



Wildlife Conservation and Land Acquisitions: A Case Study of the Tanzania Land Conservation Trust

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Introduction: Large-scale Land Acquisitions

In the past decade, there have been large-scale acquisitions of land in Africa that have drawn the attention of both agrarian policy analysts and local populations in the affected areas. The key concerns are the merit of the land deals and the way they are executed, both in terms of how they are negotiated and the resultant structures of the new land tenure dispensation. The central concern, however, has been the capacity of the local populations with a claim to the affected lands to secure their preferred outcome. Can they, for example, block the deals if they don't want them? What is the import of these land acquisitions to local population and the country generally? While proponents say the deals are beneficial to the states and local communities, critics argue that they portend ill for the countries concerned, especially on food security, the environment and access to land by the poor. This paper inquires into these issues within the specific context of the TLCT. The central question guiding the inquiry is whether these land deals constitute conservation and development icons, and to what extent the affected local communities have been involved in the framing of the deals.

Four basic research questions informed data collection:

- i) What is the nature of the balance of power among the contracting actors?
- ii) What narratives are offered to legitimise these acquisitions?
- iii) What is the nature of the resultant contractual architecture?
- iv) In what ways do the resulting experiences vindicate the legitimating narratives?

In light of these questions, an actor-centred institutional framework was adopted, where actors are conceived as having endowments and preferences. Different actors interested in a certain issue may differ in these variables. Actors operate in an institutional context, which in turn structures the strategies they adopt in pursuit of their preferred outcomes. Consequently, it is hypothesised that:

- i) Because of the nature of the product the proponents of conservation land deals seek to produce, they are compelled to initiate discernible efforts to placate local populations in a bid to forge a green union.
- ii) Competing preferences on the appropriate form of land use is disrupting the consummation of such a union, leading to a contestation over these land deals.
- iii) Differential action resources tilt the outcome of the ensuing contestations in favour of the land deal sponsors.

Nevertheless, acquisitions for conservation have a greater likelihood to be tolerated than activities such as mining, biofuels production, agriculture, etc.

Data for this paper was derived from various sources. Secondary literature was consulted for the general insights regarding debates on the land grabs. There is, however, only limited literature on the case study discussed here. Consequently, the study is informed by primary

¹ Views expressed here do not reflect the views of the institution of affiliation.

sources, such as fieldwork and archival records. For the latter, AWF reference and digital archives were particularly valuable. The study is also informed by my observation of, and conversations with, various staff of wildlife conservation organisations, state wildlife agencies, other researchers and villagers in these regions who I interacted with by way of outreach, seminar participation and research focus on wildlife conservation in Tanzania, and northern Tanzania in particular. The next section of this paper is an overview of the debate about the way the land grabs are being legitimised, followed by an introduction of TLCT and its property, Manyara Ranch. A discussion of the Tanzanian context that is facilitating such large land deals ensues. The other sections are devoted to TLCT. The lure and the need for this land acquisition are demonstrated. There is a subsequent examination of the new land tenure edifice, and a discussion on the protagonists' behaviour and their presentation of the implications of the acquisitions. The conclusion then follows.

The objects and legitimisation of land acquisitions

The race for acquisitions of large tracts of land by foreign capital has been multifaceted and has taken place within the broad context of multinational or foreign direct investment and environmental conservation in sectors such as agricultural, mining, forestry, conservation lands and biofuels (see, for example, Zoomers, 2010). The deals have provoked debate on their legitimacy and fairness (in how they are structured). It has been argued that they adversely affect local interests, especially those of local populations. The legitimacy issue revolves around competing questions of food security, availability of land, environmental significance and the promise of economic development exemplified in the way they unlock potential idle land, boosting production, generating employment and delivering taxes.

The land deals are being associated with the threat to Africa's food security (see, for example, Moron and Smith 2010; *Daily News*, 2010b; Zoomers, 2010). Critics of the deals range from rights groups to regional civil society organisations and multilateral institutions. The East African Farmers Federation, for example, cautioned against the acquisitions in what it saw as the midst of a severe food and economic crisis. The Federation argued that there are concerns about the impact of these transactions on the farming systems and environment of the communities where they are located (Ippmedia 6. 2010; Ippmedia 4. 2010). Similar fears have been echoed by the Food and Agricultural Organisations and the East African Community food security strategy experts. They have reiterated the concerns of civil society and rights groups that land grabs are reducing access to food for some of the world's poorest people and threatening Africa's food security, livelihood and identity. Consequently, African governments have been advised to desist from such deals that could threaten food security (Ippmedia 2. 2010; Oluoch, 2010).

The proponents of the deals dismiss fears of food security being undermined, arguing that acquisitions like those of biofuels target lands hitherto classified as unsuitable for agriculture. Moreover, governments contend that these land deals are agricultural investments (Oluoch 2010) ---- and by definition, therefore, cannot undermine food security. Some supporters have explicitly argued that, to the contrary, land deals in sectors such as "bio-energy production can bring investments in land, infrastructure and human resources that could help unlock Africa's idle potential and increase food production," (quoted in the *East African* 2010b). To this extent, the deals are presented as legitimate ventures in Africa in a narrative combining the variables of a frontier and the imperatives of economic development.

Proponents of land deals have argued further that they are perfectly legitimate because Africa is endowed with large swathes of land that is either under-utilised or where utilised, it is misused. Such a situation is undesirable in a continent yearning for economic development. Consequently, investors in large land transactions are filling a development void. The large acquisitions are thus being justified in terms of a convergence of three factors: idle land, resource-hungry investors, and the imperatives of conservation and economic development in Africa. Africa is modeled as endowed with a potential that, however, is currently idle. This unused, underused or misused land is attracting resource-hungry investors from developed or emerging economies. African governments justify their accommodation of these investors for the need to effectively utilise resources for national development (*Daily News* 2010; Ippmedia 2. 2010; Ippmedia 6. 2010). In Tanzania, for example, state investment authorities argue that: “There have been several warnings about land grabbing in Africa, but for a country like Tanzania with vast areas, that is not a big issue because the land needs to be put into effective use,” (Ippmedia 6. 2010). Within this framework, the Tanzanian government has been making available various supposedly underused former government ranches to investors (Sulle and Nelson, 2009).

The underlying logic is that these investments are a vehicle that can unlock the idle potential of African land and transform rural development through investments in land, infrastructure, and human resources and provide the much needed employment (*EastAfrican* 2010 b; Ippmedia 6. 2010; Zoomers, 2010). Provision of employment is particularly cited to explain why the “...people should not complain about investors being given land, because after all they provide employment to many Tanzanians” (Ippmedia 6. 2010). But not all are, however, convinced that the transactions are only targeting idle land and that they spur economic development. Aryeetey and Lewis (2010) have suggested that there are questions on whether these transactions constitute pursuit of economic development opportunity or are the familiar tales of economic corruption in Africa. Supporters of Aryeetey and Lewis (2010) in Tanzania contend that these worries are legitimate in light of the differential returns to those involved in and affected by the land deals.

