



Otherring Pastoralists, State Violence, and the Remaking of Boundaries in Tanzania's Militarised Wildlife Conservation Sector

Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel 

Department of Geography, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway;
weldemichel@ntnu.no

Abstract: This paper examines the ways in which Tanzanian conservation authorities utilise biodiversity “extinction narratives” in order to legitimise the use of violence in redrawing protected areas’ boundaries. Militarisation and violence in conservation have often been associated with the “war on poaching”. Drawing on the history of conservation and violence in Tanzania, and using an empirical case from Loliondo, the paper suggests that violence in conservation may be legitimised when based on extinction narratives and a claim that more exclusive spaces are urgently needed to protect biodiversity. It argues that the emerging militarisation and use of violence in Tanzania can be associated with both global biodiversity extinction and local neo-Malthusian narratives, which recently have regained predominance. When combined with “othering” of groups of pastoralists by portraying them as foreign “invaders”, such associations legitimise extensions of state control over contested land by any means available, including violence.

Keywords: poaching, political ecology, buffer zones, extinction narratives, Maasai, Serengeti

Introduction

This paper emerged from an incident I encountered just before starting fieldwork in Loliondo, a subdistrict in Ngorongoro District of Arusha Region, Tanzania. Loliondo is located on the north-eastern border of the Serengeti National Park (SENAPA) and the purpose of my visit was to meet with village leaders and to obtain permission to do fieldwork. A few minutes into a discussion with one of the village leaders, the leader received a phone call and I was aware that he was furious about the information he had just received about the park authorities burning the homes of local people in his village on the park’s boundary. Our discussion was interrupted, and the village leader suggested that, together with a driver from Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI), I should leave the village immediately, as local people might have confused us with government conservation workers and attacked.¹

While driving towards SENAPA we witnessed park rangers and government security forces burning Maasai *bomas* (traditional houses) along the road, while

the owners stood by helplessly. Investigation reports by Mittal and Fraser (2018) and Pastoralists Indigenous Non Governmental Organization's Forum (2017) later revealed that over 200 Maasai pastoralists' homes were burned on that day alone. Similar actions continued for the several months, during which c. 5800 homes were destroyed by government forces between August and November 2017, leaving more than 23,000 people homeless (Mittal and Fraser 2018).

Wildlife conservation practices, particularly in Africa, involve a long history of often violent encounters between communities and conservation authorities (Brockington and Igoe 2006). Colonial and postcolonial authorities often established exclusive protected areas through spatial designations by dividing up and containing societies and nature in discrete categories (Brockington and Igoe 2006; Neumann 2005; Ngoitiko et al. 2010). Authorities commonly used military and military-like techniques and violence to deter communities from continuing traditional hunting practices, cultivation and accessing livestock grazing grounds (Brockington 2002). Hence, violence in the name of conservation is not new (Lunstrum 2014) and it is not unique to Tanzania (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2015; Schauer 2018). Rather, it represents a continuation and hardening of some aspects of the violent "fortress conservation" (Brockington 2002), which was widely challenged by proponents of participatory conservation models around the end of the 20th century (Lunstrum 2014).

Nevertheless, elements of the fortress model seem to have regained acceptance in recent years in Tanzania (Benjaminsen et al. 2013; Goldman 2009; Noe 2019). While there is a growing body of literature on militarisation and violence in conservation (e.g. Büscher 2016; Duffy 2014; Lunstrum 2014), the focus is often on its use in the context of poaching. By contrast, the driving force behind the current surge in the militarisation of conservation and how the use of violence is legitimised in non-poaching contexts, particularly in Tanzania, is not well documented.

In this paper, I use the violent evictions in Loliondo as an empirical case in my examination of why violence is used in conservation and how its use in a specific non-poaching context is legitimised. I argue that in the case discussed here, interventions in the name of conservation drew on predominantly global narratives about wildlife decline or even extinction, as well as local narratives about degradation of "wildlife corridors" and "dispersal areas" due to "uncontrolled population growth"² in order to rationalise the appropriation of pastoral land to expand protected areas. However, expansion is not a straightforward process, as communities who occupy the affected areas claim historical and juridical rights to the land and maintain that they are better placed than the state to take responsibility for conservation. The communities in Loliondo also have a history of active resistance against attempts at land grabbing by various actors. Authorities justify the use of violence to counter such resistance by defining local people as "others", invaders and foreigners, as well as enemies of conservation.

