

**The Impact of Conservancies on Maasai Communities in the Region Surrounding the
Maasai Mara Game Reserve
MERC
December 15, 2014**

Introduction

This report was commissioned by the Maasai Education, Research and Conservation Institute (MERC) and it addresses the origins and operations of privately owned wildlife conservancies in land surrounding the Maasai Mara Game Reserve (MMGR) and relationships between conservancies and local communities. The report is the summary of the findings of research conducted during an eight-week period in June-July, 2014 in Narok Kenya. This research addresses the impact of conservancies on the well-being of Maasai communities, including especially: 1) economic impact on landowners of conservancies; 2) impact on grazing and over-grazing on community owned land and inside the MMGR; 3) relationships between community members and conservancies; 4) transparency of lease agreements and conservancy structures; and 5) long-term impact on Maasai cultural, economic and social survival of conservancies. The interviews for this research were conducted with community members, some of whom are conservancy members or employees, other conservancy representatives, Narok County government officials, and people involved in MMGR management.

The reason we undertook this study is because there is a perceived crisis resulting from the establishment of conservancies, privately owned entities that lease land adjacent to the MMGR from Maasai landowners for the purpose of tourism and wildlife conservation. These conservancies have removed tens of thousands of acres of grazing land from community use over the past decade. While conservancies prevent individual plots of land from being sold, and in that way retain wildlife habitat, they have engendered a crisis in available grazing land that has forced cattle into the MMGR, resulting in overgrazing there. All those interviewed for this report

agree on several points: 1) The current situation is not tenable; 2) Conservancies have had both positive and negative impact on the region; 3) Maasai people are not getting the full benefits of conservancies as profits are taking away from the community; and 4) Accountability and transparency are lacking regarding the operation of Conservancies.

We also encountered extreme differences of opinion about the impact of Conservancies, especially regarding the impact of Conservancies on grazing and potential solutions to the current crisis. Most of those interviewed agree that some grazing should be allowed within the conservancies, but they expressed starkly different views about whether any grazing should be allowed within the MMGR. A deeper difference of perspective emerged in the course of the interviews about the value of Maasai culture and herding economy, as some stakeholders privately expressed the opinion that Maasai pastoralism will be phased out as Maasai people derive their income from leasing land, moving to towns and adopting more assimilated lifestyles. A third point of disagreement involves the future management of the Maasai Mara ecosystem generally, and the relative roles of the elected Narok County Government and of private Conservancies in directing that future.

History

Kenya is globally known for its beautiful landscapes and wildlife sightings which forms the backbone of the Kenyan tourism industry that is located in large part in Maasailand. Since 1987 tourism had become Kenya's number one foreign revenue earner and by 1990 no other African country was earning as much from Kenya from wildlife tourism (Honey, 2009, p. 47). The Maasai Mara Game Reserve and Amboseli are two of the most famous tourist destinations in Kenya. The land set aside by colonial and then Independent Kenyan Government for these two

parks include the most lush and best-watered land, areas that were traditionally used to graze livestock and find water during long droughts. Maasai people were removed from those areas to develop wildlife based tourism though some grazing has been allowed under varying conditions through the past decades. The removal of deep drought reserves creates extreme hardship on Maasai communities and challenged their strategies for survival on dryer terrain surrounding the parks. Those strategies have also been impacted severely through the privatization of land which has led to sale of individual plots and disorganization of traditional grazing schemes that have for centuries moved cattle between communally owned seasonal wet and dry pastures. The commodification of land in this region has led to a growing wealth gap among herders and corresponding range of sizes of herds, which also impacts land use and grazing access.

These rapid changes have led to widespread concern that pastoralism among the Maasai is threatened, which implies a threat to the culture and society itself. As all those interviewed agree, Maasai culture is embedded in the pastoralist lifestyle and both cattle and land have great cultural significance to the survival of the Maasai as a people. Something that makes Maasai culture especially unique is a reliance on pastoralism as a means of survival instead of hunting the abundant wildlife that shares the land. As Narok County Executive Allan Twala stated “Maasai have existed with the wildlife for hundreds of years. When it comes to conservation, we are the best at it, we have lived with the wildlife for centuries” (personal communication, July 3rd, 2014). Mr. Twala describes the Maasai as the best at conservation because of the way that they have been grazing their livestock along side the wildlife and “you get someone who doesn’t have that culture, you know, they look at wildlife and they think food. We don't actually eat wildlife” (personal communication, July 3rd, 2014). Wildlife and Maasai people have coexisted

to the extent that many interviewees expressed the belief that wildlife seen in the Mara today would not exist if not for the protection provided through the centuries by Maasai culture.