In Tanzania, for example, the alleged idle land given to investors has been the subject of contestations, especially by the local populations who believe the land should belong to them. Resentment against these acquisitions even found their space in Parliament and in the recent national elections in regions grappling with multinational land grabs and mining schemes (Ippmedia 3. 2010; Ippmedia 5. 2010). Communities argue that the large scale projects undertaken by the foreign investors are neither participatory nor beneficial to them, and that some of the land was dubiously acquired from peasants (Ippmedia 4. 2010). In one district, some pastoralist communities were reportedly keeping vigil outside their houses to protest against their planned eviction to pave way for an investor. They countered: “We are traditional occupants of the land by birth-right, how can a foreigner who came here only in 2003 push us off?” State representatives were undeterred by such protests. A local state officer reportedly said: “... what he knew was the residents are required to move out to allow the French investor to start developing the area” (*Arusha Times*, 2010). The implication here is that claims of forced displacement are not therefore, without foundation, thereby bursting the idle land proposition. Indeed, the local state officer may not be dismissed as a case of misguided interpretation of government policy. Similar sentiments have been associated with the state agency in charge of investments. The director has been reported as saying that “People cannot just be evicted from their land unless the investment is of national interest,” (Ippmedia 6. 2010). Such cases contradict the premise of unused and available land invoked in legitimising land grabs. Similar contradictions surface with respect to state land privatised

and given to investors rather than giving it to the locals. Kapunga Rice Scheme is one such example.

The Scheme was formerly owned by state-owned National Agriculture and Food Corporation (NAFCO), but like the Manyara Ranch, it was placed under divestiture during the economic liberalisation programme of the 1990s. A Member of Parliament (MP) claimed that the company was, ironically, under-utilising the land; instead of cultivating it was leasing out farming plots to local farmers at a high price of Tshs1 million per hectare. The company acknowledged the leasing claims, but for a lesser amount of Tshs170, 000 per hectare. The firm further revealed that they were receiving more applications from potential farmers than they could honour, implying that there is land hunger among supposedly idle locals who incidentally were ready to do what the investor had leased the land for (Ippmedia 3. 2010). Is it possible that such investors could as well recoup their capital by just leasing land to the local peasants? It is the fear of such eventualities that leads the critics referred to by Aryeetey and Lewis (2010) to cast aspersions on the claims of spurring economic development by proponents of the deals (see also the skepticism by Moron and Smith, 2010 and Shivji, 1998)². Similar skepticism abounds in acquisitions based on environmental conservation.

Land acquisitions for environmental conservation are either in the form of securing of critical ecological areas, or for production of bio-fuels, thereby linking acquisitions with mitigating climate change. The former is legitimised in terms of how it salvages critical habitats from misuse, thus contributing to environmental conservation, while the latter exploits under-utilised land for a 'noble cause': reduction of over-reliance on fossil fuels. In Tanzania, examples of the former include Manyara Ranch that is held under TLCT, while those of the latter include Razaba Ranch (22,000 ha) in Bagamoyo District, which had been given to Zanzibar by former President Julius Nyerere, but had not been used since. The government has now leased it to SEKAB BT as a sugarcane plantation for bio-ethanol production (Sulle and Nelson, 2009).

Concern has, however, been raised over the potential adverse environmental impact of the land deals, including those specific to the environment, such as bio-fuel projects (Oxfam 2008; Muyakwa 2009; Ippmedia 4. 2010 ; Ippmedia 6. 2010; Gachanja, 2010; Zoomers, 2010). Unregulated growing of jatropha, for example, is feared to have the potential of land bleaching and environmental degradation. The case of the proposed jatropha production in Kenya perhaps expresses this apparent environmental service contradiction of the land deals. The project is supposed to replace dakatcha woodland and it is feared that its water requirement will adversely affect both water catchment and biodiversity conservation. Moreover, it will ironically impact negatively on climate mitigation efforts because more carbon will be released due to the low capacity of jatropha to store carbon (Gachanja, 2010). If such claims are scientifically tenable, then the alleged service to environmental conservation could become an ecological disaster. It is such grey areas that are intensifying the aspersions being cast on the legitimacy of these deals in addition to reservations on how they are sponsored.

Questions on how these deals are structured and mediated hinge on the transparency (or lack of it) of the eventual contracts. The conflicts caused by these deals are evidence of the lack of

² Although Shivji's dismissal of even joint investment with villages could still be varied, examples are now coming out that could moderate that criticism. In well-structured eco-tourism joint ventures, some communities in northern Tanzania tourism circuit are registering credible satisfaction with the outcome of such ventures. Such joint ventures could then be presented as examples of best practice in land "acquisitions".

clarity in the process (Ippmedia 5. 2010; Aryeetey and Lewis. 2010). Local communities complain that these large scale projects “are neither participatory ... , and that some of the land was dubiously acquired from peasants,” (Ippmedia 4. 2010). Moreover, the structuring of these deals is bound to be flawed on account of differential action resources available to interested parties. As some of the sponsors of these land deals have observed, land tenure regimes in most African countries, including Tanzania, can be complex (AWF 2000). This means that contracting parties need to invest heavily in their negotiating capacity. It can be expected that most external actors, unlike the local ones, will be backed by both elaborate human, non-human and even diplomatic resources. They are thus prepared to “negotiate complex and sensitive land agreements and policies” (TLCT nd.; see also Aryeetey and Lewis. 2010). As a result, some land deals are structured in ways that later raise eyebrows among interested parties.

In the case of the Kapunga Rice Scheme referred to above, for example, what appeared incredible to the MP was actually perfectly within the contractual right of the investor. In his reply to the member, the Prime Minister said the investor had all the right to design a model of utilisation of the land because it belonged to him. This position may appear to be what is reflected in the contract because in its part, the company stated that “...the privatisation agreement allows the investor to cultivate the land and lease out part of it to surrounding farming communities” (Ippmedia 3. 2010). The obvious question that arises is how to explain a contract that gives an investor more land than necessary, even as it anticipates that local farming populations need land. The answer is largely institutional: the extant land tenure regime discriminates against certain actors; if they are also less endowed in action resources, they are then forced to live with less than their preferred outcomes. This broad assessment of the Tanzanian case can be illustrated using the example of TLCT.

TLCT and Manyara Ranch

Manyara Ranch was initially owned by inhabitants of Esilalei village in Monduli District. The village has since split into two, Ol tukai and Esilalei. These rural villages have the basic agrarian characteristics of most such areas in Africa. The main economic activities are livestock herding, petty trading, farming (save for the disruptive vagaries of weather and wildlife damage), and formal employment (especially in conservation and tourism). The literacy level is basic primary school, with very little presence in higher education.

Villagers claim they inhabited this land until the advent of colonialism when they surrendered it to a white settler. In 1974/5 the government of Tanzania took it over and ran it as part of the National Ranching Company (NARCO), a state firm charged with commercial livestock ranching. Like many other public agencies then, it was mismanaged and beset with financial losses, which in 1998/99 amounted to US\$10,000. In 1999, the company was earmarked for privatisation under the government’s divesture programme (Sumba et al., 2005). The question of what to do with the ranch then arose. As expected, various interested parties claimed a stake in the ranch. Prominent among them were the local villagers, private developers and a conservation lobby. While the three do not necessarily represent three different possible land use strategies, the proponents of conservation acquisitions model them as if they do. Institutional structures and history interacted to deliver the land to the conservation lobby.