My analysis is based on five sessions of fieldwork, totalling approximately three months, between February 2017 and June 2019, during which I held in-depth interviews with representatives of key government (15) and non-governmental organisations (4), as well as with researchers (3) and local people in Tanzania. I

also had several informal meetings with various actors. In addition, the analysis is based on readings of various relevant documents.

My planned fieldwork in Loliondo was cut short due to the eviction incident described at the beginning of the introduction and continuing hostilities made returning to the villages in Loliondo difficult. Hence data on local views were mainly obtained from secondary sources, such as reports and news articles, in addition to seven open-ended interviews that I conducted while in the field before the eviction incident. I also arranged meetings with two village leaders from Loliondo while they were in Arusha, the regional capital, where we had an in-depth discussion about the situation. Most of the interviews were audio recorded, after having obtained the interviewees' verbal consent.

In this article, I first briefly present the theoretical debates relating to militarisation and violence in the name of conservation. In the next section, I provide a brief background on conservation and violence, followed by a discussion of the recent shifts towards militarisation in Tanzania. Thereafter, I present empirical material from Loliondo, which shows how violence unfolded and was legitimated in the specific context, as well as its social and ecological implications. Finally, I briefly discuss the empirical findings in relation to existing works and present my conclusions.

Conservation and Violence

Springer and Le Billon (2016) argue that violence is a difficult concept to grapple with, as it can refer to an overt occurrence of an incident with easily recognisable physical damage and deadly consequences, such as in the case of physical attacks, or it can mean covert and mundane suppressions of critical thought, which require careful choice of theoretical lenses to appreciate its presence. Moreover, violence can be a manifestation of an exercise of coercive power or its use can be unintended (Springer and Le Billon 2016:1). The history of conservation is filled with accounts of the different forms of violence, such as evictions (Brockington and Igoe 2006), "shot-to-kill" type attacks (Brockington et al. 2008) and multiple forms of mundane suppressions (Dowie 2009) against local populations. Bocarejo and Ojeda (2016:182) argue that violence in all its forms is "not external to, but constitutive of, conservation practices". Nevertheless, the earlier acceptance of the overtly violent approach to conservation waned due to widespread criticisms of its human rights abuses record (Goldman 2011) and due to the emergence of less violent and ostensibly more socially and ecologically effective participatory conservation approaches around the end of the 20th century.

Recent literature on wildlife conservation, particularly in Africa, includes various accounts of the use of militarised violence (Duffy 2016; Duffy et al. 2015; Lunstrum 2014; Marijnen and Verweijen 2016). Lunstrum (2014:817) terms this trend "green militarisation", which she defines as "the use of military and paramilitary (military-like) actors, techniques, technologies, and partnerships in pursuit of conservation". Green militarisation combines general tendencies of militarism—an ideology that privileges military culture and values, and justification of the extension of these values and culture—into nominally civilian spheres, as well as the

actual use of militarised techniques and actions in the name of protecting wildlife (Lunstrum 2014:819). Violence in the name of conservation is often promoted through the “spectacularization of green militarisation” (Cavanagh and Benjaminson 2014; Cavanagh et al. 2015; Marijnen and Verweijen 2016), meaning the presentation of militarised conservation actors, such as rangers, as selfless champions or “green martyrs” (Marijnen and Verweijen 2016).

The recent increase in “green violence” (Büscher and Fletcher 2020), many argue, is allegedly associated with the “war” against poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking (Duffy 2016; Duffy et al. 2015; Lunstrum 2014; Marijnen and Verweijen 2016) and with growing concerns about the decline in wildlife numbers due to habitat destruction and the assertion that “people-oriented” conservation approaches have failed to address this decline (Bocarejo and Ojeda 2016; Neumann 2004; Wilshusen et al. 2002).

Poachers as Terrorists

Growing concerns among conservationists over the decline in wildlife numbers due to increasing poaching and illegal trafficking of wildlife products endorses “war for biodiversity” (Duffy 2014) by creating a sense of urgency that in turn justifies the use of violence to save wildlife (Büscher 2016; Duffy 2014; Duffy and Humphreys 2014). However, the militarisation of conservation has partly to do with a discourse that links poaching with global security concerns (Cavanagh et al. 2015; Duffy 2016; Duffy et al. 2015). The ways that the relation between poaching and global security concerns are framed herald a fuller integration of conservation and security objectives, which thus make the use of violence defensible (Duffy 2016). Nonetheless, Massé and Lunstrum (2016:236) argue that the production of the poaching-terrorism link serves more as a depoliticised alibi for green grabbing and dispossession, as wildlife-based tourism becomes more profitable, than as concerns for wildlife.