Throughout the interviews we heard an often repeated claim that, though wildlife tourism became a main source of income for the reserve and the country, the Maasai are often not beneficiaries of the income generated on their land. This imbalance creates socio-economic inequality according to those interviewed, many of whom also described a feeling that wildlife are deemed more important to the Kenyan government and tourism industry than Maasai people themselves. One clear consensus emerged through the interviews, which is a concern for the long-term health of the MMGR and surrounding community land and the wildlife that it supports. We found that the issues of the subdivision and farming of land were of particular interest to interviewees, though there was little agreement among them on the specifics of the issues, how to conserve the land and how Maasai community residents should be involved.

Although the MMGR itself is vast, it is not enough to support the wildlife that resides and migrates through it; the surrounding areas are of equal importance. The wildlife in this area includes the wildebeest migrations which is one of the UNESCO designated Seven Wonders of the World. With Kenya's growing population and changes in the settlement scheme, the Maasai community lands surrounding the MMGR have gained some attention from both environmental conservationists and tourism investors. This interest has evolved into the creation of the wildlife Conservancies that now border the MMGR.

The Conservancy Model

Wildlife Conservancies today are based on the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy structure that was first established in 1995 North of Mount Kenya ("What We Do," 2014). This model was the

first of its kind. It relies on persuading local landowners, whose land has been privately allotted by the Kenyan government but which continues to be used for a communally based economy, to lease land to a conservation organization which then assumes control over the land and develops is for tourism, conservation or similar purposes.

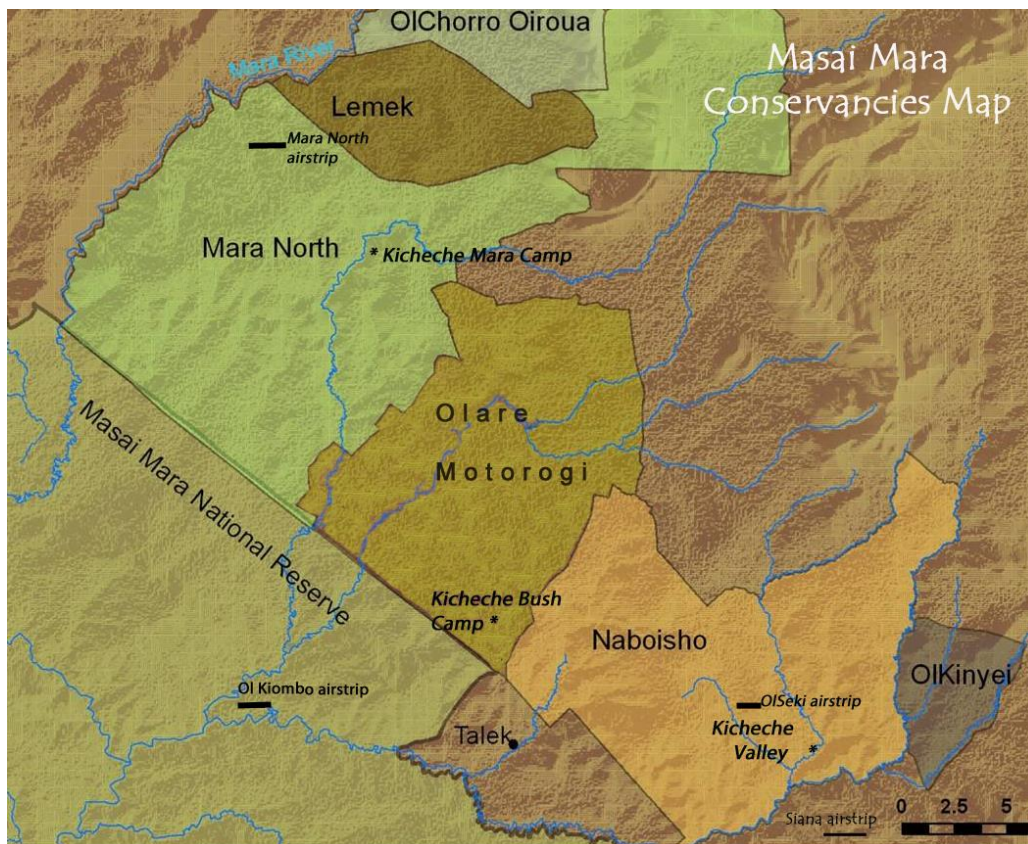
In many cases this has involved seeking investment from tourism partners who have eased conservancy land to create boutique camps and small lodges, and in other cases it has involved seeking donor partners to assist with funding. In both cases the goal has been to ensure equitable financial returns to landowners in return for their support and co-operation". ("How the Conservancy Model Came About," n.d.)