Land tenure regime and historical precedents facilitate land deals for conservation

The phenomenon of large-scale land acquisitions in Tanzania is hinged on the history of land tenure in Tanzania and, with respect to acquisition of land for conservation, the role of wildlife tourism in the political economy of Tanzania. Control of land in Tanzania has been the domain of the state since the colonial authorities appropriated all land and put it under government control. In 1923, the British colonial authorities passed the Land Ordinance that centralised all land under the state (Crown), including subordinating to the state land hitherto held under customary laws (Shivji, 1998). With independence, the new state emulated its colonial predecessor and continued the practice of vesting radical title on the head of state. Although commentators and legal scholars have argued that the state is the trustee not the owner of public land (Shivji 1998), in practice the state has treated public land like its own and can appropriate and dispose it at will. It is in this dispensation that the current land grab, and its assumed disregard of local interests, is thriving. As one critic of state control of land ownership has stated:

“After independence in 1962, the Government presented to the Parliament a Bill to grab the entire land in the country and make it public property. Since then, people have been evicted from their land to pave the way for investors or for other uses,” (emphasis mine) (Ippmedia 1, 2010).

Although there have been recent legislations on land, these have consolidated, not loosened, the grip of the state on land matters, providing the window of opportunity for which the current large-scale land transactions thrive outside the censure of local populations. Indeed, the current Land Act (URT 1999a) and the Village Land Act (URT 1999b) could account for the failure of communities to put up a struggle against dispossession. Both legislations have provisions whose interpretations in terms of national interests could intimidate local actors into submission in any contest over land with well-wheeled external interests. This is precisely what may be expected in the case of TLCT.

In the first instance, while land in Tanzania is categorised as either public, village or conservation land, the President has the right to shift land from one category to the other (URT 1999a). Within the context of village land rights, and in terms of the villagers’ evaluation of their strategies, this provision assumes ominous proportions when the Village Land Act provides that the President has powers to redistribute land considered as open land (URT 1999b)³. The President can exercise such powers liberally because the Land Act (URT 1999a sec. 3(1) (e)) seeks “... to ensure that land is used productively and that any such use complies with the principles of sustainable development”. The latter aspect is equally important, particularly in situations such as that pitting the villagers against TLCT where the land at stake borders on conservation interests. The law empowers appropriate authorities to protect certain lands that they deem should not be “... developed on account of its fragile nature or of its environmental significance” (URT 1999b: sec. 7 (1) (f)). The law further empowers the President to “...declare any land to which subsection 7 applies to be hazardous land and any such declaration shall operate to compulsorily acquire, subject to compensation, any right of occupancy in that land” (URT 1999a sec. 7 (8)).

³ The question of open or unused land is particularly tricky for pastoralists, especially where the interpreting authority has little respect for pastoral way of life. It was once reported in one wildlife conservation meeting, that villagers in one Maasai district were nervous because the then President had flown over their district and had raised the question of why there was such vast tracts of land that was unused. While pastoralists contend that these are grazing fields and are not unused as bureaucrats and non-pastoral observers would like to think, such characterizations of their lands does not inspire confidence of land tenure security (see Wily, 2003 for a further comment of this land debate).

Thus the existing legal regime can account for why most local communities are unable to resist state appropriation of their lands for foreign investments. With specific reference to conservation interests, it particularly explains why villagers may not outdo conservation lobbies, given both the weight of the state powers over land, and the added weight of the nexus between land and environment in the law. In addition to this mix is the centrality of wildlife tourism in the political economy of Tanzania, with the result that land conflicts are frequent.

Tourism ranks among the top employers, accounting for 16 per cent of GDP and nearly 25 per cent of export earnings. The bulk of the tourism industry is wildlife-based, mainly in Tanzania's northern circuit that comprises the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tarangire-Manyara ecosystem (which houses the Tarangire and Lake Manyara National Parks), Serengeti and Kilimanjaro National Parks. TLCT interests are focused on the region, which supports a tourism industry valued at US\$1.3 billion per year (Sumba et al., 2005: 3; Sachedina 2008: 53-4). The strategic national importance of this region's contribution is further enhanced by the fact that Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) acknowledges that proceeds from this northern tourism circuit supports the operations of other parks with insignificant numbers of visitors. In terms of state authorities, therefore, stability in the northern tourism circuit lessens the burden of the national treasury, which would otherwise be called upon to bail out the running of these parks. Thus, in the event of any contestations between local populations and conservation interests, the state is biased towards the latter. This has been the case.

Tanzania's northern international tourism circuit has since the colonial period been the theatre of land use conflicts involving conservationists, state wildlife agencies and local communities over questions of wildlife conservation and wildlife-based tourism investments (Neumann, 1998; Brockington, 2002; Shetler, 2007; Kabiri, 2007; Igoe and Croucher, 2007). The latest example is the ongoing violent confrontation in Loliondo between the villagers and Ortello Business Company, a hunting outfit associated with a Middle East Arab royalty that was given land being claimed by locals (for a reproduction of this experience among Hadzabe, see McCrummen, 2007). In all these contests, local communities have always emerged with only scars. This paper argues that the legal regime in force, the position of the tourism industry and these past legacies of appropriations that were unsuccessfully contested, informed the calculations of villagers into working with conservationists in the TLCT project (see for example, Goldman, 2006 where villagers claim they have no say in Manyara Ranch management, but are mere cogs in the wheel driven by others). This in itself would otherwise be puzzling because it would have been expected that communities would instead have shied away from ceding ground to conservation agencies. What is the significance of the Tarangire-Manyara Ecosystem that conferred value onto Manyara Ranch as to make it influence the villagers' choice of strategy?

Mapping Manyara Ranch

Manyara Ranch is located between Tarangire and Lake Manyara National Parks. Its significance is tied to the importance of the Tarangire-Manyara ecosystem in Tanzania's conservation and tourism interests. The ecosystem covers an area of approximately 22,200 km². It includes two national parks (Tarangire National Park (TNP) and Lake Manyara National Park (LMNP)), National Forest Reserves, and the Mkungunero Game Reserve

(AWF. nd 4; Sachedina, 2008: 51-52). There are other wildlife significant areas, such as the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Serengeti National Park whose fortunes are also connected to this ecosystem. The terrain is semi-arid with annual average rainfall of 600-700 mm. The vegetation is mainly acacia woodland, grassland, bush and riverine forest (AWF. nd 4). The region has the second largest density of animal biomass in the world after the Ngorongoro. Lake Manyara National Park, for example, has the highest known density of elephants (1/km²) in Tanzania. Animals found in the area include elephants (about 3,500), zebras, wildebeests, buffalos, oryxes, hartebeests, greater and lesser kudus, gerenuks and elands. Others are predators such as lions, leopards and the endangered African wild dog. In addition, it is rich in bird diversity, with around 350 species being recorded in Lake Manyara National Park (AWF nd 4; Sumba et al. 2005; Sachedina, 2008: 51-52).

