represent a schism of new political conflict.

Having used grazing resources to build strong relationships with Maasai neighbours over several decades, the Lekorere family are now cashing in the social capital they have accumulated in pursuit of political power. As a Maa-speaker, a landowner, and a woman, Sarah Korere is attempting to convince dissonant actors that she can be 'the path of least resistance' that unites them. The Hawar family, meanwhile, having faced their own livelihood misfortunes, have been forced to sell land to a tourism investor. While the success of Barlette's business has helped her to build social and economic ties with Maasai neighbours, her accomplishments have also generated resentment in her land's former owner. Seemingly envious that investment and economic opportunity has eluded him, Sayed views Barlette as an interloper and demonstrates intent in undermining her business and land tenure. As rumour circulated that Lempurkel was

trying to use Sayed as a conduit for anti-white rhetoric, Barlette's employees feared their beneficial arrangements with this partner were threatened.

The chapter illustrates some of the political challenges any conservation partnership in Laikipia may face. Though an actor like Barlette can invest time and resources in building mutually beneficial relationships with neighbours, those relationships may only be as stable as the political systems in which they are nested. As Laikipia's challenging history continues to show itself in the fragmented landscape, group ranches appear to some politicians as a course towards their larger goals. Pastoral communities are attractive allies for conservation actors due to their land, their image, and their labor, though they are also attractive to politicians looking to make gains among disenfranchised populations. As shown in the case of the Maasai Cricket Warriors, the sand harvesting industry, and the Napishana Centre, successes in one place or among one group can easily give life to resentment close by. In some respects, the drama I outline between Barlette and Sayed paints a pessimistic portrait of the future of conservation enterprises in Laikipia. Though conservation actors sometimes work hard to build mutually beneficial partnerships with neighbours, success may only make landowners and communities vulnerable to actors who feel they've been excluded. In the next and final chapter, discussing how Laikipia did encounter violence in the year preceding the 2017 elections, I will explain some of the risks conservation actors took in defending their lands and livelihoods from political attack. Though I have shown, in this chapter, that positive images of conservation and tourism can be true to life, the qualities that make pastoral images so valuable can also be used against their very subjects.

Chapter 7:
Pastoral images and other casualties of the 2017 conflicts in Laikipia.

In September 2016, as I bid goodbye to the participants I had worked with over the preceding fourteen months, the annual dry season once again began to take a toll on Laikipia's group ranches. Ranch owners faced a growing number of requests to rent or grant pasture to their Maasai neighbours. Orghissi Ranch was prepared as usual to help residents of Ol Tome Group Ranch weather the drought, but some ranches in the area turned neighbours away, citing the need to conserve resources for what could be many challenging months to come.

By the summer of 2016, landowners in Laikipia did have additional reasons for wanting to secure their borders. In June, several hundred men and cattle migrated from Samburu County and occupied a corner of a 50,000-acre ranch called Segera.[31] Owned by German businessman and philanthropist Jochen Zeitz, Segera Ranch has a strong reputation in the county for supporting the communities that live along its borders. The men occupying Segera were alleged to have been armed by Laikipia North MP Matthew Lempurkel, who also promised to shield the men from any attempts at prosecution. As explained in Chapter Six, Lempurkel built his political reputation on the promise to evict Europeans from Laikipia, and, in an absence of support from the county's pastoral population, was now utilizing his networks in neighbouring counties to realize this goal.

By July of 2016, the men from Samburu were in a standoff with Segera's security staff. Sarah Korere, who was vying for the chance to unseat Lempurkel in the 2018 elections, visited Segera to try and deescalate the tensions. She soon returned to Marley, claiming to be shocked

[31] See: https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000217846/illegal-herders-shoot-worker-in-ranch-invasion

by the obstinacy of the young Samburu men, as well as the power of the weapons they were carrying. The standoff at Segera would prove to be the start of a year-long political crisis in Laikipia that would call the future of conservation and tourism in the county into question.

This chapter will summarize the political conflicts that roiled Laikipia County in 2017, specifically exploring how the crisis was represented in various forms of media. Though I could not observe the 2017 pre-election conflicts and their immediate impact on group ranch residents firsthand, I followed these events through a variety of means, including communications with participants on Ol Tome. As I also followed the coverage of the conflicts through some of the world's leading news sources, I grew concerned—as did group ranch residents I spoke with—that pastoral lifestyles were being cited as the root of Laikipia's mounting political problems. As Günther Schlee (2012:3) explains, "there is a culture of misrepresentation of pastoralists in the popular, political and 'development' discourses" in Kenya—misrepresentations that have "detrimental, marginalizing and impoverishing effects on those talked about". Pastoralists in Kenya have been subject to campaigns of misrepresentation since the early colonial period, when authorities saw the physical mobility of pastoralism as a threat to modernization and development (Hughes 2006; McIntosh 2016). Though the creation of group ranches following independence seemed to welcome pastoralists into Kenya's national fold, George Paul Meiu (2016:217) notes that "politicians continued to use ethnic stereotypes as ideological alibis for refusing to build infrastructure" and otherwise "develop" pastoral regions of the country.

As several large ranches in Laikipia North became targets for violence in the run-up to Kenya's 2017 General Election, these conflicts were often represented as a 'war' between conservation and pastoralism writ large. With a seemingly unrelenting number of livestock and armed trespassers descending on Laikipia, conservation actors sought to neutralize Lempurkel's

anti-white rhetoric using problematic images and tropes of their own. For instance, journalists and media figures throughout this conflict invoked the theory of the 'tragedy of the commons,' a concept that posits that pastoralism inflicts permanent damage on rangeland ecosystems (Hardin 1968). Other journalists used a trope often called 'the white saviour' to add news value to the story of these conflicts, and curated their coverage to include images of dead wildlife to attract readers' attention. While some members of Laikipia's landowning community did their part to resist the whitewashing of the conflict, Maasai in the group ranches—not to mention many Samburu—were arguably caught in this rhetorical crossfire.

Returning briefly to Ol Tome in early 2018 while working with participants on a different project, I found that the conflicts had led some ranchers to recalibrate their relationships with their Maasai neighbours. For decades, the assumption that group ranches lacked security helped Laikipia's white landowners to secure themselves politically; private ranches stood for security and economic productivity against a symbolic frontier of lawlessness (McIntosh 2016). The funding private ranches have received for anti-poaching has also helped them to claim moral high ground in Laikipia, while the tall electric fences that surround these ranches have made the people that live outside them appear threatening (Neumann 2004).

But as armed herders from nearby counties descended on Laikipia in 2017, large ranches with stronger relations with group ranches credited Maasai neighbours for helping ensure their safety. As the conflicts receded, the frontier of security once symbolized by the barrier across the road on Ol Tome had been re-scaled, and conservation actors expressed a renewed interest in working with group ranches towards a secure future. At the end of the chapter, I assert that conservation actors in Laikipia continue to make problematic use of pastoral images, while

conservation remains an attractive livelihood path for Maasai who succeed in conforming to its "aesthetic order" (Igoe 2010:388).

The 2017 pre-election conflicts

In January 2017, as Kenya officially entered the year of a highly-anticipated election, hundreds of herders and several thousand cattle began crossing the border from Samburu and Baringo counties, proceeding towards ranches in northwest Laikipia.[32] For months, Samburu and other neighbouring counties had been ravaged by one of the most intense droughts in years, and Lempurkel, by all accounts, was trying to turn these misfortunes to his favour. Like on Ol Tome, climate change and population pressures have put strain on natural resources in Samburu, where communities have also been fragmented by inequality in livestock wealth (Lesorogol 2003; Okumu et al 2017; Witsenburg and Adano 2009). Much like in Laikipia, Samburu elites can sometimes afford to amass large herds of cattle, and provide automatic weapons to herders tasked with grazing them in contested areas (Straight 2009; Greiner 2013). Scholars point out that the so-called perpetrators of political violence in Kenya are often socially or economically vulnerable themselves (Boas and Dunn 2013; Kagwanja 2005). In northern Kenya, herders are responsible for safeguarding livestock; where they graze them is often for their owners to determine (Yurco 2017). As wealthy livestock owners in Samburu and other areas struggled to maintain cattle throughout the 2016/17 drought, Lempurkel promised his allies land in Laikipia if they helped him oust white ranchers from the county.

The 'invaders' that entered Laikipia in January 2017 spent several weeks grazing in Loisaba, Mugie, and several other large ranches, even passing briefly onto Koija Group Ranch,

[32] See: https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017/01/19/land-invasion-wrecks-laikipia_c1489820

which falls under NCT's security mandate. The United States and several other Western countries soon placed Laikipia under a blanket travel warning, leading Sandra Barlette and the Napishana Women to receive a prompt flood of cancellations from visitors. By late January, the trespassers and cattle had invaded a large ranch in Laikipia North called Suyian, where they were captured on camera looting and burning the ranch's tourist accommodations.[33] These acts of aggression made it clear, said ranch owners, that the trespassers were politically motivated, and ranch owners across Laikipia urged the Kenyan Government to move swiftly in protecting tourist infrastructure. The Chairman of Ol Lentille, the high end-tourist lodge and conservancy operating in partnership with Kijabe Group Ranch, warned that if Kenya's Government did not respond quickly "the local economy will plunge into a hole from which it will not recover for more than 5 years."[34]

By February, several bystanders, police, and alleged invaders had been killed in skirmishes across Laikipia North. Weapons and ammunition captured from invaders were revealed to have been issued by the Government of Kenya, leading some to surmise that the invaders had been armed by Lempurkel using misappropriated police resources.[35] By early March, the unwelcomed livestock and herders had moved farther south to a 26,000-acre ranch called Sosian, where, on March 5th, the ranch's owner Tristan Voorspuy was attacked and killed. Voorspuy, a former British army officer, had seen his own tourist facility vandalized in recent days, and had set out on horseback to survey the damage when he was attacked by a group of men, allegedly from the Samburu and Pokot ethnic groups.[36] The next morning, Voorspuy's