This land is set aside for wildlife conservation. Tourist companies lease portions to build lodges and establish for-profit businesses marketing an exclusive, typically high-end, eco-tourism experience.

These large parcels of land are strategically chosen to border the famous Kenyan National Reserves or Parks so that they create wildlife corridors and zones. Often, conservancies promote themselves as 'community-based' enterprises, and a more 'true eco-tourism experience' than what is offered within the neighboring park or reserve, which is available for those who can pay the substantially higher bed-night price. Conservancies use ratios of how many beds to hectares (or acres) are on the entire piece of land to give the tourists a more private and elite-feeling vacation as they are less likely to see other safari vehicles (or any human presence) on their daily game drives.

In our research we focused on three of the five conservancies that are border the Northern and North Eastern edge of the MMGR; Mara Naboisho, Olare-Motorogi, and Mara North (see below for map). Olare-Motorogi was originally established as two separate conservancies in 2006: Olare Orok and Motorogi, but they recently merged for joint management. The merged conservancy includes 32,900 acres leased from 277 individual landowners. Olare-Motorogi

allows some carefully managed grazing (“How the Conservancy Model Came About,” n.d.). Mara North Conservancy was established in 2009. It includes 74,000 acres leased from 788 landowners (“Mara North Conservancy,” n.d.). Mara Naboisho was formed in 2010 and leases 50,000 acres from 500 landowners (“History,” 2012). Each of these conservancies allows grazing in some capacity and have different ways of carrying out their similar management structures.



(“Conservancies,” 2012)

All of the conservancies pride themselves on two things; first they provide a private setting for tourists. For example, an online review about Naboisho says; “The Mara Naboisho Conservancy is outside of the Masai Mara Reserve and therefore less crowded. Don't see many other vehicles and in the conservancy, you are permitted to participate in night game drives” (Craig, 2014). This review points to two of the biggest advertising strategies that conservancies

use. By saying that the conservancy will be less crowded than the Reserve, conservancies can claim to participate in eco-tourism. Also, conservancies advertise activities that are not allowed in the Reserve. Because they are not government owned or managed, many of the conservancies allow activities that are illegal in the neighboring Reserve such as night game drives, horse back riding, going off road and walking tours. Conservancies explicitly compete with MMGR for high-end tourists using these marketing strategies.

The second claim made by all of the conservancies is that they participate in community-based conservation/tourism, and all describe programs which that fund that benefit the local Maasai communities. Some conservancies have established a Trust that receives money from the tourist partners and then allocates funds to various local projects, especially supporting water projects and schools. One such example of trust is the Olare Orok Motorogi Trust, which is managed by George Vaulkhard. Mr. Vaulkhard described the Trust as

...separated completely, so legally and everything is completely separated from the conservancies. We are basically funded by camps, in terms of the camps give us \$5 every time somebody comes and stays in a bed, and that goes into our operational budget and we run projects outside of the conservancies. (Personal communication, July 8th, 2014)

Mr. Vaulkhard explained that the Trust is a separate entity from the Conservancy because it has its own board of trustees. However, the Trust is connected to the conservancies through funding and through the overall messages that the trust spreads about wildlife and land conservation. When asked about the Trust's role in grazing policy, Mr. Vaulkhard replied that "grazing is one thing which as a trust we try to keep out of as much as possible because it's extremely political...Grazing, cows and water are sort of the three religions in the Mara" (personal communication, July 8th, 2014). In this way, Mr. Vaulkahrd repeated something that we heard from many interviewees: grazing policy is widely understood to be politically sensitive.

