SCIEPublish

Article

Land-Tenure Shifts in the Maa Landscapes, Kenya, and the Impacts on Social-Cultural Relations, Structural Power and Social Economic Differentiation

Danson Kareri Mwangi *

Kenya Institute of Primate Research, Nairobi 00502, Kenya

* Corresponding author. E-mail: mwangikareri@primateresearch.org or mwangikareri@yahoo.com (D.K.M.)

Received: 26 May 2024; Accepted: 30 July 2024; Available online: 7 August 2024

ABSTRACT: In recent years, the expansive pastoralist landscapes in southern Kenya have undergone rapid transformation, the key being a change in the land-tenure system from communal to individual ownership. However, little is known about the complexities influencing these changes and how the changes impact the local people. This study employed qualitative inductive approaches and ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and in-depth interviews. It examined how local and international formal and informal institutions have impacted land tenure changes among the Maa pastoralists living near Chyulu and Tsavo-West national parks. Despite the expected benefits of individual land ownership, the changes have not addressed significant social barriers. These include norms and power structures that disadvantage the poor in the community, as well as women and youth within households. People with higher levels of poverty and fewer or no political connections are marginalized during land adjudication at the community level. At the same time, traditions and customs deny women and youth entitlement to property at the household level. Such groups thus experience land privatisation differently. This article argues that expropriation and unequal abilities to control, access and benefit from land profoundly impact social differentiation among pastoralists. Further, the article illuminates a more-than-human achievement, with wildlife shaping people's lives through conservation-induced land expropriation, and a more-than-human vulnerability that livestock and wildlife face in the wake of land fragmentation and fencing that restrict their free movement. The article contributes to more significant debates on pastoralist land tenure, property relations, ongoing changes in land control processes, and more-than-human achievements and vulnerabilities.

Keywords: Pastoralist; Landtenure; Landscapes; Indigenous communities; Wildlife conservation; Group ranch

1. Introduction

Life for most pastoralist communities is inexorably bound to livestock, wildlife and the landscapes that they all share. Both livestock and wildlife occupy a critical material space in human social and cultural worlds. In recent years, however, relationships between people and animals have continued to shift as the climate changes, human populations grow and the world becomes more interconnected, resulting in increased global influences on local ways of life, including land occupation and use. Changes in land tenure systems and land use have shaped many ecosystems, creating numerous conservation and land management challenges [1]. This should not be so for pastoralist communities. Research has demonstrated that human and wildlife co-existence is possible and even desirable [2–5]. Reid [5], in particular, has shown the compatibility of pastoralism with wildlife and how pastoral land use can enrich savanna landscapes and encourage biodiversity to flourish. Other studies have supported this and upheld the role animals might play as ambassadors for all species. For example, Echeverri et al. [6] have described the emotional attachment between humans and other animals, showing how this may trigger concern and care for the rest of nature. This demystifies the long-held notion within fortress conservation spheres that wildlife cannot thrive in landscapes inhabited and used by people.

Fortress conservation is a model that originated in the USA in the late nineteenth century during the creation of the first national park in the world, the Yellowstone National Park [7]. The model fostered the creation of uninhabited or 'pristine wilderness' and the conversion of these wildernesses into wildlife conservation areas. The model then became

https://doi.org/10.35534/natanthropol.2024.10016

the prototype for conservationist efforts and was characterised by the forceful eviction of Indigenous communities in other parts all over the world. It depicted a global conservation agenda that manifested as colonialism in most developing countries, a form of colonial reconceptualisation of nature, landscape, and society that allowed Indigenous people to be dispossessed and displaced [8].

Most conservation areas in Kenya and elsewhere espoused the fortress conservation model and Spence's analogy of 'pristine wildernesses.' The two national parks at the core of this article are a case in point. At the time of their establishment, the colonial government argued that conservation was the best use for the land because the area had an abundance of wildlife. The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) records depict an area virtually uninhabitable by humans due to the presence of tsetse flies, drought that prevented herding of livestock, and insecurity due to frequent slave raids from the Kenyan coast [9]. This contradicts studies showing that an Indigenous community once lived on the land, especially around the Ngulia Hills, but was forcibly evicted to create the parks [10–14]. Archeologists have also provided evidence to refute claims by nineteenth-century European travelers who had described Tsavo as hostile and practically uninhabited [15]. The findings presented in this article are a subset of a broader study that explored how conservation of wildlife is understood, perceived, and embraced (or not) across the communities bordering Chyulu and Tsavo-west national parks, southern Kenya; how different land-use practices and ecological, socio-cultural, and political-economic processes shape understandings, perceptions, and everyday experiences of pastoralists, farmers and conservationists at the borderlands of the parks; and the role, both current and historical, that the state, state agencies and NGOs have played in shaping perceptions and understanding of wildlife conservation at these borderlands.