As a consequence of this richness of habitat diversity, there are ecological landmarks within and adjacent to this ecosystem that have been internationally recognised and designated for their biological value. Lake Manyara NP was designated as a Biosphere Reserve in 1987, and the Ngorongoro Crater was designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1979 (Sachedina, 2008: 51-52).

The significance of this ecosystem for both conservation and wildlife tourism is thus enormous and has the potential to influence land tenure dynamics within the region. It is in this context that the TLCT involvement in Manyara Ranch is to be understood. Manyara Ranch is a critical part of the Kwakuchinja wildlife corridor, the only remaining viable connection between Tarangire and Manyara National Parks. The ranch occupies 17,807 hectares (approximately 45,000 acres) of land and is located 80 kilometers from Arusha (Sumba et al., 2005). Several huge dams on the ranch attract a large diversity of both resident and migratory wildlife and birdlife (AWF nd. 4; Sumba et al., 2005). Significant resident population of wildlife includes groups of bull elephants, breeding herds of giraffes, many lesser kudus, wildebeests, zebras, gazelles, oryxes and elands. There are also predators such as lions, cheetahs, leopards, hyenas, jackals, and bat-eared foxes (AWF nd 4). While the presence of such an abundant species of wildlife is enough to draw attention of conservation and state wildlife agencies, the presence of other variables, such as trends of wildlife decline, make such a focus even more protracted. In both Tanzania and neighbouring Kenya, census reports indicate that wildlife is declining rapidly, in some cases as high as 65 per cent in both countries (Reid, 2002; Western et al., 2007; Sachedina, 2008: 380-2). In most cases, this decline is attributed to land use changes that deprive wildlife of its habitat. This attribution foregrounds potential land use practices as a definer of the successful contenders in land tenure claims, as is the case with Manyara Ranch. Consequently, as it would be expected, claimants to land tenure who can be associated with the potential use of land in ways hostile to wildlife conservation are bound to be marginalised in favour of formal wildlife conservationists. This is the context in which villagers claiming the ownership of Manyara Ranch failed to fully reclaim a ranch they considered theirs and had to be compromised into a wildlife conservancy tenure relationship.

Manyara Ranch: From village land to TLCT

Three possible options that are portrayed as characterising the post-divesture phase include annexing the ranch to Lake Manyara National Park. This had happened with the Mkwaja Ranch that was acquired by Sadani Game Reserve. While this option would have been consistent with retaining the ranch within the ambit of wildlife use, the model of having it as a fully protected area was going to be at odds with the current orthodoxy of involving

communities in wildlife conservation and the need to relax land alienation for wildlife use because of the backlash it has on human-wildlife relations (Sumba et al.'2005; AWF, 2003). The other option was to return it to the community, and the community itself had taken initiatives to secure this outcome. The villagers petitioned the President to have the land returned to them, given that they occupied it prior to its appropriation by both the colonial and post-colonial governments (Goldman, 2006: 173). Such a move was within the responses to liberalisation by those dispossessed of their lands by the agrarian reforms of the 1970s. Some people who lost land during the villagisation programme in Tanzania had attempted to use the courts to redeem their lands (Shivji 1998). These attempts may have emboldened the villagers claiming Manyara Ranch in their bid to use the divesture programme to reclaim their land. Returning the land to the locals was found to be contentious, given the centrality of the landscape to conservation, and the perceived uses of the land by the communities if they got it back. Locals were modeled as habitat converting agents given the prevailing practices in neighbouring districts such as Simanjiro (Sumba et al., 2005; Cook, 2007; Sachedina, 2008) and thereby fragmenting landscapes and consequently blocking wildlife mobility. Of course such portrayal of communities is self-serving because conversion of landscapes is not uni-dimensional. While formerly wildlife habitat has been converted to livestock and cropping, examples now abound of communities converting livestock and crop lands into wildlife estates as is happening in Ololoskwan, north of Serengeti National Park and in parts of Kenya⁴.

The third option was to sell the ranch to private developers, which was opposed by conservationists who, as indicated above, could easily invoke the law on hazardous land use to derail competition by private investors. AWF sources, apparently in a bid to justify their preferred outcome, contend that selling the ranch to private developers meant it had the potential to be used in ways incompatible with overall landscape conservation. What is striking is that even private developers who were interested in game ranches are depicted as unviable, apparently because game ranching for tourism would entail fencing, thereby blocking wildlife movement and excluding local communities from accessing pasture (Sumba et al 2005; AWF 2003). This reasoning is problematic because the current arrangement that AWF pushed for is running wildlife tourism ventures without fencing, indicating that fencing is not determinative even in a game ranch. Moreover, the current arrangement does not itself meet the requirement for access to grazing land that is used to exclude private developers as viable contenders. As will be mentioned later, communities complain that they are denied access to grazing in the ranch (even as wildlife from the ranch roam in village land) (see, for example, Goldman 2006 for an extended discussion on this issue). Having excluded alternative options, the protagonists settled for a Trust, in which the land would apparently be held in trust for the community but managed by AWF. This is how the TLCT came into being (AWF 2003; Sumba et al., 2005).

The Tanzania Land Conservation Trust

The rise of TLCT must be located within the context of international agencies and foreign capital operating in Tanzania. TLCT came into being as a result of lobbying spearheaded by AWF and backed by a battery of international organisations, such as WWF and UNDP, which are involved in wildlife conservation. In the local setting, the AWF-led coalition enlisted the support of state agencies in conservation, such as TANAPA and the Wildlife

⁴ See also Suzuki 2002?? for Zimbabwe.

Division. A task force involving these actors, local Maasai and the private sector was activated to facilitate the formation of a land conservation trust⁵. Its brief included raising funds and lobbying both the local Maasai and the state to buy into the trust model. The process was aided by the existence of a provision for trustee incorporation in Tanzania (the Trustees Incorporation Ordinance chapter 375 of the laws of Tanzania). These activities culminated in the establishment of the TLCT, which was given a 99-year lease over the Manyara Ranch. According to the trust deed, TLCT's mission is: "To conserve the natural resource values and services provided by the ranch as part of a critical wildlife corridor and dispersal area," (and) "To benefit partner communities from the ranch activity base –both directly and indirectly" (Sumba et al., 2005; AWF 2005; Goldman, 2006). This mission statement is at the same time an exercise in legitimising the acquisition of Manyara Ranch by the Trust.

Legitimising TLCT's Acquisition of Manyara Ranch

The proponents of TLCT, led by AWF, premise the acquisition of the ranch on environmental sustainability. Thus, in terms of the present discourse on land grabs, the acquisition by TLCT is presented as a variation of the other land takeovers that are portrayed as being characterised by calculation of individual or corporate advantage. For TLCT, the proponents aver that it is first, a non-profit outfit, and secondly (and perhaps most important), it is an agent of necessity whose objective is to provide a public good: wildlife conservation. Within this framework, pursuit of private gains by other actors operating within the same landscape is viewed as dangerous to the environmental project. The land seizure is presented, therefore, as inoculating the conservation project against this danger. In this respect, AWF states that:

TLCT is a non-profit institution whose main goal is to acquire critical wildlife areas threatened by private development. The TLCT manages these lands to protect the needs of pastoral communities as well as to preserve the integrity of these areas for wildlife conservation (AWF nd).