The Issue of Grazing

Conservancies have removed so many acres of grazing land from community use and the resulting crisis in lack of adequate access to grazing is the chief concern of all those interviewed. With restrictive grazing policies in use on many thousands of acres surrounding towns and bomas, many of the local community are forced to graze their livestock in the MMGR. While it is illegal to bring livestock into any of Kenya's reserves, the government fines penalties are much less severe than those imposed by the Conservancies and so faced with a choice, land owners avoid being caught within the Conservancies and take their cattle into the MMGR instead, typically at night. This scarcity has resulted in various problems. 1) The remaining community land not leased to Conservancies has become severely overgrazed, especially in the Talek area which is an island of community land surrounded by MMGR and the Naboisho Conservancy; and 2) sections of the MMGR are also in danger of being overgrazed, especially those bordering community land such as Talek, which has led to diminished wildlife presence in those areas. Remaining community land becomes a funnel for herders and their herds seeking access to the MMGR. This crisis threatens the survival of pastoralism in the region and therefore of Maasai culture.

Management of the MMGR has expressed grave concern about the long and short-term sustainability of both the natural environment and tourism within the MMGR. This concern is apparent in a negotiated a management plan for the Reserve. According to the current senior game warden, James Syndio, there has been a lot of work initiated by Narok County to find solutions to the conflict to overgrazing in the region. A broad group of stakeholders participated in the development of the Maasai Mara National Reserve Management Plan for 2008-2018,

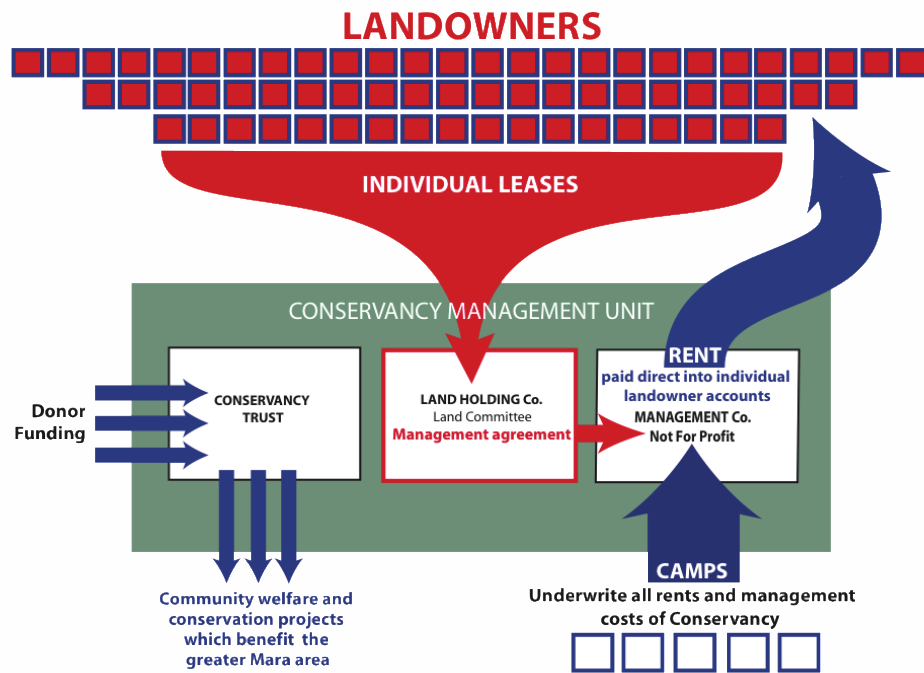
which presents a detailed, negotiated proposal to limit the impact on the Mara ecosystem by decreasing tourism facilities and streamlining tourism activities, and other measures to promote ecological sustainability and community involvement in Mara management. Part of the proposal for community outreach programming is based on understanding and acknowledging the issues of overgrazing (County Councils of Narok and Trans Mara, 2008, p. 80). The creation of this plan brought various parties together government officials from Narok and Trans Mara Counties, Kenya Wildlife Service, and NGO stakeholders such as African Wildlife Foundation. These various parties have similar interests, as they are all concerned about the health of the wildlife and natural resources. The wildlife Conservancies also have these same interests. However, it appears that Conservancies are not participating in these collaborative conversations but are instead pursuing their own solutions through their own alliances, networks and lobbying efforts. Because of the significant impact of the Conservancies on all land management issues in the region, the lack of collaborative effort raises questions about the effectiveness of any solutions to which Conservancies do not contribute

Conservancy Structure

One of the main objectives of this research was to gather information about the structures of the conservancies, including how different bodies such as board and trusts relate, how conservancies make decisions, and who enforces the decisions. In each interview with people associated with conservancies, we asked about the structure of the conservancy. We were surprised to find that initially much of what we were told in interviews conflicted with other interviews, and this was true about information received by different employees of the same conservancy. This confusion might result from the complexity of conservancy structures, or that

conservancy employees, including management, are not informed about those structures. Each conservancy functions slightly differently. But there is a basic structure that forms the model for all of the conservancies surrounding the MMGR. All are structured to manage relationships between the same constituencies and entities: 1) Maasai landowners; 2) a landholding company that signs leases with landowners; 3) one or more tourism companies/partners; 4) a conservancy management body; and in most cases 5) a trust for community programs that does community outreach.