[33] See: https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017/01/31/herders-invade-suyian-ranch-and-burn-lodge_c1496893
[34] Posted in the WhatsApp group "Ol Lentille Conservation", 3 February 2017.
[35] https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017/03/23/cut-off-supply-of-bullets-and-then-disarm-communities_c1530124
[36] See: https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/03/remembering-tristan-voorspuy-one-of-the-last-stylishly-mad-

killing made front page news on several of the UK's leading media sources.[37] British diplomats also began exerting pressure on the Kenyan government to restore law and order in Laikipia County.[38] Though most European landowners in Laikipia are not technically British citizens, the UK government has historically lent its influence to protecting the rights and interests of this community.[39] Within days, Lempurkel was arrested and charged with inciting violence in the case of Voorspuy's death. Lempurkel denied any responsibility for the violence sweeping Laikipia, stating to the media that the invasions were driven by "drought caused by climate change."[40]

As Lempurkel sat in jail denying any role in the violence in Laikipia, Ol Tome residents claimed the politician's rhetoric was spreading fervently through informal campaign channels. Livestock in the group ranches were struggling immensely as the drought persisted well into April, and Lempurkel's envoys were urging Ol Tome residents to join the invasions by occupying Orghissi. "Matthew was telling us that if he was re-elected all the *wazungu* [white people] would be made to leave the county," said Rogei, a junior elder on Ol Tome. "He said they would leave on the day of the election—Maasai or Samburu could go and have the land." Enticing as Lempurkel's promise of land might have been for group ranchers struggling with drought, residents claimed to recognize that the expulsion of white ranchers from Laikipia would not be in their long-term benefit. Constance said that "even now, when we need to have grass, we can make an agreement with Orghissi or [another ranch nearby]. If we took over those ranches

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people-in-kenya/

[37] See: http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-39176538

[38] See. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/03/inequality-drought-and-the-deadly-fight-for-precious-grazing-land-in-kenya

[39] See: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/british-high-commissioner-addresses-laikipia-county-assembly

[40] See: https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/laikipia/Lempurkel-arrest-political/1183290-3843124-wrbqe9/index.html

security in this area would be very bad—we would be left fighting over grass with Samburu, and probably many people would be killed." Sarah Korere, who by this stage in the conflicts had been confirmed as the Jubilee Coalition's candidate for the Laikipia North seat, also urged residents of the group ranches not to take Lempurkel's pledges at face value. Sarah told me she reminded residents that the invasions were taking place with the support of elites from other counties, and that Laikipia Maasai were unlikely to be given access—much less ownership—of any lands vacated due to violence. Though Sarah confessed that she and her family were fearful their own ranch might also be invaded, the problems in the county provided her an even greater opportunity to cast herself as a brokerage politician. Travelling to insecure corners of Laikipia to speak with ranchers who, in some cases, were boarding up their homes, Sarah was successful in convincing most ranch owners that she was their best hope for stability in the county.

By late April, with rains finally forecasted for Laikipia and neighbouring regions, residents hoped that wetter weather farther north would inspire the trespassers to pack up and leave.[41] Government forces had made small gains by arresting or killing some alleged invaders, though residents noted that the county remained gripped by fear and tension. Sarah told me that some white landowners had in fact voiced support for Lempurkel, fearing they would be subject to violence if he were re-elected without their support. Sarah claimed that other white ranchers saw supporting Lempurkel as a betrayal, though she claimed she understood the actions some had taken given the intense uncertainty they faced. "Everyone was very scared during the election year," Sarah said. "I really don't know what many [white landowners] would be doing now if Matthew had been re-elected."

[41] See: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/23/dreamed-africa-author-kuki-gallmann-shot-wounded-kenya-conservation/

Group ranch residents employed in conservation or tourism enterprises were especially concerned for their futures at that time. James, the young man who works as a tour guide for Barlette, lost a significant amount of income as Barlette's business was closed for most of 2017. Ol Tome Group Ranch was fortunate not to suffer any direct violence or property damage, though the general climate of insecurity prevailing across the whole region took a toll. Ol Tome's economy was stifled as supply chains of goods were disrupted. Schools, clinics, and other public facilities were intermittently closed as non-resident workers feared travelling in the area. Conservation groups like the Ewaso Baboon Project shrunk their workforce down to a skeleton crew, limiting the wages available to the young men they employed in their research. Even the revenue from sand harvesting risked drying up as construction and investment throughout the region slowed. While Kenyans in almost all regions anticipate a lull in economic productivity near the time of an election, Laikipia residents began incurring this cost a full eight months before the poll was held.

By April, Ol Tome residents continued to be thankful that unwelcomed cattle had not overrun their lands, though their neighbours on Il Ng'wesi suffered a damaging incursion of livestock and armed herders across their northern border.[42] Government security forces were dispatched to Il Ng'wesi to help expel invaders, but were soon redirected to the west of Laikipia to respond, residents said, to a more important incident. On April 23rd, Italian-born landowner and memoirist Kuki Gallmann was shot while driving in her vehicle on her 98,000-acre ranch along Laikipia's western border. In previous weeks, Gallmann's safari lodge had been destroyed much like others, and the suspects had allegedly shot and killed several elephants and giraffes.[43]

[42] See: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-landrights-farms/politics-of-death-colonial-scars-and-drought-feed-kenya-land-wars-idUSKBN19E04R

[43] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/23/dreamed-africa-author-kuki-gallmann-shot-wounded-kenya-conservation/

Gallmann was swiftly airlifted to Nairobi for medical treatment, and the international media were reporting on her shooting within hours. By early May, rains had indeed fallen on the region and many so-called invaders did leave, though the battle over what these conflicts represented was, in some sense, only just commencing.

Figure 21: Photograph posted on Ol Lentille's WhatsApp page on February 3rd, 2017, depicting a man invading a ranch wearing a Lempurkel campaign t-shirt. The photo, captioned "Thug", was taken as evidence that the land invasions were political. Photographer unknown.

The image of Gallmann

Though the early incidents from this period of conflict received only back-page coverage in the international media, the shooting of Kuki Gallmann brought much wider attention to the crisis in Laikipia. Through her autobiographical novel, *I Dreamed of Africa* (1991), and its high-budget Hollywood adaptation (2000), Gallmann has played a major role in curating Laikipia's global image in recent decades. Naturalized as a citizen of Kenya after moving there from Italy in the 1970s, Gallmann's memoir tells of how she "offered the land back to nature" by dedicating her ranch to conservation.[44] Gallmann's first turn in the global spotlight in fact occurred in 1989, when she appeared at Kenya's first public ivory burning sporting a custom-made t-shirt reading "Say No to Ivory". Gallmann drew the attention of photographers and international journalists covering the event, who viewed her as an effective and unproblematic ambassador for the conservation movement. Gallmann's rise to fame in the early 1990s coincided with impactful changes to Kenya's wildlife protection laws. In 1988, under the leadership of paelantologist Richard Leakey, the Kenya Wildlife Service imposed a strict shoot-to-kill policy against suspected poachers (Neumann 2004). Necessary though these policies may have seemed for curbing the steep decline in endangered species, shoot-to-kill policies have been criticized for sowing fear between Maasai communities and the Kenya Wildlife Service (see also Duffy et al. 2015; Lunstrum 2014).

In the weeks following her shooting, while Gallmann recovered at her other home in Nairobi, she granted an exclusive interview to British freelance reporter Tristan McConnell. Excerpts from the interview appeared as a feature in the UK's *Guardian* newspaper on June 18th.[45] In the piece, McConnell explains that Gallmann's ranch had recently become the

[44] https://gallmannkenya.org/about-us/our-story/
[45] See: https://www.theguardian.com/global/2017/jun/18/who-shot-kuki-gallmann-the-story-of-a-kenyan-

"epicentre of a violent struggle pitting private landowners against semi-nomadic herders"—signaling the combative and dichotomizing tone through which many writers would represent the crisis. McConnell points out that the violence in Laikipia appeared to be incited by politicians, though he also uses the invasions as an allegory for Kenya's struggles with population growth. "Villages have become towns, and towns have become cities," McConnell says. "Livestock has increased and grassland has been grazed into dust." Here, McConnell deploys two misconceptions often associated with the tragedy of the commons: first, that the accumulation of livestock is unbound; and, second, that it contributes to desertification (McCabe 1990). In recent decades, ecologists working in northern Kenya have debunked many myths associated with the tragedy of the commons, asserting that livestock numbers have not so much increased, but rather have become concentrated within smaller grazing areas (Kimiti et al. 2017; Lesorogol 2003). Population growth, ecologists assert, does not lead inexorably to growth in livestock herds, as pastoral communities facing land constraints consistently look to other livelihoods (Kibet et al. 2016). Seasonal droughts in northern Kenya also continue to act as a check on the growth of herds, contrary to the image that stock accumulation occurs without limit or without risk or cost to livestock owners.

Throughout his piece, McConnell also situates pastoralists in juxtaposition to sedentary communities, advancing the image that 'people-on-the-move' are disorderly and inherently dangerous. McConnell profiles a member of the Laikipia's region's Il-Chamus community, emphasizing that this group traditionally practiced fishing, downplaying the fact that they also raise livestock (Little 1985). In recent decades, anthropologists have tracked the symbolic connection between movement and danger in Western imaginaries, exemplified by the anxieties

conservationist-heroine

felt in America and Europe about 'illegal' immigration. Being rooted in place, as Malkki (1992;1995) explains, is seen in many cultures as 'the natural' state of being, and helps us explain the stigmatization that pastoralists have suffered throughout Kenya's colonial and postcolonial history.

That an article voicing the views of Kuki Gallmann would cast a dark light on pastoralists is not surprising, as this figure's writings have often been criticized for representing Africans in problematic ways. Gallmann's 1991 memoir and other publications make frequent use of the trope of the poacher, a product of Malthusian thinking in which poverty is associated with criminality and danger (Neumann 2004). "These children have never seen and been taught to appreciate the beauty of their country" (Gallmann 1991:251), Gallmann wrote of her neighbours in the early nineties, going on to say that the communities living near her ranch are "polluted by alien religions, by poverty, and a lack of worthy goals". As previously mentioned, pastoralism has often unnerved Europeans in Kenya, as it is seen, say McIntosh (2016:55), as involving "too little labor and too much movement." Reflecting on the fact that security forces were pulled from Il Ng'wesi to respond to Gallmann's shooting, one Il Ng'wesi resident said "the government cares much more about *wazungu* [Europeans] than it cares about Maasai."