The current article focuses on shifts in land occupation and tenure system among the Maasai community (hereafter Maa) bordering Chyulu and Tsavo-west national parks. It demonstrates how fortress conservation premiered the Maa's expropriation from traditional grazing lands and how this progressed into a series of land-tenure changes with huge ramifications for the community. The article shows how communal land has changed to individual ownership. Despite the expected benefits, these changes have not overcome social barriers like norms and power structures that disadvantage people within households and the community. The result is marginalization of people with relatively higher levels of poverty and fewer or no political connections during land adjudication at the community level. Traditions and customs also deny women and youth entitlement to property at the household level. Such groups thus experience land privatisation differently. The argument in this article corroborates Unks et al. [1] observation that the impacts of land deals on pastoralists are socially differentiated and thus need to be understood in the context of broader changes in the political economy of drylands and pastoralist responses to such change. The article provides context-specific accounts of how the Maa pastoralists have navigated evolving land-tenure systems over the years and how change from a communal landtenure system to an individual ownership system might impact social cohesion and cultural cooperation among community members. The article argues that unequal access to, benefits from, and control over land significantly affect social differences among pastoralists. The article adds to anthropological debates on land tenure change. It encourages us to consider two points: how wildlife conservation efforts impact human lives and identity and how livestock and wildlife suffer from human-caused land fragmentation and fencing that limit their movement.

2. Methodology

This qualitative study used ethnographic methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and general conversations with pastoralists, conservation officials, NGO staff, and Kenya Wildlife Service personnel. I immersed myself in the daily lives of the Maa community staying in their homesteads and taking part in activities such as pasturing and watering livestock and fetching fuelwood. This allowed me to build trust and a good rapport with the community, which was necessary for gathering credible information on sensitive and complex issues such as land and pasture, often critical sources of dispute in the Maa community [16]. Staying within the community gave me the opportunity to have a first-hand experience of their way of life and to gain a deep understanding of their everyday actions and their meanings and values for land, livestock, and wildlife, which were crucial for this research [17]. It also allowed me to observe and witness what the people actually did, not just what they said they did. These are all difficult to discern from an interview or a questionnaire survey. For a study seeking to illuminate societal experiences and their subtleties [17] the ethnographic approach was crucial in generating a rich understanding of the local, national and global political, economic and social influences that historically and currently shaped land management and use and people's way of life more generally.

2.1. Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected for five months: July–November 2022. Purposive sampling was used to deliberately select informants who are prominent in the community and have extensive knowledge and experience with land tenure in the area.The technique is recommended for use in qualitative studies to recruit participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation [17,18]. Using homesteads as units of analysis, household heads were chosen since they held ownership rights to family property, including land and were knowledgeable about changes over the years. Women and youth were also interviewed to triangulate the information from land and property owners with that from those who did not own property. Key informants were also purposively selected based on their specialization, knowledge, insights, or experiences relevant to this research. For example, Kenya Wildlife Service managers and conservation NGO officials were purposively selected due to their specialty in wildlife management and conservation. Village elders and ranch committee officials were selected due to their influential or authoritative positions in ranch management and the ongoing land individualization. Overall, thirty-eight in-depth interviews with ordinary participants and seven semi-structured interviews with key informants were conducted. The general population was studied through unobtrusive participant observation in their everyday activities.

Data was in the form of interview transcripts, field notes and photographs. Historical data was also collected from government records and secondary sources, including scholarly works and journal articles, that analyzed and interpreted past events in the Maa community. Interviews were conducted in Kenya's national language, Kiswahili. If a respondent had difficulty expressing themselves in Kiswahili, an interpreter was provided to assist. Official interviews were conducted in English, but respondents could switch between English and Kiswahili based on their comfort and proficiency in either language. Besides interviews, the researcher attended local meetings, and made audio recordings and contemporary field notes. The data was transcribed and translated into English at the earliest convenience, transferred into a predesigned excel master sheet and coded for theme and content.

Data gathering followed the concept of saturation, with the researcher gathering the data until such a time that no new ideas, themes, or surprises arose [19]. Data was analyzed iteratively throughout the fieldwork and report writing [18]. An inductive emic approach was used [19]. The first few interviews were transcribed and the information progressively developed into more abstract categories and finally into themes as more interviews were conducted. New themes were added as and when they came up. However, while Glaser and Strauss propose grounding meaning in the emergent data, this study continuously reflected on the data, triangulated it with existing theories and literature, and incorporated evolving insights [18]. This allowed the researcher to progressively revisit both the data and the focus and continuously refine them. This article uses direct quotes and interview extracts to present the opinions and voices of research participants but the names used for the participants are all anonymized.