These conservancies are also structurally related to 6) a national umbrella organization called the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA); and 7) a regional umbrella association called the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA), which was created by the existing conservancies to lobby on behalf of pro-conservancy legislation and policy. There are often many other partners involved with each conservancy, including and especially the Kenya Wildlife Service and NGO wildlife conservation groups. The graph that follows which is credited to Dickson Ole Kaelo of the KWCA simplifies the structure to show the flow and the various bodies involved.



The graph shows a very straightforward relationship between all parts of the conservancy structure. In fact, however, the understanding of conservancy representatives about the actual operation of those relationships is more blurred. One manager of a conservancy repeatedly told us that conservancy’s need to fundamentally change their policies to include more transparency and a democratic process from the bottom up. These changes would drastically influence the entire structure and give the landowners more power with conservancy decisions (personal communication, July 8th, 2014). The entity that appears to be least understood by interviewees is the Land Holding Company for each conservancy. This was equally true in regard to each individual conservancy. In all cases the different Land Holding Companies are listed as the leasing entities on the leases signed with Maasai landholders and therefore they are the entities

legally renting the land. However none of the landowners interviewed had any idea who specifically represents this Company. Maasai landowners reported that they only interfaced with members of the conservancy management bodies, which is structurally a separate entity from the Land Holding Company. This lack of transparency and clear accountability proves challenging for landowners, they reported: if they seek to address an issue regarding their lease, who, they ask, do they approach?

Other information came to light during interviews with landowners and management of conservancies about negative aspects of the lease arrangements. For example, many expressed concern that community landowners are being paid far below the actual value of their land in these long term lease agreements. The area around the MMGR has been demarcated to individual males with about 100-150 acres each. Individual landowners sign a lease with the Land Holding Company, which in turn negotiates an agreement with the management of the conservancy. Representatives of the Landholding Company must approach these individuals with land and persuade them to sign a lease agreement that states, among other things, that no one can live on the land, collect firewood, or graze unless otherwise stated in future policies. These leases specify an amount to be paid each month to the landowner for a specified number of years, typically 10-15 years, at which point the lease must be renegotiated. Below is an example of the description of a lease agreement drawn by the Naboisho Landholding company ltd:

Rent:

The annual Rent for 2010 shall be calculated at Kenya Shillings Two Thousand (KShs. 2,000) per hectare and proportionately for any lesser area and shall be payable in equal monthly instalments from the 1st March 2010 to December 2010 to the Landlord's designated account or as shall be notified by the Landlord to the Tenant in writing prior to the due date of any rental payment and shall further be payable by the Tenant to the Landlord subject to the terms of the Lease.

Increment:

The Rent will be subject to an increment in the following terms:

During the development phase beginning 1st March 2010 and ending 31st December 2012:

- (i) From 1st March 2010 to 31st December 2010 an annual rent of Kshs. 2000, payable in equal monthly instalments.
- (ii) From 1st January 2011 to 31st December 2011 an annual rent of Kshs. 2500, payable in equal monthly instalments.
- (iii) From 1st January 2012 to 31st December 2012 an annual rent of Kshs. 2800, payable in equal monthly instalments.
- (iv) From 1st January 2013 to 31st December 2013 an annual rent of Kshs. 3000, payable in equal monthly instalments.

Naboisho Lease: Pg 12

At the rates specified in this typical agreement, the payment to a landowner would be as follows: by leasing 60.7 hectares (which is about 150 acres) a landowner would be paid KSH 121,400 per year (USD \$1,374), therefore KSH 10,116 per month (USD \$114).

Many Members of the local community interviewed expressed shock as the low amount of the rent paid to landowners. Conservancy management has responded to similar concerns voiced by community members over the years by creating trusts to provide for community projects like schools and clinics. James Ole Kaigil, the Assistant Manager of Olare Motorogi conservancy, agrees that the rent itself is not enough compared to what the landowners could be making on the same piece of land doing other activities. He said "that's how the trust was introduced. The trust is to assist the conservancies so they can have development projects in the outskirts of populated area" (personal communication, July, 10th, 2014). Mr. Kaigil further explained that the trust helps those people who may not be directly benefitting from the

conservancy, which then helps to gain the support of the larger community for the conservancy.