In addition to perpetuating problematic stereotypes about pastoralism in writing, McConnell and *The Guardian* also used sensational images to give the story of Gallmann's shooting mass appeal. McConnell's article shows a photo taken years before of Gallmann seated next to an elephant corpse—an effort to situate the crisis in Laikipia among broader concerns about illegal wildlife killing. Incidents of poaching were alleged to have taken place on Gallmann's land during its occupation, to be sure, though inserting this image in the context of this story posed its own dangers. In recent years, sensationalized cases of wildlife killing in

Africa have aroused extreme anger among Western news readers—such as in the case of Cecil the lion, shot by a licensed American sport-hunter operating in the grey zone of regulation in Zimbabwe. According to Büscher (2016:992), responses to the "poaching crisis on news media often become hysteric, defined as a situation where emotions run so high that it leads to exaggerated, extreme or uncontrolled behaviour". Cursory readers of *The Guardian* could easily infer that the invasions in Laikipia were motivated by poaching, inviting global audiences or governments to support fortress-style or militarized conservation. Büscher (2016) says that graphic images of dead wildlife are crucial in stimulating international support for conservation; they are this sector's most effective public relations tool for eliciting support from governments, funding bodies, and the public.

Figure 22: Photo accompanying a feature on Kuki Gallmann published by the Guardian UK on June 18th, 2017. The undated photo was distributed to the media by the Gallmann family following her shooting. Photo property of Agence France Presse.

Another media agency that utilized the photo explained it was distributed by the Gallmann family themselves. *The Guardian* and other outlets that used the photo did not disclose efforts to verify when and where the photo was taken. News readers would be justified in assuming the photo was taken in the days preceding Gallmann's shooting, or that the herders invading her ranch did so with the goal of poaching rare wildlife.[46] Once McConnell's piece cultivates the perception that pastoralism and the people who practice it are dangerous, he reaffirms that landowners like Gallmann represent a solution. "Some ranches have closed and some owners are considering selling," he writes, "but others, among them Gallmann, are hunkering down."

In July 2017, with elections now less than a month away and much of Laikipia remaining under police lockdown, *The New York Times* carried an article titled "Loss of fertile land fuels 'looming crisis' across Africa."[47] Its author, Jeffrey Gettleman, uses the crisis in Laikipia as an opportunity to discuss issues of land shortage across the continent, neglecting the extent to which the conflicts in Laikipia were rooted in the region's historical and climactic particularities. Gettleman posits, for example, that nomadic pastoralism is a short-term response to soil degradation, withholding the fact that Laikipia North and many nearby regions have never been well-suited to cultivation agriculture. Gettleman downplays the fact that many large ranches in Laikipia have historically been dedicated to livestock production, and withholds the fact that areas inhabited by pastoralists remain among the few regions of Africa where wildlife still thrive (Reid 2012). In attempting to explain Laikipia's environmental challenges to an audience of urban, Western readers, Gettleman says: "the ground [in northern Kenya] is as hard as concrete

[46] https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/wounded-author-kuki-gallmann-vows-return-to-kenyan-ranch-20170512
[47] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/29/world/africa/africa-climate-change-kenya-land-disputes.html

and the rain just splashes off, like a hose spraying a driveway." As *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* are the world's first and third most-read news sources, respectively, the limited portrait of pastoralism these two articles paint could have significant long-term repercussions. While McConnell's piece is hazardous to the image of pastoralists in Laikipia by associating them with insecurity and disorder, Gettlemen's strips pastoralism of its social moorings and its ability to sustain people in the face of climactic adversity (Galvin 2008; Fratkin 1986; Krätli and Schareika 2010). For centuries, pastoralism has been the only viable livelihood on four fifths of the land that makes up Kenya—areas drier and more challenging to survive in than most Kenyans realize. Despite many challenges, pastoralism remains the most productive use of arid lands in Kenya, which continues to be a leading source of meat for Kenya's cities and growing urban centres. Livelihood diversification is now vital for pastoral communities throughout Kenya, but we must not accept the popular assertion, says Schlee (2012), that pastoral livelihoods are destined for extinction.

Though many residents of Ol Tome remained unaware of how the conflicts in Laikipia were read about around the globe, many did get a taste of the anxiety that the conflicts were causing Kenya's government and its law enforcement bodies. Residents of Koija Group Ranch testified that several hundred of their livestock had been mistaken for trespassing cows, and were shot from a helicopter by police forces, who would not admit fault for this grievous error.[48] Meanwhile, Ol Tome residents claimed that they were harassed and intimidated by security forces as they attempted to move about the county. Maasai residents acknowledged that many Kenyans struggle to differentiate between Maasai and Samburu people. "The Samburu are the

[48] The shooting of cattle by security forces during this conflict is outlined in this media article: https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001234496/security-forces-shoot-500-cows-in-laikipia-as-herders-protest

ones who are responsible for the violence and the problems during that time," said one man in Ol Tome town in 2018. "But when problems have happened with livestock involved, even the government does not care who is who." Ol Tome's Location Chief, who expressed in 2015 the need to attract more investment to the area, claimed the conflicts had impacted group ranches in much the same way as they did the tourism sector. "People around Kenya need to know," he said, "that this community are serious people. We care about business, we care about safety, but when things like this happen, our whole area looks bad."

Truth and lies

While many foreign audiences learned about the conflicts in Laikipia in a manner that underprivileged the experiences of pastoral people, some journalists did work to probe more critically at the socio-economic underpinnings of this crisis. On February 9th, during the week after trespassers had burned the lodge at Suyian Ranch to the ground, *The New African* magazine carried a story titled "Conspiracy in the Wild," penned by Kenyan journalist John Mbaria.[49] In the piece, Mbaria claims that the invasion of Laikipia had been driven by the disenfranchisement of pastoralists in Samburu County, the result, he alleges, of conservation programs implemented by the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT). As explained, NRT is a conservation organization founded by one of Laikipia's most prominent European landowners, which oversees security and natural resource management in thirty-three pastoral areas across eleven Kenyan counties. In *the New African*, Mbaria explains that NRT has facilitated investment partnerships in Samburu, Isiolo, and elsewhere in the north, many stipulating that portions of group ranches or community areas be set aside for tourism. NRT and their partners claim that community members may graze

[49] See: http://newafricanmagazine.com/current-affairs/investigations/a-conspiracy-in-the-wild/

livestock in these areas during droughts, and that the security resources NRT provides protects these 'grass banks' from unsanctioned grazers. Mbaria, however, alleges that these efforts have deprived Samburu people of access to crucial pastures, and that conservation efforts are driving pasture scarcity, forcing many pastoralists south towards Laikipia. "Claims have also been made," Mbaria adds, "that NRT's activities have far-reaching implications on the entire country and therefore need to be handled with more than casual attention by Kenya's allies across the world."

Though magazine articles often allow writers to editorialize on political issues, Mbaria's allegations against NRT soon drew ire from the conservation community. The Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, a leading Nairobi-based conservation lobby group, accused Mbaria of fabricating information for his feature, and warned that he was painting "a bad image on wildlife conservancies in Kenya." Mbaria sparked further anger in the weeks following Gallmann's shooting with a publication in the online magazine *The Elephant* titled "The Laikipia crisis and the Disenfranchisement of Kenyans in the North".[50] In the piece, Mbaria argues that the conflicts in Laikipia should "be looked at as a national security issue exacerbated by historical land injustices and the pursuit of an inappropriate conservation model that relegates the true owners of the resources to the periphery." In 2016, Mbaria had also released a book titled *The Big Conservation Lie*, co-authored with Mordecai Ogada, a former Executive Director of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum. The book makes serious allegations of corruption against white Kenyans in the conservation establishment, particularly Richard Leakey, former KWS head, and Ian Craig, the founder of NRT and a co-founder of LWF. Mbaria and Ogada (2016) criticize the conservation sector for depoliticizing the power and wealth that the European community holds

[50] See: https://www.theelephant.info/features/2017/05/18/the-laikipia-crisis-and-the-disenfranchisement-of-kenyans-in-the-north/

in Kenya, and allege that the threat of species extinction has been used to hold Kenya's government hostage to Western donors. They claim that Leakey has used his influence among Kenya's environmental authorities to facilitate oil exploration in Turkana County, and they point out that staunch anti-poaching figures like Craig have profited from harvesting wild game throughout the years (Mbaria and Ogada 2016).

Though Mbaria and Ogada's criticisms of the conservation sector echo the concerns of many leading scholars (Igoe and Brockington 2007), their comments were especially unwelcomed by the conservation community in the context of the 2017 crisis in Laikipia. An American conservationist working in Laikipia told me that Lempurkel had presumably read Mbaria's reporting, and said it might have helped this politician justify instigating violence against white landowners. As explained in Chapter Six, European citizens in Kenya usually abstain from speaking about politics in public, especially since whites in Zimbabwe faced a campaign to expel them from their lands in the late 1990s. According to David Hughes (2010), the occupation of white-owned lands in Zimbabwe began as retaliation against one farmer who was vocally urging his large workforce to support a party that opposed Robert Mugabe. In Chapter Six, I highlighted the anxieties Barlette may have felt as politicians competed for support among her workers—people over whom she holds power, but who she cannot be perceived as asserting political influence. Though white Kenyans, says McIntosh (2016:4), "haven't seen the nadir of loss faced by white Zimbabweans," they can be vulnerable to demonization by politicians, and see criticisms like those from Mbaria as threats.

Though the land conflicts in Zimbabwe and Kenya did bear some similarities in rhetoric, critics have in fact denounced the associations drawn between these countries by media

sources.[51] In both cases, politicians described white settlers as relics of a violent history, though calls to remove white landowners from Laikipia had no backing from Kenya's national government. As Zimbabwe's crisis in the late 1990s devastated the economy and drove away investment, political scientist Gabrielle Lynch warned that "comparisons to Zimbabwe do immeasurable damage to Kenya's image, [and have] a detrimental effect on investment and tourism."[52] Lynch does well in urging Kenyans to care about how the Laikipia conflicts are represented, though it is remarkable that as this crisis continued to claim lives, "images" were what critics considered most at stake.

ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth

In the weeks after Gallmann's shooting, as global media coverage of the crisis reached a fever pitch, one landowning family in Laikipia created a multi-platform social media group called *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth*.[53] Seemingly concerned that the whitewashing of the crisis in Laikipia could spur an even greater backlash against white landowners, *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* attempted to amplify the voices of African stakeholders who had also been affected by the conflicts. *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* boasts over twelve thousand followers on the social networking website Facebook, and several thousand additional followers on Twitter and the photo-sharing platform Instagram. On the page, a security guard at a large private ranch recounts how he was injured in a skirmish with invaders in July of 2017. The testimony is accompanied by a photo of the speaker badly bruised and bleeding from the face. The man explains, despite

[51] See: https://www.nation.co.ke/oped/opinion/ADDRESSING-INVASION-OF-RANCHES-IN-LAIKIPIA/440808-3847206-lmcpra/index.html

[52] See: https://www.nation.co.ke/oped/opinion/address-laikipia-ranch-invasions/440808-3799016-9r98ykz/index.html

[53] I am aware of the identity of this page's host, but am withholding it as they expressed the desire to remain anonymous.

his injuries, that he is grateful to be employed on a white-owned ranch, and claims that the land invasions in Laikipia are threatening his family's financial future.

Figure 23: Social media content posted by *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* on July 7, 2017: A security guard injured in the invasion of Ol Maisor Ranch.

In other posts, men and women are shown sitting with computers or notebooks explaining the passion that they feel for conservation; some of these conservation workers are from pastoral groups, though the majority of them are not. These figures testify that working in conservation has allowed them to support their families while helping to ensure a bright future for Laikipia at large. Female figures such as teachers are featured testifying to how positive conservation is for gender relations, stating that, without it, Maasai women would have few ways to earn incomes and struggle to educate their children. Individuals' testimonies on this page are oftentimes lengthy and retain language errors made by the speaker, thus preserving the personalities of the

real people affected by this crisis. Initially shared within the social and professional networks of landowners, conservationists, and tourism entrepreneurs in Laikipia, *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* soon developed a larger following of readers worldwide. Effective as the figure of Kuki Gallmann was for giving the Laikipia crisis global news appeal, some realized this discourse could have an alienating impact on African viewers. In addition to showing that white landowners were not exploiting Africans as Lempurkel alleged, conservation actors—in this time of crisis—needed to let African voices do the speaking.

Though I argue that *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* did help restore nuance to a story oversimplified by the Western media, this social media voice was also unforgiving of any actors who support or practice pastoralism. For example, one woman from Laikipia's group ranches who is training to be a doctor with a scholarship from a conservation organization explains how greatly she values education and the impact she hopes it will have on her community. "When I become a doctor," she says, "the first thing I am going to do is give back to my community … education is power ... a lot can be achieved when people are educated." Though this woman's belief in the value of education is shared by many group ranch residents today, her success is represented as a direct consequence of the fact that she has recognized the pitfalls of pastoralism. "Ignorance, illiteracy, and a lack of knowledge," says the medical student, "is why some people still practice nomadic pastoralism when surely the drought and famine will kill their livestock every few years." The support that conservationists appear to have provided this aspiring doctor is commendable, though *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* presents her success as the simple product of her choice. As explained in Chapter Four using the case of Il Ng'wesi Group Ranch, it is often only select families or individuals that can access educational opportunities provided through conservation. Though this medical student has the right to try to convince her community of the

benefits of education, her image sends the message that pastoralism must be abandoned for group ranches to develop. The security guard injured in the attack on a ranch is quoted giving similar testimony: "So the advice I am giving my children is to go to school and study hard," he says. "Keeping livestock is not a good way of life anymore."

While the image of the medical student is problematic in that it pits one person's advantages against a whole community, other content featured on *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* denounces pastoralism in more explicit terms. In August 2017, one post showed a satellite image of a border zone between a group ranch and a private land parcel, attributing the visible contrast between them to their different ownership and management models. "This image," the post reads, "shows two properties in Laikipia – one which has had careful land management and rangeland rehabilitation; the other communal land." Using the stability of this photo image to hold these two land parcels in contrast, the post asserts that group ranch lands have been damaged due to the "tragedy of the commons"— "a typical theme," says the post, "running throughout pastoralist history." The image is annotated with the message that "more needs to be done to create awareness and regulations protecting the environment within these communities, and for their attitudes to adapt if they are to have a place in the modern world."

While *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* can be commended for offering an alternative to simplistic coverage of these conflicts by the global media, it demonstrates how challenging it is for conservation to justify itself without demonizing other forms of land use. Though *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* did bring some nuance to the otherwise limited picture of the crisis, it simultaneously suggested that pastoralism is a threat to Laikipia's social, economic, and environmental security. Photos of unpeopled, 'pristine' landscapes are not only effective in tourist brochures; they can be utilized as weapons when struggles over belonging grow

combative (Hughes 2010; Geschiere 2009). *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* may indeed have been effective in drawing attention away from the less sympathetic plight of landowners such as Gallmann, but it also risked alienating the very communities the future of landowners in Laikipia may depend on.

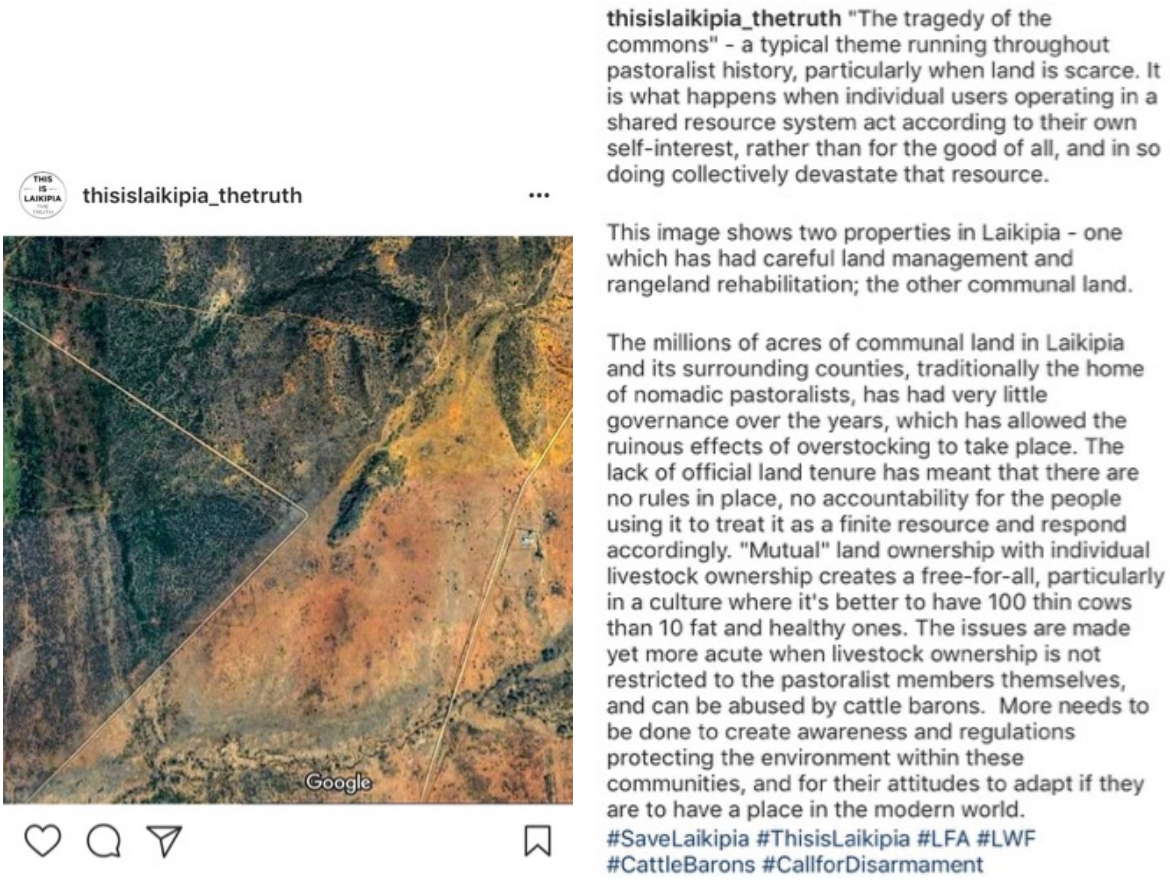

Figure 24: Social media content posted by *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* on August 1, 2017: an undated satellite image of the boundary between a Maasai group ranch and a white-owned ranch.

The conflict in introspect

When I returned briefly to Ol Tome in early 2018, I found many people beleaguered by what had been one of the most challenging years in recent memory. Group ranch residents claimed they were relieved that Sarah Korere had defeated Lempurkel in the August election, but

were disappointed that a run-off in the presidential ballot had required another election to be held in mid-November. “It was a terrible year,” said one Meru man who ran a small metals shop in Ol Tome town. “No one was making any money at all, and this year we are now working hard to catch up.” Schools, government offices, and businesses throughout Kenya closed for the August elections, and many remained shuttered throughout the fall amid fears that a run-off could spark political violence.

By 2018, some landowners in Laikipia who suffered damage to their tourist businesses had begun to rebuild, though it remained uncertain if and when tourists would return to the county. Near the road through Ol Tome, I crossed paths with James—the man who worked in 2016 as a head tour guide for Barlette. He still held his job, but said that Barlette was struggling to recover after being out of business for a year. “I know that *wageni* [visitors] will return,” said James, “but it might take long, like when Kenya saw lots of violence in 2008. I think many people might fear Laikipia now, and it will take time for its reputation to be fixed.”

Within weeks of her victory, as people throughout the county began wiping the stress of the election from their brows, Sarah Korere faced pressure from her constituents to ensure that invaders from the north would not return the next time northern Kenya suffered drought. In October, with the backing of many Europeans landowners and the Laikipia County Government, Sarah forged a deal for hundreds of group ranch residents to be armed and trained as Kenya Police Reservists. A week-long training course was administered by the Kenya Police at Ol Tome, and Wilfred, Rogei, Dixon, and other men were all given newly minted AK-47s. After years of treating group ranches as the source of insecurity or disorder in Laikipia, leaders and influential ranchers in the county appeared to see local pastoralists as allies. “We need guns now that we have seen what can happen to lands that are not protected,” said Rogei. “The conflicts

last year have made these ranches realize the Maasai are all that stands between them and the Samburu."