Extinction Narratives and the Militarisation of Conservation

Wildlife spaces often extend beyond the conventionally protected areas (Adams 2004). The return to more violent and protectionist conservation in recent years can be associated with the numerous reports of biodiversity loss due to the alleged failures of the more participatory alternative conservation models (Brockington et al. 2008; Hutton et al. 2005; Wilshusen et al. 2002). It can also be related to concerns over decline in global biodiversity numbers, which many conservationists refer to as the “sixth extinction” (Kolbert 2014; Leakey and Lewin 1996) or “biological annihilations” (Ceballos et al. 2017) whereby, it is argued, humans are in the process of pushing the earth’s biodiversity to the verge of extinction and have altered the “evolutionary trajectories of species” (Otto 2018:1). For example, a recent report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) stresses that “nature is declining” at rates “unprecedented in human history” and warns that the accelerating extinction rates of species may threaten humanity’s own existence.³

Proponents of extinction narratives consistently emphasise that humanity is under threat from the decline in biodiversity, making conservation a matter of security and an emergency (e.g. The Independent 2019).

While some critical scholars, particularly political ecologists, recognise the looming crisis and argue for radical rethinking in conservation policy and practice (e.g. Büscher and Fletcher 2019), proponents of extinction narratives, primarily neoprotectionist conservationists, propose extending the borders of existing protected areas and setting aside up to half of the earth's surface to prevent extinction (e.g. Wilson 2016). They call on conservation actors to enforce desperate measures to save both biodiversity and humanity. Despite widespread criticisms, the assumptions of neoprotectionist conservationists seem to be gaining acceptance, partly because they fit with taken-for-granted scarcity narratives in communicating a sense of urgency and partly because they reinforce the prevailing interests of powerful actors in resource control (Büscher et al. 2017; Mehta et al. 2019; Weldomichel et al. 2019). This is not to claim that biodiversity loss is not real, but rather to point out that the way crisis narratives frame biodiversity loss is "superficial, anti-political and devoid of context" (Büscher and Fletcher 2019:288). Büscher et al. (2017) argue that a plan to expand protected areas at a scale proposed by such narratives might have considerable social impact through fuelling conflict and violence. Globally, such a plan could negatively affect up to one billion people who are already marginalised (Schleicher et al. 2019). Furthermore, the expansion of protected areas is a difficult task, as land adjacent to existing protected areas is in many cases occupied by people whose lives have already been affected by existing protected areas (Dowie 2009:xxi). As Li (2011) notes, there is a limit to how far people can be pushed off their land and it is likely that plans for further expansion of protected areas would face resistance from them.

Thus, in conservation, militarism and the use of extreme violence may be justified, as the environment, wildlife, and biodiversity are presumed to be under a threat that is becoming "out of control" (Büscher 2016:980). This sense of urgency, which is communicated through crisis narratives combined with neo-Malthusian interpretations of the relation between population growth, resource scarcity and environmental degradation (for an example, see Veldhuis et al. 2019), may further legitimise militarised interventions and help to mobilise public support for violent measures to "protect" wildlife (Duffy 2014; Lunstrum 2014).

At the local level, violence and evictions can be legitimised when the political nature of subtle and hidden resistance by locals are misconstrued as encroachments by conservation authorities (Holmes 2007). Expansion of protected areas and the use of violence can be legitimised by discursively "othering" a targeted group of people (Lunstrum and Ybarra 2018; Neumann 2004). According to Said (1985:108–109), "othering" means "disregarding, essentialising, [and] denuding the humanity of another culture, people or geographical region" as grounds for violent expulsion, land theft, occupation or invasion. Melber (2014:197) states that othering "promotes the 'we-they' dichotomy and ... [is used] to justify why 'others' by definition do not qualify nor are entitled to be part of the national body politic" and can be used to legitimise direct and structural violence. Furthermore, othering is used as an exclusionary discursive tool, whereby "dissident or

ethnic others are relocated to a captive space on which the state, or colonizing culture, is able to inscribe its own version of legibility" (Jones and Manda 2006:199) in which the "other" does not have the same rights and humanity as those creating the distinction (Klein 2016). In conservation, the discursive constructions of locals as "others" as "foreigners" (Lunstrum 2014:827), "illegal occupants" (Bocarejo and Ojeda 2016) and "conservation's enemies" (Dowie 2009: xxi) serve as stepping stones for the use of violence and eviction (Lunstrum and Ybarra 2018). Once local communities are defined as foreigners or as threats to wildlife, these imaginaries strip them of their legitimacy to demand justice (Lunstrum and Ybarra 2018). Combined with crisis narratives that present biodiversity decline as a global emergency driven by humans, this discursive reordering of the moral standing of certain types of people (local people in the studied case) as dangerous encroachers versus the victimised wildlife may play a vital role in making the use of violence justifiable (Neumann 2004).