According to Mr. Kaigil the trust helps fill out the areas where the actual rent is lacking (personal communication, July 10th, 2014).

The benefits from trusts do not appear to be equally shared, and accrue mainly to landowners and others living near conservancy borders. One landowner, Nelson Ole Kirrokor, who is a landowner in the Olare Orok Conservancy and lives right next to the Naboisho boundaries, expressed a similar sentiment to that of Mr. Kaigil. He explained that the conservancies have developed his village to have schools, water projects and working on a health center. “Looking at how far we have gone in development and current situation of the community, I would sincerely say that the creations of the conservancies have really contributed to that” (personal communication, July 9th, 2014). Mr. Kirrokor also mentioned that visitors from the conservancies come through the villages, which has also aided in this villages development. Mr. Kirrokor’s experience is an important one to look at as it offers the experience of someone who lives right next to the boundaries of a conservancy. Villages that are further away may have very difference experiences and/or perceptions of the conservancies community programs.

Another contentious issue among landowners are the conservancies’ policies on grazing. This issue is critical to the community because pastoralism lies in the center of Maasai culture. At Olare Motorogi, employees expressed pride in the original Olare Orok grazing plan and its recognition of traditional grazing patterns. One employee described the grazing plan found on the Olare Motorogi website almost verbatim:

Olare Motorogi Conservancy has adopted a holistic approach to grazing and pasture management within the Conservancy; an approach that is not far removed from the traditional Maasai system where the elders would decide on which areas were grazed and which were left for leaner times. The “Kundi Moja” or one herd system is where the landowners control-graze a small area in a tight formation of their herds and will graze this short before moving on to the next designated area.

(“How the Conservancy Model Came About,” n.d.)

This system of rotational grazing based on traditional models seems like a successful kind of grazing plan and the employee stated that all landowners are part of the grazing plan. However a landowner within Olare Orok, Edward Ole Musukut, said that in fact only a few select members of Olare Orok are allowed to graze their cattle within its borders. Although Mr. Musukut sees positive impacts of conservancies as they have halted the subdivision of the community land, he also expressed concern about the impacts of the “larger structure” (personal communication, July 14th, 2014). The structure that Mr. Musukut is concerned about relates to the issues of a lack of transparency, low rent (especially when thought of as a comparison to the profits), and unequal grazing policies.

From all interviews it appears that Maasai landowners encounter many types of pressure to lease their land, both of the carrot and the stick varieties, belying claims by conservancies that their approach to conservation and tourism supports communities. One way that pressure is exerted on reluctant land owners is through the promise of loans for needed school fees and uniforms and other needs that Maasai families cannot often afford on their own. Landowners report arriving to meetings with Land Holding Co. representatives to find a stack of cash sitting opposite their seat at a table, offered to them as a loan if they sign a lease with the Conservancy. These tactics are often successful, understandably when the depth of poverty in these communities is considered. The problem is that the loan then indebts the landowner who has no choice but to continue signing new leases as old ones expire, a trap familiar to sharecroppers and other unfree laborers throughout the world. (Personal communication, Mr. Taek, July 22nd)

Mr. Musukut was involved in a community driven campaign to shut down the Conservancies in 2011. The precipitating factor was violence: all parties acknowledge that

conservancy management had been using physical violence to punish Maasai people found grazing within the conservancy; people, including children, were beaten and locked in shipping containers as punishment, typically with no water or food and for as much as several days at a time. This community driven organizing effort to invalidate the leases bore fruit as Olare Orok's lease was cancelled. However, only a few months later, Olare Orok was recreated as a conservancy and representatives persuaded most of the community members, one at a time, to re-sign a new lease for more money. As a result, Olare Orok's lease payments are typically much higher than those paid by Naboisho:

Rent:

The annual Rent for the first year from 1st July 2011 shall be calculated at Kenya Shillings Three Thousand Three Hundred (KShs. 3,300) per hectare and proportionately for any lesser area and shall be payable in equal monthly installments to the Landlord's designated account or as shall be notified by the Landlord to the Tenant in writing prior to the due date of any rental payment and shall further be payable by the Tenant to the Landlord subject to the terms of the Lease.