2.2. Study Site

This study took place in the Maa community, occupying four group ranches on the western side of Chyulu hills and Tsavo-west national parks (Figure 1). Mbirikani and Kuku group ranches adjoin Chyulu and Tsavo-west National Parks, while Rombo is further south of Kuku ranch, bordering Tsavo-west National Park and Tanzania. Kimana ranch is to the west of both Mbirikani and Kuku group ranches. The area is categorised as an arid and semi-arid land (ASAL). It experiences a dry season from June to October and a wet season from November to May. Rainfall ranges between 400–600mm per year but is generally low and erratic [20]. There are two permanent rivers, namely Kikarankot and Nolturesh, and several seasonal rivers and spring-fed swamps. The vegetation along the rivers starts as woodlands, then changes to dense shrublands, followed by open shrublands, and finally becomes grasslands as you move further away from the rivers. The landscapes are important for the conservation of large mammals such as the African elephant (*Loxodonta, africana*), giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*), hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*), eland (*Tragelaphus oryx*), lesser kudu (*Tragelaphus imberbis*), warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*), lion (*Panthera leo nubica*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*), and a variety of gazelles and monkey species [21]. Like most part of Kajiado, the topography of the area is mostly plains and rocky lava outcrops and volcanic hills. The soils consist of black cotton soils, dark red sandy loams and ash and rocky volcanic soils [20]. The area has a population of approximately 27,750, and a density of 21 people/km^2. Poverty levels are approximately 50% [22]. Pastoralism is the predominant activity, but some households adopt farming to diversify their livelihoods. Individuals and private farms have bought land and converted it into exclusive agricultural land [23,24].

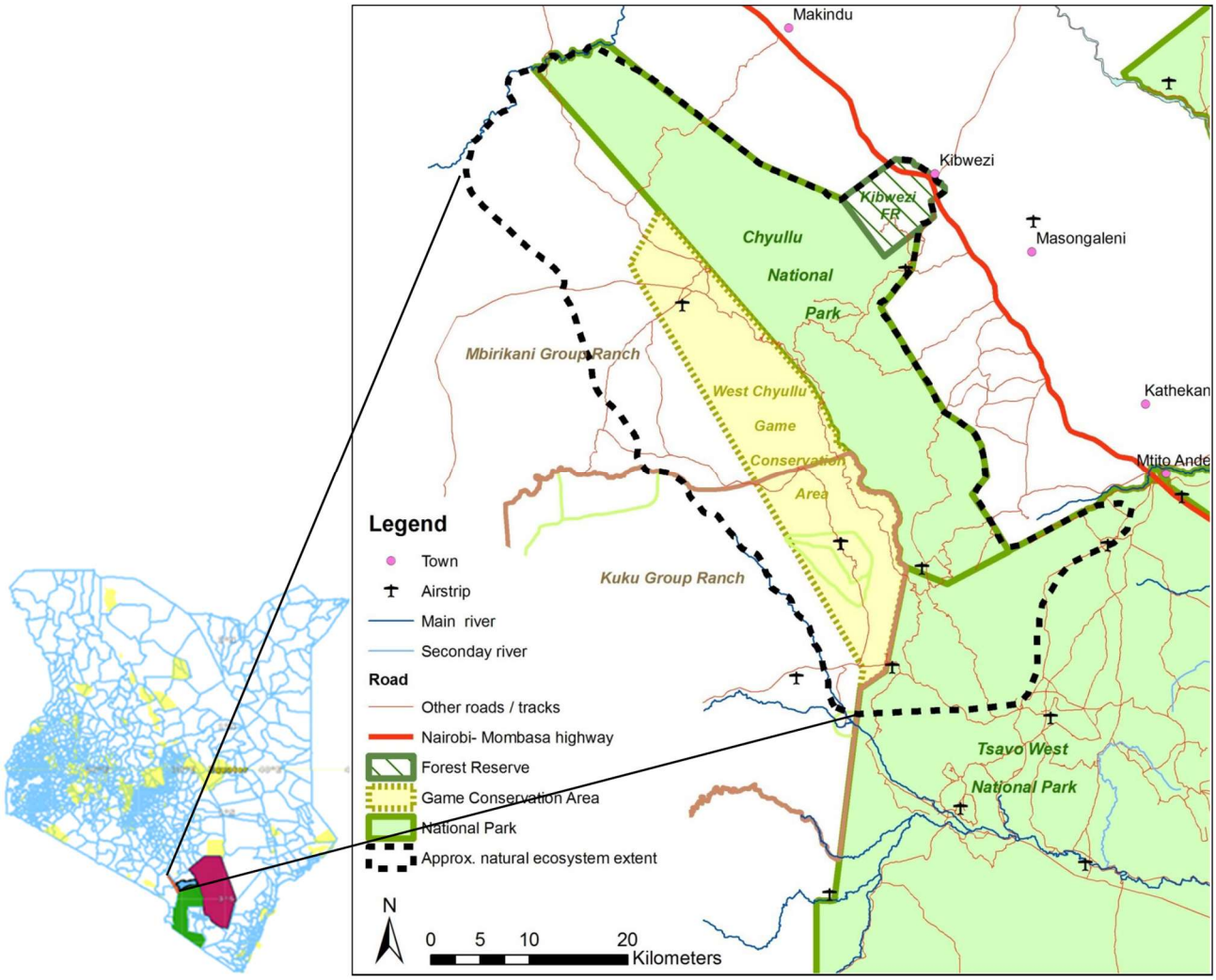

Figure 1. A map of Kenya showing the location of the Mbirikani, Kimana, Kuku, and Rombo group ranches and the adjoining Chyulu Hills and Tsavo-west national parks. Source: [24].