To summarise, the increasing focus on the "war on poaching" and illegal wildlife trafficking in the green militarisation literature, to some extent obscures aspects of why authorities militarise and securitise conservation management. Emerging consensus among conservation scientists and authorities regarding the fragmentation of ecosystems and the need to create "wildlife corridors", "dispersal areas" and "buffer zones" to reconnect ostensibly increasingly isolated protected areas (Goldman 2009) may give an "environmental stamp of approval" for decisions to convert more land into protected areas (Bocarejo and Ojeda 2016; Brockington and Duffy 2010). The role such powerful extinction narratives play in legitimising the use of violence in conservation across varied geographical contexts is yet to be fully explored.

Conservation and Violence in Tanzania

Tanzania is often renowned for its exemplification of the clichéd image of "Africa"—a vast wilderness with abundant diversity of wildlife. Currently, c. 40% of Tanzania's land surface is under some form of protection, including 16 national parks, 31 game reserves, 38 Game Controlled Areas (GCAs), over 30 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), and other forms of protected areas, which makes it among the countries with the highest proportion of protected spaces in the world (TANAPA 2018). It is one of the biggest wildlife tourism destinations in the world, and according to the World Bank, Tanzania's revenue from international tourism increased from less than US\$ 500 million in 1996 to over US\$ 2.465 billion in 2018 (World Bank 2020). With an average growth rate of 12%, tourism contributed 17.2% of the GDP and 41.7% of Tanzania's foreign exchange earnings between 2014 and 2018, making it one of the key economic sectors of the country (TANAPA 2018).

However, in Tanzania, vast areas such as the Serengeti, which are often considered "wildernesses" by conservationists and conservation authorities alike and upon which the country's tourism depends, have essentially never been devoid of people (Adams and McShane 1996; Miller 2016; Shetler 2007). Historically, people lived in these areas before they were violently relocated by colonial and

post-colonial governments to form national parks (Neumann 2001; Ngoitiko et al. 2010; Shetler 2007). Although Tanzania gained independence on 9 December 1961, and user rights for most land previously taken by the colonial authorities was generally transferred to locals, land designated as protected areas remained under state control (Bluwstein 2018). Moreover, the new government continued to alter land use legislations pertaining to parts adjoining protected areas and this critically affected people who were relocated to such areas (Bluwstein and Lund 2018; Brockington 2008; Miller 2016).

In the 1990s, growing global and domestic pressure, along with the imposition of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), led the Tanzanian government⁴ to decentralise conservation and to recognise communities' land rights (Benjaminsen et al. 2013; Igoe 2005). The Village Land Act of 1999 (United Republic of Tanzania 1999) stipulates that villages can acquire title deeds and maps of village land from relevant authorities. The Act defines village land as land outside reserved land, which inhabitants have regularly occupied or used for over 12 years prior to the enactment of the Act. Most importantly, the Village Land Act also allows villages to enter into venture agreements with tourism businesses (Gardner 2012; Ngoitiko et al. 2010).

From the state's side, direct engagement of local communities with tourist companies means that a portion of tourism income goes to communities instead of the state (Brockington 2008; Nelson 2004). This has coincided with a rapid overall increase in tourism revenue due to growing global affluence, which has resulted in a demand for nature-based tourism (Nelson 2004). The growing contribution of conservation-based tourism to Tanzania's GDP has made it an issue of national importance and has vitalised the government's interest in recentralising its management (Benjaminsen et al. 2013; Ngoitiko et al. 2010).

As part of the recentralisation process, the government passed the controversial Wildlife Conservation Act 5 of 2009 (United Republic of Tanzania 2009), which underlines the need to establish wildlife corridors, migration routes, dispersal areas, and buffer zones adjacent to existing national parks. It also grants powers to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism to declare any land, including village lands, as a protected area. In this way, power can be transferred back to the national government. Additionally, the Wildlife Conservation Act states that protected areas should be enlarged and clear boundaries be marked between protected and non-protected areas (United Republic of Tanzania 2009:17–18). Thus, the Act clearly provides for the recentralisation of wildlife management (Benjaminsen et al. 2013).