Increment:

The Rent will be subject to an increment in the following terms:

| Year 1 st July - 30 th June | Rent per ha | Annual Increment |
|---|-------------|------------------|
| 2011-2012 | 3,300 | 100 |
| 2012-2013 | 3,400 | 100 |
| 2013-2014 | 3,500 | 100 |
| 2014-2015 | 3,600 | 100 |
| 2015-2016 | 3,700 | 100 |

Even with this re-signing process at higher rates, some of the local people, including Mr. Musukut, held out and refused to sign the new leases as they saw no changes in the "new" conservancy structure. Over time, the individuals that continued to refuse to sign the lease report being pressured in various ways into signing. Just a few months ago, Mr. Musukut decided he had to capitulate and lease his land. Mr. Musukut's 150 acres is completely surrounded by

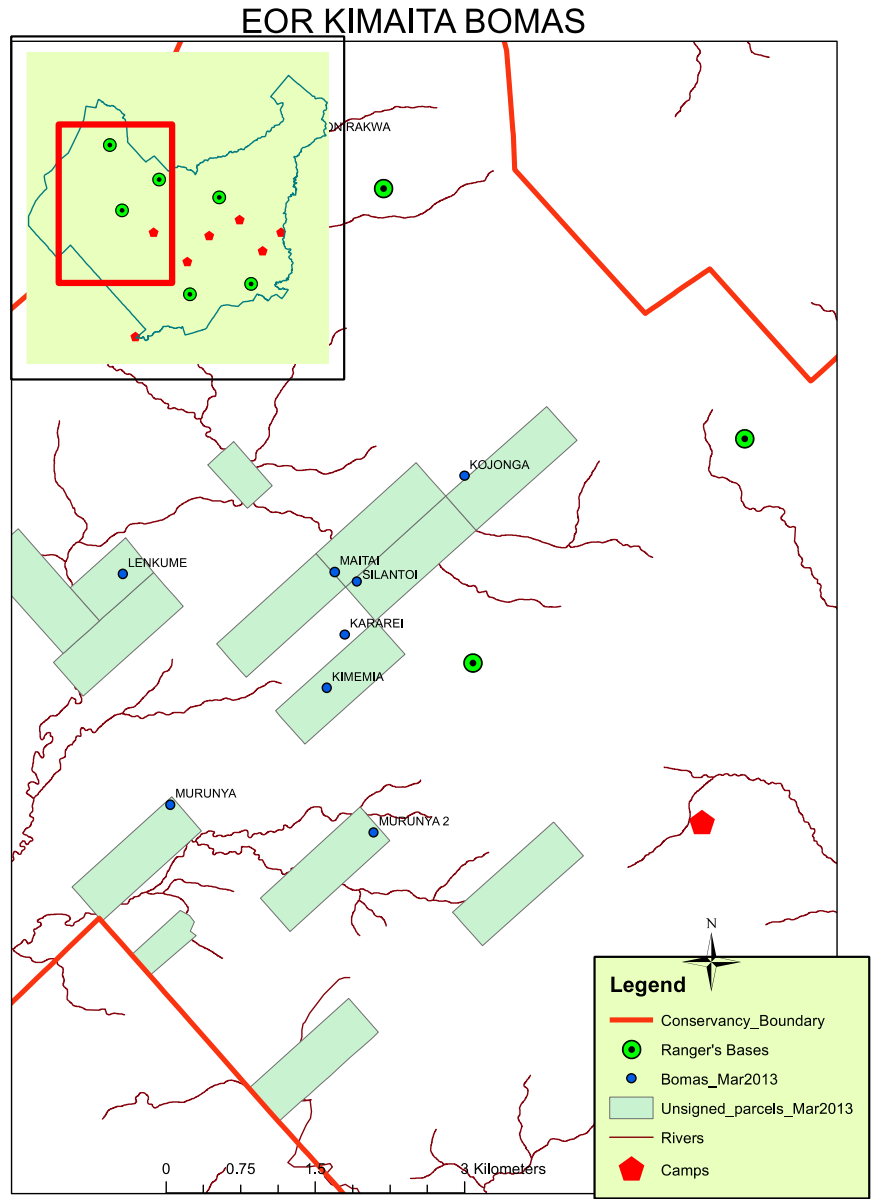
conservancy land, which made his livelihood almost impossible as he could not graze or collect firewood from his larger surrounds.