Allowing me to feel the weight of his weapon as we sat on the steps of a shop on Ol Tome, Wilfred explained that the manager at Orghissi had relayed a message to him from the ranch's foreign owner. Orghissi's owner was thankful, Wilfred told me, that the Ol Tome community had stood by them during the crisis—for not giving in to Lempurkel's enticement to break down their fences and occupy the ranch. "I think before, many ranches in this area thought they must protect themselves from Maasai. They let us graze our cows on their place sometimes, but they would not hire us for work. But I think people—politicians in the county, too—have a better idea of group ranches now. They know that if they keep us as friends, we can help to protect all of Laikipia." Weeks later, I passed Orghissi's Manager on the road to Nanyuki, and he confirmed—having been less affected by the conflicts—that their Maasai neighbours on Ol Tome deserved the credit. "We will need to continue to manage illegal grazing by being strict with group ranches," the Manager said, "but there is no question after last year that group ranches and private ranches have to work together. They rely on us more and more for grass, and for years, we have thought that was pain. It still is. But we know there are much larger problems that come with separating ourselves from communities. We need the group ranches to be our allies, not the allies of corrupt politicians." Even elders like Ngila, still unconvinced that tourism can provide worthwhile income for group ranches, were happy to see Ol Tome receive credit for the security it can offer neighbours. "These past years, Orghissi have, I think, been forgetting about us. But now they remember that we are their neighbours and we must work together to all be secure."

On January 9th, 2018, only one week before I returned to Laikipia, a large ranch called Ole Naishu, not far from Ol Tome, was targeted by a group of armed men estimated to number in excess of fifty.[54] The men stole as many as 800 head of cattle belonging to the ranch's white owners, and made off across Makurian, a Maasai group ranch that lies along Ole Naishu's northern border. The raid aroused strong concern among group ranchers and white ranchers in Laikipia, who all feared that the county might backslide into the chaos residents and authorities had worked hard to escape in recent months. Makurian residents were not alleged to have perpetrated the raid, but were accused of complicity by Ole Naishu's owners as they failed to sound the alarm as the stolen cows were being moved across their land towards the Isiolo border.

As I handed him back his loaded rifle, Wilfred claimed not to be surprised by Ole Naishu's misfortunes. Ole Naishu, he explained, has the poorest reputation for relations with its neighbours among all ranches in the county. The ranch's owner, Jeremy Block, is also the owner of the Dorman's coffee brand, a large corporation with business interests throughout East Africa. Staff members of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum told me years before that Ole Naishu was badly "out of sync" with other ranches, many of which were responding to the 2017 conflicts by trying to build closer relationships with group ranch neighbours. Mordecai Ogada, the former head of LWF who had spent years mediating disputes between Ole Naishu and group ranches, said the ranch's management "feel no responsibility to the group ranches at all—they are just nuisance that are basically ignored." As police forces descended on Makurian to investigate the raid, Sarah Korere was fearful of the outcome and urged police to exercise restraint.[55] Some residents of Makurian had allegedly fled their homes and taken shelter in the Mukogodo Hills fearing that

[54] See: https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/02/16/610-cattle-still-missing-after-laikipia-cattle-raid-on-january-31_c1714639

[55] https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/02/20/leaders-support-the-ongoing-operation-to-recover-stolen-livestock_c1716584

police were sanctioned to use violence against anyone suspected of stealing Block's cattle. "How can people expect their neighbours to come help them, if they have been treated like the enemy all the time?" Wilfred asked. "Ole Naishu will continue to have great problems if they do not try to help the people more."

As I prepared to say farewell to my friends on Ol Tome yet another time, John—the young cricketer who had appeared alongside me on Ol Pejeta's social media page in 2016—approached me in the group ranch's town centre with a gleaming look on his face. He informed me he had recently applied for a job as a Community Conservation Liaison at Orghissi—a newly created role that involved educating group ranch members about responsible natural resource use. John would attend an interview the following week and was understandably feeling nervous. The salary the job paid could provide him strong security and allow him to help relatives in times of need. John had not only come to me to convey the good news, but also to ask for my assistance in preparing for his interview. I told him that my experience with professional interviews was limited, but that I would try and advise him as best I could.

John told me that his interview would be conducted by two of Orghissi's senior staff: a woman who worked as the Conservation Director, and the Manager that I had spoken to on the road the week before. John had held a few jobs in the past—such as a youth mobilizer with an NGO—but he said that part of the reason he felt stressed was this job and interview involved working with whites. John explained that he expected to be quizzed on his commitment to conservation—questions that would assess whether he believed that conservation and traditional lifestyles were compatible. "I need to seem not too confident but also show them I have my own ideas," he explained. "They want someone who is loyal to their people but not afraid to tell people they are wrong." With regard to convincing the interviewers that he was committed to

conservation, I encouraged John to reference his place with the Maasai Cricket Warriors, and to emphasize the international perspectives it had given him. Most emphatically, I repeated the adage that, in interviews, it often profits people to simply "be themselves." John said he understood, but reminded me of how contradictory this advice sometimes seemed to group ranch members. "When Maasai go for [a] job, people sometimes want us because we are Maasai. We can help conservationist[s] or ranches like [Orghissi] to work with Maasai better. But it is not easy to be the Maasai and the mzungu at [the] same time. Which Maasai do they want," John fumed in frustration, "the Maasai who loves cattle or the Maasai who loves wildlife?"

Conclusion

Looking at the ways the 2017 crisis in Laikipia was represented in different forms of media, it is certain that this crisis grew to be a struggle over more than simply votes or space for grazing cattle. As Kuki Gallmann, in her notoriety as a conservation heroine, has helped link Laikipia with the world for decades, her shooting was a chance for journalists to pull at the heartstrings of their Western readers. Despite its problems, Gallmann's image as an anti-poaching icon continues to hold potency for Western audiences, a fact that made *The Guardian*'s coverage of this crisis especially hazardous for pastoralists in Kenya. While some media sources used the trope of 'poacher' to clear a moral high ground for minority landowners, others used pastoralism as a parable for pandering to Western concerns about climate change in Africa. *The New York Times*, while relying on white interlocutors, cast nature or land as the victim of the crisis—described as pillaged by nomadic people who are turning Kenya irreversibly to dust.

As a small group of Kenyan critics argued that the conflicts in Laikipia were the fruit of longstanding inequality in the region, landowners took to social media and forged a space where

a different story of the conflicts could be told. *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* was helpful, I suggest, in resisting the whitewashing of this crisis, though this platform also cast pastoralism as a ruinous practice and demonized communities who refused to choose alternatives. Often represented as war between conservation and pastoralism writ large, the 2017 conflicts in Laikipia threatened to alienate group ranch communities from their diverse neighbours and the wider world.

After many months of living in the shadows of these conflicts and the economic challenges that they had caused, Ol Tome Group Ranch and its neighbours see new reasons to work together despite the vastly different land use models they pursue. Private ranches like Orghissi credit Ol Tome residents for not giving into Lempurkel's divisive rhetoric, and for recognizing that Orghissi's and Ol Tome's security and futures are closely intertwined. For decades, Laikipia's group ranches have been enclosed and insulated from their European neighbours, whose fences, firearms, guard dogs and helicopters have often been paid for by conservation organizations. Though the distribution of arms might not appear to some as evidence that group ranches are being brought in from the cold, residents have received this as a signal that Laikipia does not blame Maasai for its recent problems.

Elsewhere across Laikipia, new security concerns have brought longstanding anxieties and resentments to a head. Makurian Group Ranch, for instance, has been blamed for failing to protect its neighbours from livestock theft. Ole Naishu, the private ranch targeted in recent raids, has a poor track record of relations with Maasai, which will likely worsen if police authorities take punitive action against Makurian residents. Sure as Wilfred was that being given guns was a gesture of trust by the county for Maasai, he asserted that respectful, lasting relations with neighbours was the best way for private landowners to secure themselves. Progress notwithstanding, it will continue to be challenging for group ranches to work with their

neighbours on truly level footing, given their different resource capabilities and the embeddedness of anti-pastoral prejudice deep within Kenya and the world's psyche.

Despite the security challenges Laikipia experienced around Kenya's General Election of 2017, conservation remains an impetus (or a pretense) for relationships between group ranches and their neighbours. Though tourism in Laikipia appeared to face a long road to recovery in 2018, large ranches continued to recruit Maasai like John to help convince their neighbours of conservation's promise. John may indeed have his own reservations about whether conservation can secure his people's future, but he also knows that succeeding in this industry requires him to present a carefully crafted image. While life stories such as John's would make attractive content for the curators of *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth*, expecting other young Maasai in Laikipia to emulate John would be problematic. John, from a relatively wealthy Maasai family, is exceptionally educated by group ranch standards, and has developed confidence and language skills through his global travels with the Maasai Cricket Warriors. But in the eyes of landowners and other proponents of conservation in Laikipia, John embodies the precise image of conservation they wish to project—a charismatic individual who has learned through life experience that conservation is his best chance for a bright future.

As Hegel (1991[1820]) once described, being embedded within larger socio-economic systems can indeed shield people from uncertainty—in this case, from the shock of droughts that decimate livestock, or seeing armed invaders bearing down on people's homes. Though many residents of Ol Tome have so far failed to see a future for themselves reflected in popular images of conservation, they may—after decades of being cast as threats—see security as a pillar of these efforts that they can reasonably and proudly fulfill. Conservation, for the diverse and hard-

to-capture ways it makes itself felt in Laikipia North, involves compromises not everyone can make, and is mediated, so often, by highly political images.

Conclusion: Conservation's paradox.

On March 19th, 2018, after several months of deteriorating health, Sudan—the last surviving male of the northern white rhino species—was euthanized at Ol Pejeta. Before the rhino's death, which scientists said made the subspecies "functionally extinct," veterinarians harvested Sudan's sperm, in the hope that a male northern white rhino may roam the plains of Laikipia again one day.[56] Sudan's death made headlines around the globe via news sources like CNN and BBC, who reproduced photos of Sudan alongside his most famous visitors and patrons. *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* posted its own tribute to Sudan, stating that his "death has left many with a heavy heart, and a renewed determination to win the fight against poaching and end the rhino horn trade for good." On March 30th, Ol Pejeta hosted a memorial service for the rhino, attended by several high-profile politicians and representatives from international conservation organizations. The event—which involved the unveiling of a headstone beneath a tree in a picturesque location on Ol Pejeta—was also a prominent display of conservation militarism. Dozens of heavily armed rangers marched in formation for the attendees, "a fitting tribute," said Ol Pejeta's social media, to Sudan's "life and his great work as a rhino conservation ambassador."