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Historical Land-Tenure Shifts in the Maa Landscapes Bordering Chyulu Hills and Tsavo-West National Parks

The Maa landscapes bordering the eastern side of Chyulu Hills and Tsavo-west national parks are characterised by a long history of complex land ownership and control shifts. Before the onset of colonialism in Kenya, the Maa pastoralists enjoyed free movement across expansive landscapes ranging from Southwest to Southeast Kenya and northern Tanzania. The contemporary land-tenure shifts started with the hiving off of what was part of the original Maa landscapes by the British colonial authority in 1947–48 to create Tsavo National Reserve, now Tsavo-east and Tsavo-west National Parks [10–12]. The British colonial authority forced the Maa to sign treaties restricting their access to over 50% of their original land. Kenya's post-colonial government did not improve the situation. Instead, it continued to enforce and justify the Maa's displacement. In 1983, Chyulu Hills was also turned into a national park, imposing even more restrictions on pasture and access to forest resources. The conservation-based displacement, dispossession and land-tenure shifts more generally in the Maa landscapes corroborate with colonial displacement and dispossession of indigenous inhabitants during the establishment of premier national parks in America and elsewhere [7,25–28]. The new wildlife conservation practices limited the Maa's access to their traditional grazing lands, changed their social relations and shaped differential abilities to benefit from the landscapes. Further discussion on how the displacement or exclusion of the Maa community, who historically lived in and managed these landscapes, led to changes in land tenure, loss of livelihoods, and cultural and social dislocation, is provided in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of this article.The second major shift is converting the communal land-tenure system into group ranches. This was initiated in 1952 by the colonial-era East

African Royal Commission, also known as the Dow Commission, along with the post-independence Lawrence Commission of 1965. The two commissions formed the policy basis for forming group ranches beginning in 1968 when parliament enacted the Land Adjudication Act Chapter 284 [1]. The new statute provided land registration to groups of people who elected to be recognized as such [29]. The Maa rangelands adjoining Chyulu and Tsavo-west national parks were converted into group ranches such as Kuku, Kimana, Mbirikani and Rombo. The ranches retained collective land ownership but brought into effect grazing management plans aimed at limiting nomadism and reducing the number of animals an individual kept. In return, the ranches would benefit from the development of permanent water sources and the introduction of measures to promote commercial livestock keeping. The ranches would also benefit from the land in more subtle ways, including monetary income from wildlife conservation activities and financial assistance from conservation NGOs [1]. However, the ranches did not make provisions for dry season grazing lands, and those that did failed to provide for movement corridors across group-ranch boundaries. This resulted in disputes between different group-ranch members over access to traditional dry-season pasture and water [14].

Further, Mwangi E [30] observes that some individuals exploited their friendship and kinship ties to committees and ordinary members of neighbouring group ranches to graze their livestock during the wet season but retreated to their ranches during the dry season. Thus, some individuals could effectively use others' group ranch as a wet-season pasture while reserving their ranch for use during the dry season. Reciprocal use would be exclusively extended to kins and friends in the neighbouring ranches who had extended use of their ranches during the wet season. Members who did not have such friendship and kinship ties were thus socially disadvantaged.

The third major shift was spearheaded by Kenya's second president, Daniel Arap Moi. Moi had repeatedly encouraged the Maa community to subdivide group ranches, stressing that they were not economically viable and that individual land ownership would allow families to develop their piece of land [30]. In 1989, he directed the then Kajiado District to expedite the subdivision of group ranches and allocate and issue individual owners with a title deed of their parcel. Although most widows and elderly males were against the subdivision, the majority of the group ranch members overwhelmingly supported the subdivision. They observed that individualized land ownership would improve one's status in the community and open up possibilities for alternative livelihood and income-generating opportunities [14].

When doing this research in 2022, most of the group ranches had been subdivided or were in the final stages of dissolution and subdivision. Kimana group ranch, for example, was fully subdivided and Mbirikani and Kuku group ranches were in the final stages of full subdivision. Each member of Kimana group ranch was allocated a 60-acre parcel and two-acre plot with the aim of settling the members on the two-acre land, which they could use for farming while leasing the 60 acres to a conservation NGO. While some members felt that these changes would result in reduced animal pasture, some did not see any problem with it. This generated yet another major shift in the Maa landscapes as most members either sold out their parcels or started converting them into agricultural land. Evidence suggests that most of the two-acre parcels have been subdivided into half-acre and quarter-acre plots. These smaller plots have been sold or converted into commercial and residential areas, contributing to the rapid growth of Kimana town (personal observation). People have become complacent, arguing that before subdivision, the group ranch was benefiting only the ranch representatives at the expense of the community:

> 'I don't mind if people sell the land. If I sell, it's my land. I would rather sell my land and 'eat the money' than have one person benefitting all alone from our communal land. The officials would have sold the land anyway.'—Nkerai, a middle-aged pastoralist and former member of the Kimana group ranch.