Since late 1990s, there has been a shift towards militarising conservation management and conservation agencies through the formulation of directives and Acts, such as the 1997 "shot-on-sight directive" (Neumann 2001) and the above-mentioned 2009 Wildlife Conservation Act, as well as through the replacement of civilian conservation workers by people with a military background and the ongoing provision of compulsory para-military training of civilian workers. In addition, ex-military personnel now occupy key positions in government conservation authorities.⁵ Similarly, under Section 10.1 of the 2009 Wildlife Conservation Act, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism has established a paramilitary unit

to protect wildlife from “unlawful” use outside the conventional protected areas. The Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) was established in 2014. Currently, the board of TAWA—an agency that manages a total area of 169,553 km², equivalent to almost 79% of the country’s protected areas including Loliondo—is chaired by a retired military general (TAWA 2020).

Violence and the Remaking of Conservation Boundaries

When the Serengeti was established as a national park in the 1950s, the colonial government resettled the Maasai on the eastern boundary, where they were left to practice traditional pastoralism on smaller and marginal lands (Gardner 2016; Ngoitiko et al. 2010). Representatives of the Maasai supposedly signed an agreement in the expectation that finally, after years of displacement by colonial authorities, they would receive a permanent place in which to live and sustain their livelihoods (Århem 1985). However, as noted in the preceding section, the government continued to change land use regulations in areas surrounding the protected areas. For example, in the southern part of Ngorongoro District the establishment of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area as a “multiple land use” system in 1959, only three years after people had been relocated into it, critically constrained the traditional livelihoods of the Maasai and other hunter-gatherer tribes (Århem 1985).

In 1974, a 4000 km² area to the east of Serengeti National Park, north of Ngorongoro Conservation Area and south of the border with Kenya, was gazetted as Loliondo GCA (Game Controlled Area) (Bartels 2016). According to the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974, GCAs are forms of protected areas where certain human activities such as controlled grazing and professional hunting are allowed. Although GCAs place restrictions on livelihoods, people have continued to live and practice pastoralism in most parts of Loliondo, where they have established several villages and Wasso, the capital of Ngorongoro District.

Following the 1999 Village Land Act, village leaders in Loliondo acquired maps and certificates for their villages, even though the land in which they lived fell within a protected area. Villages also developed business ventures with ecotourism companies and generated revenues up to US\$ 50,000 a year (a significant amount in Tanzanian standards) by renting land to ecotourism investors (Brockington 2008; Nelson and Makko 2012).

Conflicts over land in Loliondo started to intensify in the early 1990s, when the government leased parts of the Loliondo area as hunting concessions to foreign investors, while at the same time it promoted decentralisation and village ownership of land (Bartels 2016; Benjaminsen et al. 2013; Ngoitiko et al. 2010). In 1992, the government issued a controversial hunting license to Otterlo Business Corporation (OBC), a company owned by the royal of family of the United Arab Emirates, on a land within the GCA, which the villagers openly opposed on grounds that the land belonged to them (Ngoitiko et al. 2010), and they had leased the same land to another photographic safari company (Brockington 2008). Similarly, in 2006 the government signed a 96-year lease contract with an

American company, Thomson Safaris, for yet another piece of land that the communities claim belonged to them (Mittal and Fraser 2018).

According to studies of Loliondo, several rounds of violent evictions of pastoralists occurred between 2009 and 2017 (Anaya 2010; Gardner 2016), leaving thousands of households homeless (Gardner 2012; Mittal and Fraser 2018; Pastoralists' Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations Forum 2017). The evictions involved burning homes, confiscation of livestock, shootings, torture, and several cases of other human rights violations of local people, carried out by security forces and wildlife rangers (Loliondo Joint Fact Finding Mission 2015). Exact figures, particularly for recent evictions, are hard to access, as the process is still an ongoing and involves active conflict, making the area inaccessible to reporters and researchers. According to a report by the Pastoralists' Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations Forum (2017), eviction of pastoralists in four selected villages between August and November 2017 involved violent measures such as the burning of c. 1200 homes, as well as torture, beatings and arrests of many residents who resisted the evictions. Another report revealed that 19 people were arrested, 11 seriously injured and 5800 homes were damaged, leaving over 23,000 people homeless in Loliondo between August and November 2017 (Mittal and Fraser 2018). The report also indicated that on several occasions livestock found nearby the national park, i.e. the contested area, were confiscated and publicly auctioned off by the government (Mittal and Fraser 2018). One of the local people I interviewed described the eviction process as follows: "They bring ... the rangers ... beat people, seize the cattle, nobody will ever go there. They want some way to evict people. This is what's happening."