As Sudan's death sparked a brief outpouring of moral and financial support for wildlife conservation in Laikipia, some critics claimed that Sudan's passing was in fact the end of a prolonged "hoax." Mordecai Ogada, former head of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum and co-author of *The Big Conservation Lie*, argued that the media attention Sudan's death had attracted exemplified how conservation relies on crisis narratives.[57] Biologists disagree on the extent to

[56] See: https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/03/sudan-northern-white-rhino-death/556058/
[57] See: https://thewire.in/environment/was-the-death-of-the-last-male-northern-white-rhino-more-blood-on-our-hands-or-the-end-of-a-hoax

which the northern white rhino is distinct from its southern cousin, with critics alleging that the uniqueness of the species has been exaggerated for political gain (Groves et al. 2010). As conservation only unfolds in situations where something is under threat (Soulé 1986), Sudan's status as the last male northern white rhino made him a beacon for funding and political support for Ol Pejeta and other private conservation areas like it.

Despite the passing of Ol Pejeta's lead attraction and the ongoing struggle to draw tourists back to Laikipia following the conflicts of 2017, the Last Male Standing cricket tournament was slated to take place again at Ol Pejeta in June 2018. The tournament had gone ahead in 2017 amid the tensions gripping the county, though members of the Maasai Cricket Warriors noted that the event was greatly subdued compared to previous years. Once again, the cricketers from Ol Tome would be a major draw for the event, taking place, an advert said, "on one of Ol Pejeta's wide open plains, surrounded by wildlife and with the magnificent Mt. Kenya as a suitably dramatic backdrop." *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* released a statement promoting the charitable event, which featured a photo of the Maasai Cricket Warriors posing alongside Sudan, the late rhino. The tournament would begin raising funds for a new in vitro fertilization program for rhinos. "Some of the funds", said organizers, would also "work to transform the lives of thousands of disadvantaged youths in Africa through character education and sport." Capitalizing on the attention Sudan's death had brought to Ol Pejeta and its conservation work, the 2018 Last Male Standing tournament was cast as an opportunity for Laikipia to rehabilitate its struggling global image.

Though the Maasai Cricket Warriors have been a staple of this tournament for several years, on May 2nd, the team released a statement on Facebook claiming they were cutting ties with Ol Pejeta and the cricket organization Last Man Stands. It read:

> To Our Esteemed followers and supporters, we are sorry to inform you that The Maasai Cricket Warriors [w]ill not be taking part in The Last Male Standing Rhino Cup this year. We have done all [that] we could to help raise funds for Sudan while he was alive … We felt that Ol Pejeta Conservancy and Last Male Standing Rhino Cup - Ol Pejeta Kenya [are] just interested in using the Maasai Cricket Warriors to raise funds but they are never bothered [to] uplift the Warriors life style or rather empowering them, but they seem to be self centered and they cared more about their own development! It is a SHAME to them. They couldn't even invite the Warriors during the send-off ceremony for Sudan! We believe in the true spirit of conservation as always we have been, The right way! Not after money and exploiting the poor Warriors! We therefore kindly request Ol Pejeta Conservancy and Land Man Stands to immediately cease from using Maasai Cricket Warriors pictures in their promotion of the tournament and fundraising. Period.

In subsequent days, the Maasai Cricket Warriors' Facebook page was flooded with messages of encouragement, both from actors within Kenya and around the globe. "I hope your energies go to a more grateful endeavour next time," wrote a Brit named Simon Mockford. "Sure, they were using you guys to make money for their own benefits," said Kenyan Faith Mwenda. Weeks later, images of the Maasai Cricket Warriors continued to adorn the tournament's promotional materials, encouraging amateur cricket teams from Kenya or abroad to register for a fee of 1,600 US dollars. Promotional materials also stated that "exclusive accommodation discounts" were "available in Ol Pejeta for all players and supporters." Supporters unable to attend the tournament could donate through a crowdfunding website, which also featured a photo of the Warriors posing beside Sudan.

The extent to which the Maasai Cricket Warriors have been exploited by their partners is open to debate, though the team's inclusion and exclusion from events and images pertaining to Sudan illustrate a paradox. Though conservation efforts rely on images of pastoral people it can

count as allies, conservation actors will erase or crop those people out of images when they are not needed. Though some members of the Maasai Cricket Warriors have capitalized on the social opportunities that the team affords them, their experiences demonstrate that their image, not their persons, is what their conservation partners value most.

In the case of the annual tournament at Ol Pejeta, raising funds for conservation while profiting through tourism, the image of the Maasai Cricket Warriors is useful on two fronts. The traditionally clothed and statuesque Maasai men help draw wider attention to the tournament, and allow visitors to curate their own images as they pose for photographs with the Maasai team. As the men play cricket, their graceful, potent movements are reminiscent of how Maasai warriors might appear in battle, conjuring "the spirit", as Anna Tsing (2000:188) would call it, of times and places in Kenya that have passed. The second way in which the image of the Maasai Cricket Warriors is useful in the context of this tournament is to show the world that conservation in Laikipia enjoys strong support from African communities. As the colonial nature of land relations in Laikipia is visible to some of the county's mindful visitors, the inclusion of the Maasai Cricket Warriors—or at minimum their image—helps provide conservation activities with legitimacy. Though Laikipia Maasai living on Ol Tome do not claim any particular right to the land Ol Pejeta sits on, incorporating pastoral figures into tournament marketing sends the message that conservancies are non-political spaces.

While members of the team may have their own misgivings about conservation or its value for their people, for years they have willingly sacrificed their time and donated their image to rhino conservation. As stated in their grievance, the Maasai Cricket Warriors "believe in the true spirit of conservation" and its ability to improve the lives of all people who call Laikipia home. In that respect, the team's exclusion from Sudan's memorial had a profoundly alienating

impact. It showed that the team's relations with its partners were 'deficient'—constituted by images and chains of value over which the Maasai athletes had little or no control. Ramified across the globe in documentary videos, news photographs, and marketing literature, the Maasai Cricket Warriors are easily curated by conservation actors to narrate success stories.

Figure 25: Najib Balala, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Wildlife and Tourism, unveils a headstone on Ol Pejeta Ranch commemorating Sudan the rhinoceros, March 31, 2018. Photo by REUTERS/Thomas Mukoya.

Delving into several less-explored dimensions of community-based conservation in Laikipia North today, this study has explained how conservation efforts can alienate the very people they depend on for success. In imposing a "dominant aesthetic order" on pastoral communities and the lands that they inhabit, conservation in Laikipia makes images "an indispensable part" of what Igoe (2010:376) calls its "capitalist reality." Unpacking the

predicaments and weighty challenges Maasai people face in supporting conservation, I have shown that the expectations conservation places on communities are rigid and sometimes inconsistent. As the benefits of conservation are accessed most effectively by persons or communities with the right global image, conservation is alienating for the actors or groups who cannot navigate its expectations as effectively. With critics warning that uneven access to the benefits of conservation undermines its social, economic, and environmental goals (Gadd 2005; Igoe 2006; Norton-Griffiths 1996), this study testifies to the risks of pursuing conservation within today's "global economy of appearances" (Igoe 2010; Tsing 2000). While some Laikipia Maasai are hopeful that conservation will continue to connect them with the broader world, the durability of these social chains is threatened by the fact that images are its most vital links.

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Commencing with descriptions of Kijabe Group Ranch, a community located not far from Ol Tome, this dissertation explains the alienating effect that eco-tourism has had on this ostensibly successful Maasai community. As the man on the steps of the hospital built with funding from Ol Lentille explained, his home was being remade in an image of success that was not of his people's own design. The man understood that erecting a cell tower could make Kijabe less attractive for tourists, but what was the point in being attractive, he bemused, if no space remained for Kijabe residents to realize other goals or aspirations? Alienation, Jaeggi (2014:23) says, occurs when the worlds that people inhabit begin to "appear alien"—when they lose the ability "to identify with what one does and with those with whom one does it." As my research assistant Gabriel explained when I suggested we visit Ol Lentille lodge, its investors had warned that the enterprise would not succeed unless the community stayed far out of sight. Though Ol

Tome residents envy their neighbours on Kijabe for the benefits they appear to reap from eco-tourism, alienation between group ranchers and Ol Lentille's investors currently place this conservation partnership in jeopardy.

In Chapter Two, where I discuss efforts by a foreign partner to help rid Ol Tome Group Ranch of an invasive cactus species, we see that the physical and communicative distances over which projects operate are rife with liabilities. Simon, a well-educated Maasai man who positions himself between Maasai communities and charitable groups, took advantage of his peoples' communication challenges to engage, by all accounts, in acts of corruption. Pleased though Wilfred, the Chairman of Ol Tome, was that Tutapanda stripped Simon of his financial powers, the fact that Simon would continue to be involved in the conservation project was revealing. Committed as Tutapanda was to making the opuntia clearing project work, it would not proceed, just like Simon promised, unless Maasai participants would be represented in the manner that Tutapanda's leaders had outlined. Much like at Kijabe, where investors warned residents not to upset the image of the landscape that clients most desired, Simon warned Wilfred and other leaders not to spoil the strong image of the partnership by voicing their displeasures. Though I show in Chapter Two that partners, understandably, will work with communities through 'paths of least resistance,' these paths also provide space for intermediaries to alienate donors and stakeholders from each other. As Ol Tome residents were deprived of information regarding Tutapanda's goals in their community, Simon used the alienation that he had cultivated to capture the project's resources for himself.

Subsequently, in the third chapter, I describe how the sand harvesting industry on Ol Tome has aroused indignation in the conservation community for reasons that demonstrate how paradoxical and alienating conservation can be for rural people. Seeing sand harvesting as a

viable way to earn a sustainable living from the land, group ranch leaders have been chastised by neighbours and conservationists for doing irrevocable damage to their rivers. Robert, a successful tourism entrepreneur who recently bought land neighbouring Ol Tome, has tried to convince group ranch leaders that their rivers could be as attractive to foreign tourists as they are to sand prospectors. Group ranch leaders expressed gratitude for Robert's willingness to support his new neighbours, but face too many economic and social pressures to cut off the revenue that sand harvesting provides. Sand harvesting may indeed be driving khat consumption and undermining women's ability to gather water, but it is an understandably attractive livelihood option as this community's ability to subsist on pastoralism declines. Robert, however—dependent on aesthetically pleasing images of the land for his success—articulates his frustrations in a manner that equates sand harvesting with addiction and with weakness. Though Robert's frustrations are understandable given the uncertain circumstances he is in, we see, in later chapters, that hastily articulated stories of Maasai can become mobile and damaging tropes.