3.2. Shifts in Socio-Cultural Relations

The shifts in land tenure from communal to group ranch ownership reconfigured the free movement of the Maa people and their livestock and constrained access rights to their indigenous landscapes. This was further complicated by the subdivision of the ranches into individual parcels, a shift that, although overwhelmingly supported by the majority of the ranch members [30], inadvertently undermined the socio-cultural basis of pastoralists' nomadic livelihoods [1,13,31]. This produced new complexities: while some residents considered individual ownership as an opportunity to exercise autonomy over their land, others felt that it undermined communal connections to land, livestock, and traditional grazing patterns. The social-cultural structures and relations that allowed for traditional responses to ecological changes were disrupted, leading to challenges in long-held land and pasture management strategies [30]. Traditionally, the Maa negotiated pasture resources through social networks such as clans, age-set affiliations and kinship ties [32]. Elders regulated access to communal pastures and water sources. There were grazing areas set aside for use only in exceptionally dry seasons. Some grazing spaces were reserved near homesteads for calves and sick cattle grazing.

Breaching the protocols established for regulating the use of pasture or water was met with fines, punishments, or injunctions [13]. Today, such protocols and order have been greatly compromised owing to subdivision and subsequent issuance of title-deeds to individuals, meaning that the land is no longer communal but individually owned. 'You cannot tell someone not to put up a fence on their land or not to burn or clear the grass... they tell you that this is their land and they can do whatever they want with it', lamented Naitoi, a senior elder and a former official of the Kimana Group Ranch.

Without proper regulation and control, widespread farming has occurred in subdivided ranches owing to increased demand to produce cash crops for urban markets. This farming often occurs in wetlands formerly served as dry-season grazing and watering points. As Naitoi further observed, perennial, spring-fed wetlands traditionally relied upon during drought have been individualized, drained, and converted to farmlands. Even for individuals whose land fell within such dry season reserves and have continued to reserve them, the social networks that afforded clan members, kins, and other relations to access such dry season reserves have largely diminished. Other respondents observed that access to dry-season forage and water was heavily restricted, or payment was required to access them on land that was once communal but is now someone else's land. Leboo, a middle-aged pastoralist quipped, 'Even your relative or your close friend now asks for money to allow your animals to drink water or graze on his land'.

This article also illuminates a land-tenure shift that deviates from the community's communal life and property ownership culture with long-term ramifications on people's social and cultural disposition. Lemaiyan, an elderly male pastoralist and member of the Kuku group ranch observes that the new shifts in Maa landscapes and population have diluted the community's cultural and social fabric. For example, it was traditionally very easy to identify a Maa person's lineage by asking their name. This has become difficult due to land subdivision and sales, which have led to the influx of non-Maa communities and changes in the naming system.

Further, he observes that it was traditionally highly disparaging for a Maa man not to own any livestock. 'Nobody would allow you to marry their daughter if you had no cattle', he quipped. He remarked that when a goat or a cow was slaughtered, somebody who did not have any livestock would be given a small piece of the most delicious part of the meat and asked how it tasted. Upon saying it was nice, he would be asked to go and 'look for' (meaning to work towards acquiring) his livestock, leaving the others to enjoy the meat. He could not get any more meat even if he stuck around. Lemaiyan's accounts demonstrate how the current changes in land tenure and social differentiation might trouble long-held Maa traditions and close entwinement of their lives with livestock. The community continues to experience loss of grazing land and subsequently reduced or no cattle among completely sedentary households [33].

3.3. Structural Power and Socio-Economic Differentiation

The formation of group ranches in the Maa landscapes appears to have entrenched a power structure where each ranch was controlled and governed by an organisation with officials such as a chairman, secretary and treasurer. The subdivision of the group ranches was motivated by a complex suite of factors, including the fear of appropriation of the land by the ranch officials in collusion with politicians and government officials [14,32]. A common sentiment in the majority of the group ranches was that the three primary officials of the ranches (chairman, secretary, treasurer) were often involved in financial mismanagement and were benefitting either individually or with close relatives and friends from new land-use projects. In particular, distrust over the distribution of financial benefits from conservation projects in the group rancheswas frequently stated. Leboo, a middle-aged pastoralist, remarked that, 'The ranch receives payment from a conservation NGO, but nothing comes to the common pastoralists. It all ends up in the pockets of the officials'. Summing his statement, Leboo remarked that the community members realized that the ranch was in the hands of individuals who might eventually sell it or that someone might grab the land from them, so they decided to subdivide it and have each member exercise ownership over their share. Unks et al. [1] corroborate this, observing that most members held that the officials were not representing them but making decisions that served their interests.