In the preceding sections, the significance and critical role of this region to wildlife was observed. The danger of private development alluded to has to do with the conversion of the land into farms and the resultant dangers that this poses to wildlife conservation. Cultivators have over the years encroached on the ranch and thus leading to the progressive disappearance of the Kwakuchinja wildlife corridor in the area. To this extent, then, if the ranch that constitutes a major part of this corridor was to be abandoned to the designs of the cultivators, the entire region would come under crop cultivation and wildlife migration routes would collapse (Sholley nd.; Sumba et al.,2005; AWF nd).

In one respect, farmland, and especially if under peasant cultivation, leads to land fragmentation and deprives wildlife of its habitat and blocks vital migratory routes. If migratory routes are blocked, the link between the national parks would be wiped out, yet the conservation imperatives of the ecosystem calls for the linking of the protected areas through corridors of undeveloped land in areas surrounding the national parks since none of them is viable on its own as an isolated unit (AWF nd.). Moreover, sedentary lifestyle is considered more inimical to wildlife conservation than pastoralism. Farming, apart from converting conservation land into cultivation, intensifies human-wildlife conflicts. This is because browsers are a threat to the fortunes of the farmers. This conflict induces retaliatory strategies

⁵ Perhaps on this basis, AWF can claim that it is above the accusations levelled against other actors acquiring large tracts of land that they do so under veils of secrecy (see The East African (2010) where the world report calls for the lifting of "The veil of secrecy that often surrounds these deals...").

that result in the direct killing of wildlife or in the rise of bush meat trade. A combination of all of these tendencies works against conservation.

In light of such a setting then, the proposed privatisation of the ranch by the Government was received by the conservation lobby as having the potential to render full blown a situation that was already bad. Although, as observed earlier, private activity can be pro-conservation, in this case this possibility was ignored. Instead conservation actors argued that if the ranch was sold, the land would be subdivided and utilised for a variety of people-centric purposes that in the long-term would have provided little value for either wildlife or people⁶ (Sholley). Such framing of the problem appeals simultaneously to the notions of environmental sustainability and the national interest. This is because it is not good natural resource stewardship for a state to pursue a land use strategy that issues a loss-loss outcome. Proponents of the TLCT thus cast it as an alternative that would yield a win-win arrangement for key stakeholders. As Sumba et al (2005: 2) state:

“African Wildlife Foundation proposed the creation of a national land conservation trust for Tanzania that would hold this property and manage it to meet three main objectives: conservation, community development and economic productivity.”

Thus the acquisition of the ranch land is here legitimised in terms of its criticality to conservation, yet it was under a threat that would have had ecological ramifications far beyond the ranch. So the acquisition is thus presented as part of a broader programme to salvage a valuable ecosystem, AWF insiders again state:

In 1998, AWF began working closely with the community, its leaders, local politicians and conservation professionals to secure Manyara Ranch so that it would continue to facilitate wildlife movement between Manyara and Tarangire National Parks and safeguard the wildlife populations, the integrity of protected areas and the tourism industry that depends on the wildlife (Sumba et al, 2005: 4).

In this case, the acquisition is presented as a valuable public good, and as having been executed in concert with local populations and other interested parties. How does the resultant edifice reflect this inclusion?

The TLCT as an outfit

As observed earlier, one of the key questions in the global land grab phenomenon has been that of how these land deals are structured. The question of the resultant power relations over these acquisitions is central to understanding the implications of these deals to, among others, local livelihoods and the national political economy in general. Of interest then, would be the empirical question of where the ultimate decision-making in the resultant tenurial configuration lies. In the case of TLCT and its property — the Manyara Ranch — it appears that its sponsors endeavoured to craft an institutional architecture that portrays local communities as key drivers of the Trust. The ranch has four major governance components namely, the board of trustees, the steering committee, the ranch enterprise committee and the ranch management. Local communities feature in all the first three, and by virtue of their dominance among the employees of the ranch (see below), their presence in the fourth category is guaranteed. Essentially, the Trust and the ranch are two different entities. The Trust can acquire other properties beyond Manyara Ranch which could be governed in varied ways from the ranch but all assets would be under the board. For the current purposes, however, since the Trust so far has only one property, the two can be assessed as one.

⁶ In case of the people, it is argued that arid lands cannot support cultivation over a long time. The idea then is that by the time cultivation collapses, wildlife will have collapsed long time and it would not be possible to resuscitate wildlife enterprise.

TLCT is governed by a board of trustees currently comprising representatives of the Monduli District Council, African Wildlife Foundation, Tanzania National Parks Authority, World Wildlife Fund, UNDP, the private sector, and the local Maasai community (who have four representatives namely: the laibon (religious leader), the chair of the village government from each village, and the chair of the steering committee). NARCO is also represented⁷. The Trust is chaired by the MP of the area hosting the ranch. AWF serves as the secretariat to the Trust (Sumba et al., 2005). There is also the 18-member steering committee. Each of the two villages has nine representatives, who elect their own chair. It is meant to link the community with ranch management and serves as an advisory body.

The other component of the ranch governance is the Ranch Enterprise Committee (REC) composed of the chief executive officer of TLCT (who also chairs the committee), the chair of each of the two village governments, AWF (Kenya), the steering committee chair, the director of Maasai Steppe Heartland (TME) that is under AWF Arusha office, a TLCT board member, the Monduli District Council and the manager of Manyara Ranch as an ex-officio. There is also the ranch management headed by the ranch manager and has four departments namely: finance and administration, security, livestock and community liaison.

With such governance set up where the local communities are party to the management of the ranch, it would be expected that they have a sense of real ownership of the ranch and the Trust, with AWF just serving as a facilitator in the same sense as AWF has characterised the Kenya Land Conservation Trust (AWF nd. 5). It is the model which most backers of the land acquisitions have said would optimise the relationship between land deals and local interests⁸.

While (as discussed below) this is an image that AWF and its coalition partners in the TLCT would like to present, the community part of this equation is beset with discordant voices. The question then is how to explain this variation in the outcome of actor preferences. This is largely an argument about the ways in which actor incentives and capabilities structured their responses to the ensuing contestations over the land deal. For one, it is clear that AWF had other choices to the current arrangement. It could have facilitated restitution of the property to the local villagers under their absolute title and then engage them in conservation efforts as it does with other landowning communities. Alternatively, AWF itself could have bid as a single signatory to the ranch title and it had the capital to secure this outcome. AWF, instead, chose a hybrid strategy, but one that would still deliver a preferred outcome. Why then did the key actors behave the way they did?

AWF, Trusteeship and Empire: The end justify the means

AWF's does not make secret of its fascination with wild lands in Africa. In its mission statement, AWF expresses its preferences thus: "The African Wildlife Foundation, together with the people of Africa, works to ensure the wildlife and wild lands of Africa will endure forever" (Sholley). AWF also positions itself as the premier conservationist in Africa,

⁷ It is represented by its chair. The purpose of this representation is to oversee the continuation of the livestock enterprise in the ranch. It is a requirement of the privatisation programme that any privatised state agency must continue to a certain extent with the activities it had originally been set up to do.