The violence in Loliondo does not seem to be an isolated incident. More subtle and hidden forms of violence in the name of community conservation have been previously reported elsewhere in Tanzania (e.g. Benjaminsen et al. 2013). Overt forms of violence against local populations similar to the Loliondo evictions have



Figure 1: SENAPA rangers burning Maasai houses in Ololosokwan, a village in Loliondo (source: Author, 13 August 2017) [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

been reported across different parts of Tanzania such as Manyara (Goldman 2011), Ruaha (Walsh 2012) and Kilombero (Bergius et al. 2020). Furthermore, the legal basis for the eviction in Loliondo can be traced back to policies that sought to expand conservation spaces beyond existing formal protected areas. In the Wildlife Conservation Act of 2009, a “buffer zone” refers to an area surrounding a protected area, which the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism may declare in relation to the conservation area (United Republic of Tanzania 2009). In the same Act, a “migratory route” refers to “an area of a strip or zone of land used by herds of wild animals during their migratory cycles or seasonal movements” (United Republic of Tanzania:13). Similarly, a “dispersal area” is defined as “an area habitually used by wild animal species for feeding, laying, storing eggs, rearing or feeding their young, and includes breeding places” (United Republic of Tanzania 2009:11). One of the aims of the Act is to:

protect and conserve wildlife resources and its habitats in game reserves, wetland reserves, game controlled areas, wildlife management areas, dispersal areas, migratory route corridors, buffer zone and all animals found in areas adjacent to these areas, by putting in place appropriate infrastructure, sufficient personnel and equipment. (United Republic of Tanzania 2009:17)

The 2009 Wildlife Conservation Act also places further restrictions on grazing in GCAs, unless written permission is granted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and requires existing GCAs to be reviewed. Accordingly, the Conservation Information Monitoring Unit (CIMU), a section of the Tanzanian Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI), carried out an assessment and produced a report in which it concluded that Loliondo GCA was under threat from increasing human and livestock populations, due to “lack of clear boundaries” between communities and protected areas, as well as “poor control and overseeing of boundaries”, that had led to a decline in biodiversity (see Endnote 2). As a solution, it suggested the establishment of clear boundaries demarcating reserved land (i.e. national parks, game reserves, or any other land reserved for conservation) from village land and emphasised the need to establish physical border markings and to enforce stricter rules (see Endnote 2):

having stable and socially accepted GCA boundaries delineating reserved land from village land will ensure effective wildlife conservation in GCAs, reinstate lost GCA land, clearly define village land and eventually lead to a more stable situation, avoiding resource use conflicts leading to improvement in people’s livelihood as well.

More specifically, the report suggested that the 4000 km² Loliondo area should be divided into two segments: a 1500 km² area along the border of the Serengeti National Park as an exclusive protected area in which wildlife would be concentrated; and a 2500 km² area to be “given” to local people (i.e. in which humans would be concentrated) as shown in Figure 2. However, the new conservation areas are not devoid of people, as many key tourist facilities are located within the “upgraded” wildlife concentration area, including the land leased by the OBC and several safari camps; rather, only local people have been casted out.