Other studies have also reported widespread concerns that representatives of the group ranches were misappropriating or expropriating the land. (See [1,30]).

Disquiet about excesses by the ranch officials might have driven the community to embrace subdivision of the ranches. Subsequently, subdividing the land brought forth a market system that saw the officials use their positions to exploit the less powerful in the community. For example, ranch officials are claimed to have skewed the process to register, secure and allot more land for themselves and their relatives, including children: 'Some underage children were allocated land while mature sons from some families were left out', claimed Naini, an elderly male Kuku Ranch member. According to Naini, this negated the long-held social principle of Maa elders, which was to exercise both authority and fairness. Other members cited political interferences, claiming that allotment was done based on one's political alignment.

Further, new shifts in land subdivision and allotment processes have risen to disturb the subdivision and allotment of Kuku and Rombo group ranches, which was in progress at the time of conducting this research. Unlike Kimana and Mbirikani, which did not charge any subdivision fee, Kuku and Rombo have introduced a fee, making the system favourable to those who can afford and are quick to raise the required fee as the allotment is on a first-come, first-served basis. The poverty level in the area is high and drought has made it difficult for the members to afford the KES 21,000 (≈$170) needed to facilitate subdivision and allotment. Those who cannot afford it are left out of the prime land regardless of whether they originally occupied it. Naini regretted living on his piece of land for 42 years and even buried his father there. Yet, his land was allocated to somebody else. The shifts have left Naini socially differentiated, as he was asked to leave his inheritance because the land now belongs to someone else. Cases of forceful relocation of 'politically incorrect' members and disinheritance of widows, orphans and the poor during land subdivision and allotment were also reported elsewhere (See [32]). So are multiple land allocations to group ranch officials and their close associates: 'they allocated themselves and their relatives and friends many parcels of land. Later, they subdivided the parcels or sold them to people that were not even members of this ranch', said Lemaiyan, an elderly male pastoralist and member of Kuku ranch.

Although Maa traditions and customs deny women entitlement to property at the household level, and women and youth are generally excluded from formal decision-making processes regarding land and finances [34], subdivision of the ranches has suffered even a bigger blow to women and youth. When the landscapes were communal, women and youth enjoyed free access to resources such as fuel wood, poles for construction, herbal medicine, and honey from nature.

The subdivision of the ranches did not take women and youth into account, causing them to lose access to these resources, which are now on private land.These groups thus experience land privatisation differently. Furthermore, men hold title deeds and can sell the land without consulting their families. Unfortunately, because the majority do not know the value of the land, they sell it at a throwaway price and squander the little money, leaving their families destitute. The title deed holders are also using the title documents to secure loans at the expense of the families in the event such loans are not paid up.

3.4. More-Than-Human Dispossession

Colonial and post-colonial land grabs in areas shared by humans and wildlife have negatively affected not just people and livestock, but also wildlife. Mwangi [12] has demonstrated the extent to which wildlife, like humans, can be victims of conservation initiatives, a situation he refers to as multispecies alienation. Other studies have also hinted at wildlife's close ties with humans and how expropriation of nature might trouble such ties [35–38]. The land-tenure shifts discussed in this article have disturbed human life and livelihoods and human co-existence with wildlife andlivestock. Dividing the Maa landscapes into small land parcels and converting them into farmland or fragmented pastures has made it hard for livestock and wildlife to access grazing areas and water. It also prevents them from moving freely between important dry and wet season pastures [2]. Fencing off of individual parcels of land has also made it difficult for wildlife to move from one conservation area to another, for example, from Amboseli to Chyulu or Tsavo National Parks or vice-versa (Personal conversation with KWS Warden, Chyulu National Park). This illuminates a more-than-human process that includes non-human beings such as livestock and wildlife as victims of human-induced land-tenure changes and should therefore be considered a more-than-human process.

Land expropriation for wildlife conservation and subdivision and privatization of the Maa landscapes have further ramifications for the pastoralists. Firstly, the new dispensation demands that no one graze their livestockon other individuals' land. However, the 60 acres that each household got in Kimana Ranch, for example, was not adequate for the big herds that families had so the majority of the families inadvertently had to reduce their herds. Other herders have often opted to take a risk and enter protected areas such as Chyulu Hills and Tsavo-west National Parks with subsequent conflicts with conservation authorities if the herders and/or their livestock are found inside the park. Moreover, hostility is building among residents who have taken up farming and those who remained pastoralists. This is due to the conversion of pasture into farmlands and the constant straying of cattle and goats into neighbouring farms to forage on crops. Such conflicts were non-existent before the hiving of the original pastoral lands for wildlife conservation and the subsequent subdivision and individualization of the communal land that remained. This process can be thought about as a more-than-human achievement with animals, both wildlife and, to some extent, livestock, necessitating reconfiguration of people's lives and sense of essence as human beings.