⁸ In the recent national elections in Tanzania, a presidential candidate who faulted the government on land grabbing was reported as saying that if elected, all investment activities would be conducted in a joint venture between investors and the people, with the government only supervising to make sure there was no violation of any law (Ippmedia 1. 2010; see, however, Shivji 1998 on futility of joint ventures).

defining itself from other conservation actors for its devotion to wildlife protection in the continent. It asserts, for example, that: “For nearly 40 years, AWF has been passionately and effectively protecting wildlife in Africa — in fact, AWF is the only conservation organisation fully devoted to this cause” (AWF 2000). The organisation’s faithfuls have espoused this mission and passion as their dream in AWF. Craig Sholley, an AWF ecologist, represents this dream thus: “To create a future for Africa that includes the conservation of large wild landscapes and diverse species while simultaneously improving the livelihoods of people who are willing to deal with wildlife literally ‘in their backyard’” (Sholley). Thus AWF’s image of African conservation discloses the incentive structure within which it’s response to the opportunity offered by Manyara Ranch can be understood. Acquisition of such a ranch would be a step in the realisation of this dream. Such ownership of a wild title would also have signaling effect: an outward tangible expression of this devotion. AWF’s post-acquisition feelings can throw light on its pre-acquisition incentives. Perhaps enthralled by the apparent success of Manyara Ranch, AWF contended:

“There is no reason why Manyara Ranch Conservancy should not in the near future match, neighboring parks as a place in which to experience the true wonders of Tanzania's wild areas - with the full support of the local population (AWF nd 2 emphasis added).”

One conservation actor in Arusha told me that his view of AWF’s presence in Manyara Ranch was that it wanted a project it could use to rival TANAPA, as a consequence of its failure to influence TANAPA.⁹

The ownership of such a ranch would moreover be consistent with AWF’s practice: it’s affinity to expansionism is reflected in its heartland strategy, a conservation approach that focuses on large landscapes as one unit. AWF believes they should be: “Not small pockets of land, not even national-park-sized swaths of it, but vast landscapes that range for hundreds, even thousands, of miles (AWF nd. 7; see also, for example, Sachedina (2008, 2010) on AWF and scaling up of its influence). Manyara Ranch was somewhere within this description. AWF described it as “...a large, government-owned tract within the Tarangire-Manyara corridor.” (AWF, 2000). Furthermore, AWF could raise the resources to secure this title.

Recent studies (Sachedina 2008) of AWF have revealed its capacity to raise funds for conservation in Africa. Throughout this decade, AWF’s financial portfolio was running into millions of US dollars (see table 1).

Figure 1. AWF Growth in Financial Position (approx. million US \$).

Year	Assets	Net-assets	Liability
1999	11.4	10.5	6.3
2000	11.3	11.0	7.7
2005	13.3	12.2	-
2006	16.2	15.1	-
2007	19.1	17.8	17.5
2008	29.6	26.9	21.6
2009	32.6	26.1	20.1

Source: AWF Annual Reports, 2009, 2008, 2000.

⁹ Unlike in Kenya where KWS is seen as captive to conservation donor organisations, in Tanzania both TANAPA and Wildlife Division are relatively well-wheeled and, therefore, free of undue donor dictates (see, for example, Kabiri 2007).

Certainly, this financial muscle was brought to bear on its conservation interests in Africa. Going by its 2009 expenditure, the bulk of this is now going to investments in land and habitat. This component in 2009 took 44 per cent of its investment expenditure (AWF, 2009b). AWF invested US\$2.5 million at the Manyara Ranch over six years (Sachedina 2008: 393). This financial portfolio is backed by a strategic partnership with other conservation actors who certainly (did) enhance AWF's clout¹⁰. AWF's web of partners includes Flora and Fauna International, The Nature Conservancy, USAID and the European Union. In 2009, for example, the US government contribution was US\$3.5 million (Sachedina 2008; AWF 2009b). USAID has for over a decade now funded AWF-implemented natural resources project in Tanzania, and particularly in the Tarangire-Manyara ecosystem. Unlike the villages described above, AWF's wherewithal could easily enable it to bid as a sole proprietor for this ranch.

It is likely that AWF failed to invoke its financial muscle to secure the ranch because its interest to position itself as acting in concert with the people living with wildlife may have constrained the exercise of its market right¹¹. This constrain arises because the local inhabitants competing for the ownership of the ranch had cast their claim in historical terms. Thus AWF could not secure an exclusive title to this ranch without adding another chapter to the legacy of dispossession in Maasailand, and thereby blotting its self-representation. Its next strategy then was to co-opt locals in a scheme that would see AWF realise its desire of having wildlife on large tracts of wild lands. With the registration of the Trust, AWF was satisfied that it had secured its interests. Its verdict, unlike that of communities (see below), was triumphal:

“This year brought a major victory for conservation: establishment of the Tanzania Land Conservation Trust (TLCT) by AWF and partners.... The first institution of its kind in Africa, the trust is expected to become a regional model. AWF encouraged that the TLCT be designed to secure a key section of the wildlife corridor between Tarangire and Lake Manyara National Parks. The next step is to obtain title to the Manyara Ranch...”

Thus AWF was clearly strategic in the way it was going about the disposal of the ranch. The question then is why the local communities would themselves sign up (when it is assumed they are not signatories to the AWF mission statement).

Various accounts of the local people's view on the Manyara Ranch are pegged on their claim that the land belongs to them (Goldman 2006; Sachedina 2008). Therefore, it can be expected that their preference would be exclusive community ownership of the ranch. As stated above, this informed their first strategy when the ranch came up for disposal: they made representations to the president for its restitution. The question then is why they signed up for a Trust in which they share the title to the ranch, and more so with actors whom they had cause to be suspicious of in land deals¹². In one respect, some community members claim that they did not intend to sign up for the Trust as currently constituted. Rather, they thought the land had been returned to them and AWF was only managing it but were

¹⁰ Goldman (2006: 113) describes the deal thus: “purchase of Manyara Ranch by AWF was facilitated by joint lobbying by international agencies and local MP.”

¹¹ Sachedina (2008), who AWF could possibly describe as an insider turned renegade, has claimed that when AWF supports a conservation cause that is opposed by the local population, it would rather capacitate others to do it while it keeps its distance.

¹² The history of the relationship between pastoralists in northern Tanzania and conservation actors is dominated by conflicts over land for livestock and wildlife conservation (Goldman 2006; Igoe and Croucher 2007; Shetler 2007).

surprised later to find out that TLCT had been given a 99-year lease over the land (Goldman 2006). As hinted above with reference to KLCT, and as the acting ranch manager told me, AWF claims as much. These two accounts don't differ on the involvement of AWF and, therefore, community members knew their access to the land was restricted. The incentive structure that persuaded them to accept this arrangement can be explained in terms of the circumstances they found themselves in and the benefits of hindsight. It is an institutional analysis argument.