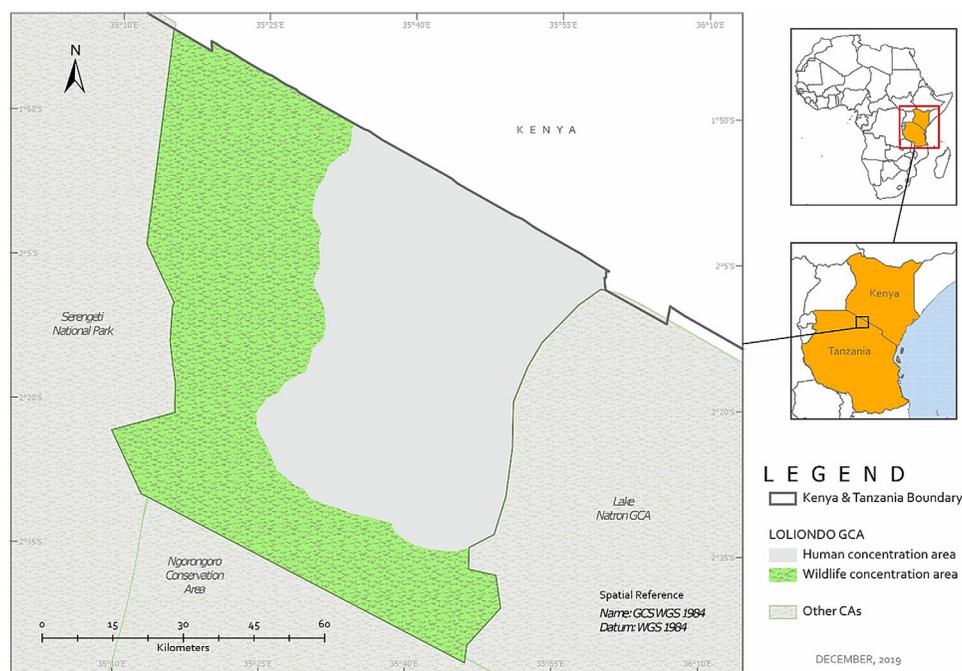


Figure 2: The new Loliondo GCA proposed in 2011, with green areas to be “upgraded” for wildlife conservation and grey areas to be “downgraded” for human concentration (source: map created by Michael Ogbe, Department of Geography, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and used here with permission) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

In August 2017, the villagers were ordered to vacate a 5–10 km wide strip of land (green in Figure 2) along the boundary of the Serengeti National Park. As one key government informant expressed, the aim was to have an “upgraded buffer zone” between the exclusive conservation area (the park) and community lands by expanding protected areas into what used to be pastoral grazing spaces adjacent to the Serengeti. However, the communities that claimed they had official documents to prove their ownership of the land resisted the proposed expansion. Previous plans from 1980s to 2008 to create a “buffer zone” had been rejected by villagers (Gardner 2016; Ngoitiko et al. 2010). Village leaders provided evidence that the area was demarcated as village land and used many tactics to pressure the government to stop the expansion plan, including working together with local and international civil society organisations and threatening physical action (Gardner 2012; Ngoitiko and Nelson 2013; Ngoitiko et al. 2010). The fierce resistance from communities apparently left the government with little option other than either to abandon the goal of expanding the park boundary or to use brute force to achieve it. In 2013, due to mounting local and international pressure (The Guardian 2013), the government temporarily abandoned the eviction plan, only to come back to it a few years later (Reuters 2018).

Justifying Violence

From interviews with representatives of key Tanzanian authorities, two justifications for the evictions in Loliondo in 2017 were prominent: growing population pressure and invasion by Kenyan pastoralists. On the one hand, the key interviewees argued that the number of people was increasing and, this combined with the Maasai's tradition of keeping big herds of livestock, was destroying the ecosystem. The evictions and violence were thus due to the assumption that the villagers were encroaching on the Serengeti National Park and the land on which they built their houses was an important wildlife migration route and water catchment area for the Serengeti. Furthermore, during interviews, key government officials argued that the catchment areas from which some of the rivers originated were located within village lands and argued that the presence of people in those areas led to the drying of the water sources for the Serengeti (Interview, 13 August 2017). Loliondo and particularly the areas nearby the Serengeti are important migratory corridors, breeding zones, and dispersal areas for wildlife (Bartels 2016). Hence, the authorities argued that population growth in those areas degraded the important wildlife spaces. Furthermore, they emphasised that the settlements were within a GCA in which, under the Wildlife Conservation Act of 2009, people were not permitted to settle. One influential Tanzanian conservation researcher I interviewed stated:

That is not their land, because they [the communities in Loliondo] are living in a Game Controlled Area. Legally, they did not have land. They are living in GCA because human activities [are] allowed, but legally it is not their land. So, the government wanted to give them their own land so that they could cultivate their own land. At the moment, they cannot plan because that is a Game Controlled Area.

He further argued:

So, our proposal is to upgrade important areas for conservation and water catchment and downgrade a major part to be a village land, so that they can decide to cultivate or whatever they want to do. The communities, I think, are somehow resisting that. They are saying "this is our land" but, legally it is not because they are living within a conservation area.