4. Conclusions

This study demonstrates how colonial and post-colonial land-tenure mediations and control can reconfigure landscapes that have been traditionally shared between humans and animals, both livestock and wildlife. Specifically, it shows how land expropriation, demarcation and subsequent shift from communal to individual control can trouble pastoral landscapes, restrict movement and undermine the basis of pastoral production and wildlife conservation. Challenges that may arise from shifting land-tenure systems within communities and households are discussed. So are disabling social barriers such as norms and power structures that allow certain people to control others and dominate decision-making at both household and community levels. While people with higher levels of poverty and fewer or no political connections are marginalized during land adjudication at the community level, normative patriarchal dispositions deny women and youth' entitlement to property at the household level. Such groups thus experience land privatisation differently. The article argues that unequal access to, benefits from and control over land have significant impacts on the already socially divided pastoralist communities.. Moreover, livestock and wildlife face additional vulnerabilities due to land fragmentation and fencing, which restrict their free movement.The article recommends ample consideration of social barriers and adequate involvement of all stakeholders in managing land-ownership shifts and related decision-making. It also recommends long-term studies to assess the impacts of the evolving land-tenure systems on pastoralist communities over time. More interdisciplinary research is required to integrate economic, social-cultural, environmental and policy perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of communal land-tenure systems. The article contributes to larger debates on pastoralist land tenure, property relations, ongoing changes in land control processes, and more-than-human vulnerabilities.

Acknowledgments

I am greatly indebted to the three anonymous reviewers and the journal editor for their constructive comments and suggestions on how to improve this manuscript. I am also grateful to the Maa community for welcoming me at their homes, and in particular my research participants for tirelessly responding to my sometimes nagging questions. Many thanks to the families that had to make adjustments to host me for months on end. Despite my strong desire to acknowledge them individually, I cannot name them without infringing on ethical regulations.

Ethics Statement

The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by Kenyatta National Hospital-University of Nairobi Ethical Review Committee (KNH-UoN ERC) (protocol code P888/11/2021 and 14 April 2022. Research permit was issued by the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation License No: NACOSTI/P/22/17118, Date of Issue: 04/May/2022.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Funding

This research was funded by WennerGren Foundation, grant number Gr. 10200.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

References

1. Unks RR, Goldman MJ, Mialhe F, Gunnell Y, Hemingway C. Diffuse land control, shifting pastoralist institutions, and processes of accumulation in southern Kenya. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2023**, *50*, 1757–1790, doi:10.1080/03066150.2022.2160630.
2. Kieti D, Nthiga R, Plimo J, Sambajee P, Ndiuini A, Kiage E, et al. An African dilemma: Pastoralists, conservationists and tourists–reconciling conflicting issues in Kenya. *Dev. S. Afr* . **2020**, *37*, 758–772, doi:10.1080/0376835X.2020.1747988.
3. Madden F. Creating Coexistence between Humans and Wildlife: Global Perspectives on Local Efforts to Address Human–Wildlife Conflict. *Hum. Dimens. Wildl.* **2004**, *9*, 247–257.
4. McLennan MR, Hill CM. Troublesome neighbours: Changing attitudes towards chimpanzees (Pan troglodytes) in a human-