In Chapter Four, I discuss how a women's enterprise at Ol Tome is also imbricated in the economy of appearances, highlighting paradoxes faced by Maasai women as they work to conform to the "dominant aesthetic order" of conservation (Igoe 2010:388). Constance and her colleagues demonstrate resolve in maintaining their centre in the face of resource challenges, and are sadly disenfranchised by some of the actors who, ideologically, should be their close supporters. The visit of a Canadian donor to the Napishana Women's Centre revealed contradictions in the eco-tourism sector, as well as the fetishized and sometimes exploitative nature of the global market for Maasai handcrafts. Attempting to tap into a growing global market invigorated, it appears, by the Northern Rangelands Trust, Constance and her colleagues were reminded that fair trade economies are not always fair in how they accept members.

Though Sheryl desired that handcrafts from Napishana reflect the creativity and work ethic of her hosts, Sheryl knew she could not sell jewellery in Canada that was not aesthetically pleasing to Western consumers. Of course, selling products or service in all economies requires that the tastes of consumers be considered, and arts produced by indigenous people around the world have been commodified for centuries. But as conservation actors have become the merchants who traffic these 'ethically made' products worldwide, they are also trafficking in images that exaggerate the benefits conservation can bring.

Much like Constance and her colleagues, whose female-run enterprise has symbolic value for the partners that support them, the Maasai Cricket Warriors are valuable to partners for the engagement and impact they represent. Jim Igoe (2010) refers to this listing of allies by conservation groups as "spectacular accumulation"—creating compilations of voices that, together, tell the success story of a conservation group. For years, the Maasai Cricket Warriors have lent their image to raising funds for conservation at Ol Pejeta, accessing—say their partners—potentially life-changing travel and employment opportunities for members. While the recent failure of their partners to include the team in important symbolic events has been alienating, the Warriors' statements on social media suggest they have been dissatisfied with their treatment by the conservation community for many years. As I witnessed in the pub through the confrontation between the cricketers and the European figure, conservation efforts that are symbolically inclusive sometimes bely Laikipia's harsh social realities. Wanting to be athletes, the Warriors find themselves in the firing line of anti-pastoral prejudices, and gestures that alienate these players are brushed off as people come together in the name of conservation.

Chapter Six also discusses the place of conservation within the broader political landscape of Laikipia, though it focuses on ranches without near as much global social capital as

Ol Pejeta. I discuss how a unique group of landowners near Ol Tome engage with Maasai through different means and modes—some using conservation enterprises as a bridge, and some using them to ignite political fires. Facing ecological challenges, many Ol Tome residents must now look beyond their group ranch to access the pasture or employment opportunities needed to survive. The Lekorere family, whose daughter has recently risen to great political heights, are now reaping the benefits of their decades of sharing land with their Maasai neighbours. The Hawar family's challenges have opened their land to investment by tourism entrepreneurs, which appears to have created new social and economic possibilities for pastoralists living near this ranch. Unfortunately, recent political tensions in Laikipia have brought latent white resentment to a head, demonstrating that conservation can be alienating for any parties living on its margins. Though conservation efforts in Kenya sometimes bring historically divergent ethnic groups together, stories of conservation successes in Laikipia can also beget new political problems.

The final chapter of the thesis, which accounts for the violence and unrest that took place in Laikipia in 2017, explores both the challenges and opportunities these events have brought about for Ol Tome residents. Throughout the conflict, Western media made problematic use of images of pastoral communities, broadcasting the message that pastoralism is ignorant, antiquated, and a threat to Laikipia's future. In explaining how an image of landowner Kuki Gallmann was broadcast without reference to its original context, I demonstrate that conservation discourse enjoys a privileged position and unique flexibility in the global conscience. Some landowners in Laikipia recognized the dangers of letting this crisis be whitewashed by the media, especially as the book *The Big Conservation Lie* drew unprecedented attention to racial inequality in the conservation sector. *ThisisLaikipiaTheTruth* acted as a valuable counterweight

to the otherwise imbalanced global coverage of the crisis, though its authors also seized upon the chances they created to project damaging images of pastoralism.

While group ranch residents took offense to certain ways the conflicts in Laikipia were presented to the world, the security challenges brought on by the crisis have inspired the county's government and conservation leaders to look upon Maasai with more consideration. After decades of citing wildlife protection as a reason to insulate themselves from Maasai neighbours, landowners and authorities realize group ranches can insulate Laikipia from dangers farther north. Positive though this reconfiguration in discourse may be for Maasai communities in Laikipia, it may come at the expense of people in Samburu, who face their own political and environmental challenges (Straight 2009; Lesorogol 2003; Greiner 2013). Though the 2017 conflicts have had the side-effect of recasting security discourse in Laikipia in favour of Maasai, we are reminded that collective efforts to secure Laikipia tend to happen against the image of dangers from outside. In Laikipia, discourses of security and conservation cannot be disentangled. Conservation only occurs under scenarios of threat, and that threat must persist for conservation to survive. Despite the injuries and damages suffered by landowners like Kuki Gallmann, insecurity along the northern and western margins of Laikipia keeps this figure's image as a heroine alive. The environmental problems Gallmann describes in her books are often real; her language, however, treats nature as an object, and Africans as people who can't be trusted with it. "I'm the curator of a living museum," Gallmann wrote to Jeffrey Gettleman as her ranch was being invaded. "The world will need places like this more and more in the future. They are impossible to reconstruct once they're gone."[58]

[58] See: http://www.conservation-watch.org/2017/06/16/colonialism-conservation-cattle-and-conflict-in-laikipia-kenya/

While Laikipia's recent troubles brought to light issues of security that evaded me in my initial fieldwork, they also confirmed that staking conservation partnerships on deficient relations is hazardous. Conservation efforts—whether those that build security, encourage land management, or foster small-scale enterprise—all depend on clients, investors, or supporters being convinced that resources are going to the right place. Simon, Robert, Barlette, and other intermediaries play a part in drawing the world's attention to Laikipia by helping to curate an image in which Maasai play the role of undissenting partner. Exemplified by the contradictory expectations faced by Constance, the young cricketer James, and even the leaders of the Loata Sand Cooperative, conservation actors expect to set the goals or the standards to which people aspire. Communities like Ol Tome can spend years, even decades, cultivating the conservation-friendly image needed to make a go in this challenging sector. But this appearance can be tarnished or undone overnight by actors or forces with stronger global capital and discursive reach. The only image more powerful in conservation discourse than the noble, environmentally conscious Maasai, is perhaps the image of the maddened land invader, stealing cows, poaching elephants, and burning lodges to the ground. Often reliant on the patronage of actors whose knowledge of Maasai realities is limited, community-based conservation in Laikipia today is made and unmade in the minds of foreign actors.

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Returning to Ol Tome in early 2018 for a brief period of follow-up research, I gained a glimpse of the short and medium-term impacts the 2017 conflicts had had on my participants. Though Laikipia Maasai were being retroactively credited for helping securitize the county at this trying time, other features of the conservation landscape in Laikipia appeared to be

unaltered. I learned that Tutapanda, for example, had made no efforts to expand or to upscale the opuntia removal project—a pilot effort to rid several group ranches of an evasive cactus species. Mamai, the Chairman of the Naibunga Conservancy Trust, said the project had been deemed unfeasible, as no environmentally and cost-friendly way of disposing of the uprooted cactus could be found. Tutapanda chose instead to provide resources to NCT for a rangeland re-seeding project, but this effort, Mamai claimed, had been derailed by Simon's actions, too. Mamai explained that Tutapanda wanted to re-seed two acres of land on Ol Tome, and keep the area enclosed by a fence, saving it as a 'grass bank' for the dry season. Simon had lost access to Tutapanda funds after the controversies I described in Chapter Two, though he was able, said Mamai, to befriend an impressionable young man brought on as NCT's Manager not long after Simon ceased to work there. Simon and the Manager allegedly designed a ruse to steal the funds intended for the re-seeding project—to stage photographs of green pastures on nearby ranches and send them to Tutapanda labelled as Ol Tome. If Simon and the Manager could convince Tutapanda that they had carried out the re-seeding project with success, the partner might finance an upscale in the project, allowing these intermediaries to keep most of the money. Mamai said members of NCT's board caught wind of the ruse in late 2017, and that the new Manager of NCT was promptly fired. Mamai said it had been left, once again, to NRT whether to inform Tutapanda of Simon's action. It is currently unknown what Simon's status with this conservation organization is. Though the Ol Tome community have succeeded, once again, in rescuing a conservation project from corruption, a single image curated to satisfy a foreign donor could have cleared a space for further years of alienation between group ranchers and their partner.

As communities like Ol Tome continue to struggle with rising demographic and environmental pressures, partnerships with international group like Tutapanda will remain

attractive and, in some cases, vital. The prevalence of *opuntia stricta* continues to be a catalyst for human-elephant conflict in the area, and the Kenya Wildlife Service continue to disappoint residents with its weak response to elephant attacks. The Northern Rangelands Trust has recently proposed building a system of wildlife fences across Ol Tome and neighbouring group ranches, shielding settlement areas from elephants while still allowing livestock to move about freely. Wilfred and other leaders have been receptive to NRT's proposal given the high number of human deaths caused by elephants in recent years, though the fencing would require that group ranches place limits on their future settlement areas. Robert—the white Kenyan tourism entrepreneur who recently acquired land near Ol Tome— has been a vocal supporter of NRT's fencing proposal, as it would create an elephant corridor near his home and block sand harvesters from reaching his land. Francis, Robert's worker, reported that Robert's new home was near completion, and that he had hired several more people from Ol Tome to work as cleaners, security, and other domestic staff. Francis continued to work for Robert despite having failed to persuade group ranch leaders to partner with their neighbour in a tourism business, while struggles playing out at the county level have in fact forced the sand harvesting industry into decline. The County Government of Laikipia had recently opened a weighbridge on the road linking Ol Tome to Nanyuki to try to enforce new taxes on the sand industry and force lorries to abide by their official weight limits. For years, overloaded sand trucks have done severe damage to roadways around the county, not to mention the rangelands the trucks pass over as they haul sand out of local rivers.