The interest shown by the conservation actors meant that the struggle for the ownership of the ranch would be structured in terms of private (communal) interests versus public (national) interests. The legal regime that would arbitrate this struggle was, as stated above, a double edged sword. While it could recognise their claims by virtue of customary rights, the power of the President to transfer land, and the legal bias towards conservation interests (especially hazardous lands) could compromise their effective repossession of the ranch. In addition, they were heirs to a history of contestations with the conservation actors over land for wildlife. This history was instructive of their limitations in such battles: they have almost always lost to conservationists. Under such circumstances, their best strategy would be to concede the ranch's conservation significance and promise they would hold it as such and would work with the conservation lobby to maintain its significance. In this case, it is possible to see why some villagers would later argue that they thought the land had been returned to them, with AWF serving as a manager. But if on paper it seemed like there was a convergence of interests between local communities and the AWF-led coalition, has this turned out to be so in practice? The question can only be answered by looking at the questions of how the parties evaluate the ways in which they have a control over the ranch and benefit from it. The next section inquires into this question. The view of the implications of the land deal to the communities from the viewpoint of AWF/TLCT is presented, followed by a commentary on the communities' view.

Implications for local communities

Debate on the implications of land grabs to the local communities is a case of two narratives. Proponents forward them as beneficial to the economies and environment of the host countries. Critics have, however, claimed that these land acquisitions are disastrous in various ways. While the impact of conservation land takeovers as represented by TLCT may not be in contention, they are certainly different from other land grabs like those of growing food for export or for biofuels. Since creating areas in which wildlife can continue to co-exist with humans is the thrust of AWF's involvement in the ranch (AWF nd. 2), the organisation can be expected to pay special attention to community benefits from the ranch. Hence, as stated earlier, the Ranch Enterprise Committee is an attempt to institutionalize community benefits from the ranch as a standard operating procedure. Consequently, there are several benefit streams, both economic and social, that can be delineated both to the communities and the society in general.

Economic benefits accrue through mainly the tourism and livestock sectors. The ranch has undertaken development of wildlife-based tourism. So far, a luxury tented camp with 12 beds is operational, offering various activities, some of which lead to direct cash benefits trickling down to the people. They include entertainment offerings by community members, sale of souvenirs, escorted walking safaris (by armed guides) and Maasai cultural visits where guests may, for example, interact with traditional healers conversant with medicinal values of the

indigenous plants (AWF nd 3). A new tourist investment, a 20-room hotel, is in the pipeline. A donor has given Manyara Ranch about US\$800,000 and an entrepreneur is expected to absorb the difference. Given experiences with such enterprises elsewhere in Tanzania, the impact to village GDP can be enormous in terms of creating jobs, local revenue sharing, and taxes (AWF 2009).

The ranch also initiated improvement of the livestock sector in both production and marketing. Breeds of superior bulls are introduced to improve local breeds of cattle and sheep. Villagers are either given or buy these breeds at discounted prices. Development of infrastructure for livestock production has focused on provision of seasonal access to water through dams, boreholes, and water tanks built and/or maintained by the ranch (USAID/Tanzania 2002; AWF 2009). Although the question of village cattle in the ranch remains contentious (Sumba et al 2005; Goldman 2006, 2003), there is a grazing agreement providing for livestock to access the ranch during difficult times. Villagers talked of this as an improvement from the era of the NARCO ownership of the ranch when livestock could not “even go near the ranch”. To ensure the villagers reap the benefits of improved livestock production, a marketing strategy has been instituted.

RAMAT has been set up to coordinate livestock production for sale to Manyara Ranch for local and international market. To facilitate the execution of this goal, TLCT through donor funding undertakes capacity building for RAMAT on organisational management, livestock husbandry and marketing. RAMAT’s target output is to increase the quality and quantity of cattle so as to raise the unit return of cows sold. And, to add value to the livestock sold, a donor-funded abattoir is to be built near the area. It is anticipated that the slaughter house will be rented. The income from these three sources (tourism, ranch livestock, and abattoir) will be shared according to a new formula awaiting approval by the TLCT Board. It is proposed that the ranch will retain 60 per cent to cover the running cost, TLCT will take five per cent for the cost of the Board of Trustees, the villages will take 30 per cent and five per cent will be retained in a reserve fund. These benefits for the community are in addition to the formal employment opportunities provided by TLCT.

As part of the TLCT compact, the two villages have exclusive rights to employment within the ranch if they have qualified personnel for the available positions. As of now, only 10 of 76 workers are not from the two villages. Villagers thus benefit when TLCT recruits and trains employees from the area. The villagers earn an income by working as game scouts, general ranch workers and in tourism enterprises, thereby benefitting directly from the ranch (AWF nd. 2; AWF. 2003). TLCT has also provided other benefits, which are of a public goods nature but proximity factors enables local communities to benefit disproportionately. Social services benefits include schools, subsidised transportation, donations to community projects and improved conservation landscapes.

TLCT’s contribution to education is perhaps one of the most prominent impacts on the villages. The ranch had a boarding primary school that TLCT has renovated into a first-class facility. Although the school’s performance prior to TLCT’s intervention was good, its buildings were dilapidated. It was also lacking in vital services such as clean and reliable water and electricity, and was far removed from transportation routes. AWF moved the school to another site, away from the immediate wildlife migratory route, in a US\$1,000,000 project funded by donors led by the Annenberg Foundation. (AWF nd.; AWF 2003; AWF 2009; Sholley). The new outfit that accommodates about 600 pupils and about 17 teachers has water and electricity, and is next to a major highway connecting the ranch to Arusha

town. In an informal conversation with a teacher at the school, the feeling that they could not ask for more was self-evident. They exuded a high sense of satisfaction, akin to that of some village elders I talked to.

On conservation, the Trust claims to have managed to salvage a huge portion of the corridor that was threatened with degradation (AWF nd) through transformations in the human resource and provision of wildlife security. TLCT improved the working conditions of the staff by constructing living quarters for them. Rangers now patrol the ranch to provide security to wildlife (AWF 2003; AWF 2009) and cases of human-wildlife conflict have reduced. Through the ranch's cattle project, lion protection has been improved. Any local pastoralist who loses a cow to the lions gets a calf from AWF, in the hope that the herders will refrain from the killing of lions in retaliation (AWF nd 3)¹³. TLCT has also improved the forest cover of the ranch. A combination of the imperatives of livestock rearing under NARCO that needed space for cattle grazing, and the demands of the charcoal market had nearly depleted the ranch's indigenous woodland cover. TLCT was thus beset with the need to reclaim this woodland. AWF set up an indigenous tree nursery and hardwoods centre on the ranch to support the re-growing of this woodland. As a result, the vegetation of the ranch have greatly improved (AWF nd 3; AWF. 2009). AWF believes that these conservation experiments also serve epistemic purposes since they provide a laboratory condition through which investigators can learn and develop innovative policy recommendations on various facets of conservation dynamics, such as drivers of habitat degradation, wildlife migration between parks and human-wildlife interactions (AWF nd. ; AWF 2003). According to the sponsors of TLCT, therefore, the Manyara Ranch land deal has benefited not just the local communities but the broader society as well. AWF sums up the land deal thus:

“Manyara Ranch is more than a wildlife crossroads—it is an intersection where people, animals and landscape meet and live and prosper together. It is a model for the future of conservation everywhere. It is a glimpse of the future of Africa itself”(AWF. 2003).