dominated landscape in Uganda. *J. Nat. Conserv.* **2012**, *20*, 219–227.
5. Reid RS. *Savannas of Our Birth: People, Wildlife, and Change in East Africa*; John Wiley & Sons: Colorado Springs, CO, USA, 2012; 416p. Available online: https://www.ucpress.edu/flier.php?isbn=9780520273559 (accessed on 26 March 2024).
6. Echeverri A, Karp DS, Naidoo R, Zhao J, Chan KMA. Approaching human-animal relationships from multiple angles: A synthetic perspective. *Biol. Conserv.* **2018**, *224*, 50–62, doi:10.1016/j.biocon.2018.05.015.
7. Spence MD. *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, NY, USA, 1999; 190p.
8. Brockington D. *Fortress Conservation: The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, Tanzania*; Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IN, USA, 2002.
9. KWS. Tsavo Conservation Area Management Plan 2008–2018. 2008, p. 208. Available online: https://www.kws.go.ke/file/1473/download?token=_Kyeb-P4 (accessed on 26 March 2024).
10. Muriuki GW, Jacobson C, Mcalpine C, Seabrook L, Price B, Baxter G. Migrating, staying, or moving on: Migration dynamics in the Chyulu Hills, Kenya. *Popul. Space Place* **2011**, *17*, 391–406.
11. Kamau PN, Medley KE. Anthropogenic fires and local livelihoods at Chyulu Hills, Kenya. *Landsc. Urban Plan.* **2014**, *124*, 76–84.
12. Mwangi DK. Parks and People: Expropriation of Nature and Multispecies Alienation in Nthongoni, Eastern Kenya. *Conserv. Soc.* **2021**, *19*, 248–258.
13. Goldman MJ. Strangers in Their Own Land: Maasai and Wildlife Conservation in Northern Tanzania. *Conserv. Soc.* **2011**, *9*, 65–79.
14. Mwangi E. *Socioeconomic Change and Landuse in Africa: The Transformation of Property Rights in Kenya's Maasailand*; Palgrave Macmillan: New York, NY, USA, 2007.
15. Fowler B. Webpage. 2005. A Place without History. Available online: https://archive.archaeology.org/0509/abstracts/africa.html (accessed on 21 November 2023).
16. Higginbotham N, Albrecht G, Connor L. *Health Social Science: A Transdisplinary and Complexity Perspective*, 1st ed.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2001; 382 p.
17. Creswell JW. *Qualitative Enquiry & Research Design, Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed.; SAGE Publications, Inc.: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2007; pp. 1–225.
18. Tracy SJ. *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*; Wiley-Blackwell: West Sussex, UK, 2013; 370p.
19. Glaser BG, Strauss AL. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*; Aldine Publishing Co.: New York, NY, USA, 1967; Volume 1, 271p.
20. Okello MM. An assessment of the large mammal component of the proposed wildlife sanctuary site in Maasai Kuku Group Ranch near Amboseli, Kenya. *Afr. J. Wildl. Res.* **2005**, *35*, 63–76.
21. MWCT. Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust. Nairobi, Kenya. 2016. Available online: http://maasaiwilderness.org/ (accessed on 3 November 2023).
22. Bird SC. *CHYULU HILLS REDD+ PROJECT MONITORING & IMPLEMENTATION REPORT. Nairobi,* 2014; Version 3, 225p.
23. Kamau PN. The political ecology of human—Elephant relations: Comparing local perceptions of elephants around Chyulu Hills and Mount Kasigau in southern Kenya. *J. Polit. Ecol.* **2017**, *24*, 801–820. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Peter_Kamau4/publication/322288188_The_political_ecology_of_human-elephant_relations_comparing_local_perceptions_of_elephants_around_Chyulu_Hills_and_Mount_Kasigau_in_southern_Kenya/links/5a50853fa6fdcc769001c0ae/The-p (accessed on 11 July 2019).
24. Chyulu Hills Working Group. Chyulu Hills Ecosystem: Importance, Threats and Way Forward. 2011. Available online: https://www.air-adventures.fr/assets/files/pdf/Chyulu_Hills.pdf (accessed on 26 April 2016).
25. Wolfe P. *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*; Cassell Publishing: New York, NY, USA, 1999.
26. Igoe J, Brockinton D. Neoliberal Conservation: A brief Introduction. *Conserv. Soc.* **2007**, *5*, 432–449.
27. Brown NA. The Logic of Settler Accumulation in a Landscape of Perpetual Vanishing. *Settl. Colon. Stud.* **2013**, *4*, 1–26.
28. Coulthard GS. From Wards of the State to Subjects of Recognition? Marx, Indigenous Peoples, and the Politics of Dispossession in Denendeh. In *Theorizing Native Studies*; Simpson A, Smith A, Eds.; Duke University Press: Durham, UK, 2014; pp. 56–98.
29. Njenga LW. *Towards Individual Statutory Proprietorship from Communal Ownership*; (3). Report No. 1; Land Adjudication & Settlement: Nairobi, Kenya, 2004.
30. Mwangi E. The Puzzle of Group Ranch Subdivision in Kenya's Maasailand. *Dev. Chang.* **2007**, *38*, 889–910, doi:10.1111/j.1467-7660.2007.00438.x.
31. Onyango P. Pan-African Media Alliance for Climate Change. 2020. The Sad Story of Being Squatters in Own Land in Kajiado, Kenya. Available online: https://pamacc.org/index.php/k2-listing/item/1202-the-sad-story-of-being-squatters-in-own-land-in-kajiado-kenya (accessed on 21 May 2023).
32. Western D, Groom R, Worden J. The impact of subdivision and sedentarization of pastoral lands on wildlife in an African savanna ecosystem. *Biol. Conserv.* **2009**, *142*, 2538–2546, doi:10.1016/j.biocon.2009.05.025.

33. Kimiti KS, Western D, Mbau JS, Wasonga OV. Impacts of Long-Term Land-Use Changes on Herd Size and Mobility among Pastoral Households in Amboseli Ecosystem, Kenya. *Ecol. Process.* **2018**, *7*, 1–9.
34. Yurco K. Beyond the boma: A gendered approach to conceptualizing resource access in pastoral households. *Geoforum* **2018**, *97*, 343–351, doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.08.001.
35. Baynes-Rock M. Life and death in the multispecies commons. *Soc. Sci. Inf.* **2013**, *52*, 210–227.
36. Ingold T. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill*; Routledge: London, UK, 2000.
37. Ingold T. *The Life of Lines*; Routledge: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2015; 185p.
38. Kopnina H. Beyond multispecies ethnography: Engaging with violence and animal rights in anthropology. *Crit. Anthropol.* **2017**, *37*, 333–357.