By 2018, sand prospectors in the region had concluded that harvesting in Laikipia had become unviable, and staged a series of protests that halted all extraction for a period of several weeks. After a long year of economic paralysis due to the conflicts and General Election, the

county's interference in the sand industry left many people on Ol Tome dejected. "No sand, no money—that is how it is here," said one Meru shopkeeper on Ol Tome who once specialized in selling high quality khat. Now she sells *mugoka*, a cheaper, lower-potency sub-species of khat, as the loss of sand income has done little to curb people's cravings. The leaders of the Loata Sand Cooperative were in Nanyuki daily trying to urge the county to lower their tolls on sand, explaining that the weighbridges were choking the group ranches of one of their only steady streams of income.

Constance, with her own shop in Ol Tome town selling foodstuffs and Chinese-made housewares, was not as affected by this economic downturn, but still struggled to pay her daughter's school fees. I was disappointed to learn that the overseas grant allowing Global Wildlife Partnerships (GWP) to support Napishana had come to an end, but the money raised by Sheryl in the months following her visit had appeared to make a difference. The women's centre now had twice the sleeping capacity it once had, as well as a large, high quality kitchen and additional bath houses. Despite initial misgivings, Constance said the upgrades were helping to attract more visitors to the centre. Foreign tourists had stayed away from Laikipia North in 2017, though more and more school groups from nearby cities saw Napishana as an attractive destination for field trips. Most encouraging of all, as Constance explained, was that her colleagues were now looking after the centre with more confidence. It appeared that being overseen by GWP had discouraged some women from investing in the centre. "The women now feel it is *their* place," Constance told me in 2018. "The only chance the centre has ever had for succeeding is if the women believe they can care for it themselves." Constance and her colleagues continue to make handcrafts when their schedules allow, though no plans to upscale their beadwork or sell it abroad are currently on the horizon.

Though beadwork commissioned by the Northern Rangelands Trust could be found in boutiques across Kenya in 2016, it appeared, two years later, that this conservation group's social enterprise activities had declined. The drought and conflict that struck Samburu County in 2017 no doubt played a role in subduing NRT's activities, though the political systems supporting this organization are also undergoing major change. NRT received significant funding from the US Government during Barack Obama's time in office, some of which was spent providing Ol Tome with the security resources they've enjoyed in recent years. In early 2018, NRT staff members told me they feared that their organization's funding would be cut, as Donald Trump was promising to rescind funding for development projects, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.[59] The speed and scale of NRT's growth in the early 2010s concerned many critics, as this conservation group appeared to be expanding too quickly to be engaging meaningfully with its declared partners (Mbaria and Ogada 2016). Pastoral rights groups and journalists have been justified in questioning whether NRT bears some responsibility for the 2017 conflicts in Laikipia, as this violence has been instigated by actors from areas that have recently fallen under NRT's security management mandate. Accounting for how residents of Samburu, Baringo, and other counties have been affected by these conflicts is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study. I am confident that other scholars are taking up this issue, and I am hopeful that the questions and theoretical issues I have raised are useful to them.

Throughout the thesis, I have explained how some white landowners in Laikipia act, much like Simon, as 'paths of least resistance'; they make Laikipia accessible to the wider world using frames of reference that partners understand. With conservation efforts drawing most of their funding and power from overseas sources, I have demonstrated that African actors are at a

[59] see: https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/22/trumps-america-first-budget-puts-africa-last/

disadvantage within the conservation and global tourism sectors. As sectors that thrive by appealing to the tastes and predilections of Westerners like Sheryl, conservation and tourism contain innate social barriers that prevent many Kenyans from advancing in these fields. To be sure, I do not proffer that divestment from conservation in Kenya or halting tourism are somehow an answer. Jobs created by the conservation and tourism sectors in Kenya are of real social and economic importance, and actors like Barlette should be credited for investing in relationships with pastoral communities. But in Laikipia North, as some investors thrive and pastoralists are enrolled as labour in their ventures, people overseas struggle to recognize that conservation is political work.

It is especially crucial to recognize the political nature of conservation in Laikipia given the fast-changing configurations of land now occurring in this region. Years ago, white settlers and horticultural groups deemed some areas of this region to be useless, though now, new generations of settlers and investors are returning to pursue conservation and tourism. The rise of these industries in Laikipia has led to a boom in land prices that is likely to continue so long as the county does not backslide into violence or unrest. Though Ol Tome and other group ranches in Laikipia North have been fortunate not to experience subdivision, the group ranches are undergoing institutional changes that could place them in new relationships with partners. The Naibunga Conservancy Trust, as mentioned in Chapter One, is in the process of being broken up into smaller governance bodies in the hope that each will be more successful in building partnerships with tourism investors. James and other Maasai who work for Barlette testify to the benefits of having tourists in their area, though people on Kijabe may paint a bleaker picture of what dedicating land to conservation means.

If we seek one 'truth' about conservation in Laikipia that all can agree on, it is that conservation is now an inextricable part of Laikipia's social, political, and economic landscape. Much like the industrialization that Marx and Hegel saw overtaking Europe in the nineteenth century, conservation in Laikipia has transformed peoples' relationships with value, with labour, with land, and with each other. In exploring the ways that conservation speculates and trades on the value of Laikipia, I have shown that relationships between conservation partners and pastoral communities are sometimes 'deficient.' In some cases, people's images are captured and curated for purposes in which their owners have little stake; in others, pastoral people and their resilient ways of life are cast as threats to the land itself.

Conservation icons like Kuki Gallmann have had a profound impact on Laikipia over the years, connecting it to a network of global actors who genuinely desire to see people and wildlife co-exist. But in a neoliberal world, where the value of land and people can be harvested in situ, images broadcast in the global media and in conservation discourse can mislead. Even for the Ol Tome residents for whom the benefits of conservation are evident, success within this sector requires projecting an image that satisfies the tastes and expectations of others. As I learned from John, the young Cricket Warrior, when he approached me to coach him in his interview, in his mind, to have a chance in conservation he had to ingratiate himself to white figures and their world. According to Gavin Rae (2011:2), the antithesis of alienation can be called 'authenticity'— "a state of being that describes what the individual truly is and, importantly, should strive to be." In its unique language, the world of conservation asks group ranchers to be 'authentic Maasai', to mobilize the knowledge and passion of their people in safeguarding nature for their long-term benefit. But young Maasai like John are disoriented and alienated by this rhetoric. Is being Maasai my fundamental strength, or is it the challenge that I must overcome?

As Marx, Weber, and other scholars have understood the phenomenon of alienation differently, they present contrasting theories for how alienation can be resolved. For Marx, the alienation of the working classes leads to the development of class consciousness, culminating, he believed, in class revolution that would instate the masses in positions of control. Weber (1905), in contrast, believed alienation was a condition that people would endure. Class consciousness, for Weber (1905), was an "iron cage"—an inescapable feature of modern capitalism. Since it was first conceptualized and implemented in the 1980s, community-based conservation in East Africa has treated pastoralists as natural allies. Community-based conservation asks pastoralists to rehabilitate traditions, asserting they are valuable in maintaining land, while helping to earn income through tourism ventures. But in Laikipia, where pristine nature and pastoral images are now in scarce demand, the social relations obscured by these images are known to some group ranchers, but not others. In Marxian terms, this awareness might signal the development of a new consciousness—a class awakening motivating Maasai people to sever relationships with conservation actors. In a Weberian perspective, neoliberal conservation is an inescapable reality in Laikipia, and the challenge is for pastoralists, landowners, and conservation actors to negotiate their mutual survival going forward.

The strained relations of conservation in Laikipia are punctuated by strong and abiding partnerships, as people of different races, ethnicities, and lifestyles recognize their shared economic and environmental interests. Concerns about security present renewed opportunities for cooperation in Laikipia, but only if group ranchers' contributions to security efforts past and present are recognized. Though security is part of the marketable image required for success—especially in tourism—the challenges that I experienced in studying security reveal its political importance to group ranchers. Laikipia Maasai, and pastoralists in general, face stigma from

many people and institutions in Kenya. This fact can be traced throughout the country's history to before the creation of the Maasai reserve system. In the past century, Maasai communities have worked to preserve their unique culture and lifestyle, asserting in the process that they are assets, not dangers, to Kenya's development as a modern nation. Assumptions and anxieties about pastoralism have motivated many efforts to marginalize Maasai—a fact that, after the 2017 conflicts in Laikipia, some officials and landowners seem willing to acknowledge.

In recent decades, conservation and tourism has transformed the lives of many in Laikipia. Facing the uncertainty of a declining export beef market in the 1980s, Laikipia's largest landowners have convinced the world that wildlife conservation beyond parks can work. The benefits of conservation and tourism have not only been accessed by Laikipia's wealthiest landowners, but by the several thousand-people employed in these sectors in towns, on ranches, and in pastoral communities like Ol Tome. Group ranch residents recognize the benefits that conservation and tourism have brought them. Schools, medical clinics, and employment opportunities are welcomed and valued by group ranch residents. But as time goes by, some residents also recognize a fact that Jim Igoe (2010) observed in Tanzania—that pastoralists lack power in the conservation sector because they lack the power to represent themselves. This study has shown that the work of conservation is often a labour of *representing others*, necessitated by realities of global capitalism in which funding, opportunities, and clients must be fought for. Ol Tome residents recognize that their land and the culture they lay claim to can be a means to other futures, but the environmental and economic pressures they now face place resources and images in very high demand.

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Appendix 1. Research permit

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MR. GRAHAM ROBERT LEWIS FOX
of MCGILL UNIVERSITY,
[redacted]
permitted to conduct research in
Laikipia , Samburu Counties

on the topic: *A STUDY OF THE CONSERVATION-SECURITY NEXUS IN THE EWASO NG'IRO BASIN, NORTHERN KENYA.*

for the period ending:
5th October,2018

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/15/2613/7053
Date Of Issue : 7th October,2015
Fee Recieved :USD 400

Applicant's Signature

Director General
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

CONDITIONS

1. You must report to the County Commissioner and the County Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do that may lead to the cancellation of your permit
2. Government Officers will not be interviewed without prior appointment.
3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.
4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.
5. You are required to submit at least two(2) hard copies and one(1) soft copy of your final report.
6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT

Serial No. A 6776

CONDITIONS: see back page