While this could be so for AWF and its other coalition partners, to what extent do local communities share this view? Assuming the local community had spare land, can they be inspired by the Manyara Ranch model and vote for additional land to the ranch to expand their investment?

“Don’t even go there”: Local communities’ love-hate relationship with TLCT?

If external actors would like to showcase the success of Manyara Ranch, local communities are rather reticent when not combative in their denunciation of the TLCT land deal. It is evident, even from AWF's own accounts, that opinion between local stakeholders and AWF on how the ranch should be managed is divergent (AWF 2005). These differences have resulted in conflicts over grazing, ownership and benefits (AWF 2006). Unlike AWF, therefore, local communities can be expected to withhold their confirmation of TLCT as a model of how to do conservation (Goldman, 2006; Sachedina, 2008).

In one respect, local grievances against the alienation of the ranch had been based on the deprivation of grazing land they suffered since the colonial times and later to the state ranching corporation. Any regime claiming to have returned the land to the local

¹³ Whether this delivers the desired results is unclear. This past October, I called a village chair to arrange a meeting and he told me that he could not make it that day because they were tracking a case of a poached elephant whose tusks had been removed. In the ecosystem, it is reported that 14 lions were killed in 2007 thereby casting aspersions on the impacts of community expenditure geared towards dampening hostilities towards wildlife (Oluoch and Manongi 2009).

communities would, therefore, have to assure locals of the availability of this facility as they know it. So far, this has not been the case. The closest the current arrangement has gone is to concede watering and grazing rights to the communities on the ranch during certain periods (Sumba et al. 2006). Yet, even this has done little to mollify local grievances against TLCT. Communities insist they are disadvantaged because they are constrained in the use of the ranch, yet wildlife from the ranch does not suffer the same limitations; it roams in their backyards liberally (Goldman 2006). This experience reproduces the community-national parks relationship that would not be expected from an enterprise that is theirs¹⁴. Thus to some villagers, the theme of land alienation leading to loss of dry season grazing lands to conservation of wildlife is still manifest under TLCT. This undermines the claim by the sponsors of TLCT that the communities own Manyara Ranch (through TLCT) and that AWF, for example, is only a manager. Villagers articulate this position in various ways.

Villagers continue to view wildlife as destructive alien property to them. Yet, they would be expected to consider wildlife as part of their estate, given that wildlife conservation is part of the mandate of TLCT, which they presumably own and, in terms of the gospel according to AWF, villagers and the animals should “live and prosper together” (AWF. 2003) in Manyara Ranch. Their response to the phenomenon of human-wildlife conflict, for example, exemplifies the continuation of this rejection of wildlife. They speak of the ranch as if they consider it an AWF property. They still wonder whether the AWF would compensate them for damage caused by the predators if it doesn’t want them to kill the wildlife (Goldman 2006). This would not be expected if Manyara Ranch had ingrained in them a conception of wildlife as their second cattle (Western, 1994) and a sense of ownership of the ranch, rather than conceiving AWF as the owner. Part of the problem has also to do with the power relations in the TLCT.

Both the villagers and the Manyara Ranch management differ on whether there is an imbalance of power in the management of the ranch. As stated above, TLCT has put structures that suggest communities are involved in the running of the ranch. Villagers, however, contend that AWF/TLCT does not treat them as equal partners, and that projects are undertaken without their full participation (Goldman 2006; Hassan 2008). Although they occupy certain positions in the governance structures, they claim that “they were only puppets” (Goldman 2006: 510). The Manyara Ranch management counters that they discuss with the steering committee regarding projects, only for communities to complain later that things are being done without their involvement. The management’s contention is that it has no control over whether village representatives give feedback to their constituency appropriately or not. The quality of representation, therefore, could be a problem. In one village, Goldman (2006) reports that there was dissatisfaction with the village representatives to the ranch steering committee, which even led to failed attempts to depose them. Nevertheless, whatever the source of the problem is, the existence of grievances does not help in the community evaluation of the land deal. There is a feeling that the deal is tilted in favour of external actors.

In one village, in response to a question on who benefits most from the ranch, the following rank ordering was provided. First, AWF was seen as the biggest beneficiary allegedly

¹⁴ Keeping livestock out of conservation areas is consistent with the orthodox in eco-tourism arrangements; because the tourism product attracting tourism investors is wildlife not livestock, investors extract this condition from pastoralists when the latter are convinced of the benefits accruing from this arrangement. Ololosokwan village in northern Serengeti National Park is a good case in point: livestock is not allowed into the wildlife designated areas when tourists are visiting.

because of wildlife, and also because it uses TLCT to “go and get money” before it trickles down to the community. The second beneficiary was the community because the ranch provides employment to villagers, while the third was the Monduli District Council or the government from taxes. The fourth was TANAPA because of wildlife (i.e. when wildlife increase, its TANAPA’s estate that is booming).

With these streams of benefits, it would be expected that there is near unanimity that the situation is certainly better than when the ranch was under the state ranching company. When asked to compare between the situation now and the NARCO era, some elders remarked ‘don’t even go there’ (i.e. this suggests that NARCO evokes bad memories they would rather not remember). The favourable rating of TLCT should not, however, mask the fact that villagers could be having alternative ideas about their land. A village official, in response to the question of what they would do with the ranch if AWF/TLCT withdrew, stated that they would share it out. After some prompting as to why, given the (potential) wildlife benefits, the response was modified to provide for the possibility of continuing with the current ventures if they got an investor. The question of the beneficial effects of TLCT to the local communities is still a contested one, both among groups and also within an individual’s own evaluation of the situation. The bottom line is what various actors conceptualise as local community’s interests.

-- Conclusion:

If wildlife could talk, they might take humans to court. Humans have been infringing on their space throughout Africa for decades. Today, the law can rule in favour of both animals and people – through an innovative land use mechanism that ensures space for wildlife while protecting the rights and prosperity of local communities (AWF nd 6).

In this paper, the case study of TLCT has been used to demonstrate that a new form of land alienation is taking place in Africa, sometimes in ways more subtle than hitherto known. Proponents of these deals, especially with respect to land for landscape conservation, position themselves as disinterested agents generating a public good.

It was argued that existing institutions, structural weaknesses of local communities, AWF’s command of action resources, and the lure of tourism nirvana interact to produce the current dispensation. The proponents of some variety of green acquisitions discussed here, perhaps buttressed by the criticism besetting other land grabs, do assume a high moral ground. Compared with other land grabs, conservationist pose as risk free and as adding value to the acquired land and to the local communities as opposed to what would otherwise happen if, for example, lands such the Manyara Ranch were to fall in alternative hands. Thus the green grabs declare a win-win verdict for people and nature, even though local communities remain apprehensive of the land acquisition projects. Thus, while proponents claim they have finally delivered on the elusive Integrated Conservation and Development Projects, one that counter the pervasive risks associated with other large land deals, community disquiet interrupts this attempt to read TLCT as a case of the best practice in contemporary land grabs.

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