The pressure put on individuals when they decide to not sign the lease is a common theme among those interviewed. Dominic Ole Koya is the community liaison for Naboisho conservancy. Mr. Koya acts as a liaison between the landowners and the management board. One of his main jobs is to convince those few individuals living within conservancy borders who have not yet signed leases to relinquish their land. The methods of persuasion involve casual get-togethers, one-on-one meetings, information about the benefits of signing the lease/the benefits of having a conservancy nearby, and promises to help find land to move to after vacating their current homes. But those methods can also entail serious pressure.

Justin Heath, current manager for Mara North and past manager for Naboisho, told us that when a landowner refuses to lease a parcel of land within the borders of the Naboisho Conservancy, he will strategically move the conservancy ranger offices to surround that piece of land (personal communication, July 12th). This then puts more pressure on those living on that parcel as they cannot leave the 100-150 acres or the access road created from the parcel to outside of the conservancy, or else the conservancy will fine them. The cattle of landowners who have leased their land to Naboisho may be allowed to graze in the conservancy under a grazing plan, but that benefit is reserved only for those who have signed the lease, not for landowners who refuse.

Mr. Heath openly acknowledges that the conservancy has no right to do anything to those that do not want to sign when they are on their own land. However, once that parcel is surrounded by conservancy land, the conservancy management can then apply this kind of pressure. The map below displays the strategy of moving rangers to apply pressure described by

Mr. Heath. It shows the movement of a ranger station (light green circle) to a position between Kimemia and Murunya to deliberately pressure the landowners still occupying their land through surveillance. Both this pressure and having a community liaison has lessened the number of unsigned leases throughout Naboisho. This is the strategy that Mr. Heath wishes to bring to Mara North.



(Credit to Seiya Ltd.)

Conservancies may apply this pressure on resistant land owners without fear of the law, because their leases with surrounding landowners are drafted in such a way to give them legal power over the land they have leased. Obviously the ethics of these tactics are another matter. The various mechanisms of pressure put onto Maasai land owners to force them to lease their land amounts to surrounding and suffocating those landowners, preventing them from their livelihoods as it is typically impossible for cattle to survive on a small parcel of land throughout the year, cut off from traditional drought survival strategies. It could be argued that the pressure exerted on Maasai land owners to give up their land constitutes an assault on the culture of the region and the economy on which it is based.

The deliberate removal of Maasai people from their land, the destruction of the herding economy in the region, and the transformation that results of Maasai people into landlords, challenges the typical claim of conservancies that they are devoted to the well-being of the Maasai community and of Maasai culture. According to Naboisho's website, that conservancy was created in collaboration with the local Maasai community:

It was agreed that the conservancy model should combine conservation of nature and cultural heritage, tourism, and the enhancement of livelihoods for the local communities. On the 28th of March 2010, the landowners formerly signed a 15-year lease to create the Mara Naboisho Conservancy. (History, 2012).

Yet it is clear that the diversity of perspectives within the local community regarding the conservancies are not being respected, that the desires of the community are influential only when they align with the desires of the conservancies. As the conservancies market themselves as the 'community based' alternative to the MMGR, they need to account for the effort apparently required to bring Maasai landowners to participate in the conservancy model.

Recommendations:

Based on our research, it is clear that the current crisis in the Mara has very serious long-term implications for the sustainable health of the Mara ecosystem, the wildlife that inhabit it, and for the future of Maasai culture and society. We make these recommendations:

- That conservancies work with all stakeholders on a common management plan for environmental conservation and management of all protected areas, which includes a strategic grazing plan that accommodates the needs of all local landowners.
- That an independent entity with access to legal counsel reviews all leases and other contracts signed with community members, and all loans made
- That the organizational structures of the conservancies be made public
- That conservancy's and the tourism company's profit structures be made public
- That a democratic process be implemented from the ground up, that decides who fills the positions on the Board, landowner committees and landholding company
- The creation of a sustainable Landowners Association that connects landowners from all conservancies
- That the camps inside of the conservancies be required to employ local members for all positions

Conclusion

The negative aspects of a conservancy structure are often overlooked in academia, policy and in tourist blogs. This research project is striving to help fill that gap as well as give information to aid in the creation of future land policies that might address such issues. The creation of the conservancies outside of the MMGR has pushed the community to over-graze the community land that is left and/or to enter illegally into the MMGR. Grazing is at the heart of the

Maasai economy and culture and therefore affords much attention. The various parties involved, the MMGR, conservancies and the community, all have the same interests in a healthy environment, wildlife and culture. It is through these shared interests that a common ground is created, and where such discussions and decisions could be made that have the potential to drastically change the current detrimental situation.