Key government informants also argued that the Maasai, despite their history of friendly relationships with the wildlife, had changed their lifestyle in recent years due to their interaction with other sections of society. Their new lifestyle was not as compatible with conservation as it used to be and there was a need to establish a clear boundary between people and the conservation areas. In doing so, the authorities drew on wider international debates on biodiversity decline and extinction, protected areas connectivity, and the need to protect the last remaining wildlife populations (see Endnote 2). One key government official interviewee stated:

For the sustainability of the entire Serengeti ecosystem, the areas around Loliondo GCA should remain undisturbed. These are migratory areas used by different species, catchment areas that drain into the Serengeti. So, the area should remain undisturbed and that is the purpose of the relocation.

A Frankfurt Zoological Society official and ex-director of Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) summarised the contradictory notions behind evictions as follows:

The Serengeti of my dreams has no livestock problems. The pastoral neighbouring communities have embraced a new lifestyle. They have settled at known addresses, they live in modern houses. Their cattle do not roam any more. They graze in paddocks and their numbers are reasonably small yet healthy.⁶

His argument seems to have been that conservationists wanted the “traditional” pastoral system to end. One way of ensuring this would be by settling the Maasai in fixed villages and by dividing up land into human and non-human spaces (as shown in Figure 2). To this end, there is ongoing “land use planning” to “give” land to communities, as one key government interviewee stated:

What the government plans to do is the lasting solution because now they [locals] will have their own land and they should have plan about how many animals they need to keep because if they keep more animals than the area can support the population will crash.

Nevertheless, according to interviews with two village officials, the government was not giving land to people, as argued by the conservationists, but instead taking away land to which the local Maasai previously had access. Similarly, a key informant, who was a legal expert from a local NGO advocating for community land rights, argued that the state was appropriating land from communities to create an exclusive hunting space for the OBC:

The government will tell you ... that “this is a protected area [and] they [local people] have invaded a Game Controlled Area [and] they are destroying the environment” all other things, but [the government’s] interest is that 1500 square kilometres of land. That is what they want for them, for the OBC. Out of 4000 square kilometres ... they are saying they have given 2500 square kilometres to the people while it is not giving; it is depriving them [of] 1500 square kilometres.

According to interviews with locals, it is designated as a protected area, land and benefits generated from it cease to belong to communities as arrangements for direct sharing of benefits with locals are non-existent. Hence, the only way that communities can ensure that they benefit from their land is by keeping it non-protected. Locals also argued that the current violent interventions have more to do with profits than concerns for wildlife. One local Maasai interviewee argued:

How do you claim to protect animals in that buffer, while the hunting company is there? If you really want to protect the animals, if you think it is a breeding zone and hunting is going on there, how do you justify conservation of the breeding area?

Another explanation for the eviction was based on a narrative about increasing numbers of Kenyan pastoralists crossing the border into Tanzania to graze livestock in the Serengeti (Mittal and Fraser 2018). In a statement on 3 October 2017, John Magufuli, the president of Tanzania, said “Tanzania is not a grazing ground for Kenya” emphasising that movement of people and livestock from

Kenya into Tanzania in search of pasture during dry seasons would no longer be tolerated (The EastAfrican 2017). Interviews with government authorities also confirmed that evictions were an attempt to protect the Serengeti from Kenyan herders who take advantage of Tanzania's lax grazing regulations. A government official interviewee explained the presence of Kenyans in Loliondo as follows:

Historically, because they [the Maasai] are [in] clans ... the same clans are also found on the border on the other side. So, it is possible and there is intermarriage, it is possible that some of them are coming from there ... I heard some time ago that the former Member of Parliament for Loliondo ... got married [to] a wife from Kenya, a Maasai, and last year or two years ago, they had to interrogate her [as to whether] whether she has ever denied her Kenyan citizenship and there were some issues related to it. So, they have been bringing livestock. This year I am told there have been about 30,000 cattle from Kenya to Loliondo. When they [the authorities] tried to remove them, the people went back to Kenya and they left their animals back here with their relatives. This now has caused the government to brand these animals [livestock] ... So, they are doing census, human census and livestock branding, to prevent migration ... from Kenya.

Another interviewed government official stated:

Those people [evictees] ... are not Tanzanians. These are Kenyans, we know them. We have the evidence. We had 175 people from Kenya with a stock of 33,000 cattle. We are talking about real evidence because in the villages not all keep the secret to hide people [Kenyans] ... and when we are burning the houses, inside the houses, we saw the motorbikes with Kenyan license plates. So now, the government is saying "OK! If that is the case, we need to protect the five-kilometre wide strip of land for the sake of the country, for the benefit of the people and for the benefit of conservation." Without protecting it, tourism will be finished in the Serengeti.

Similarly, an interviewed TAWA official argued that the Maasai on both sides of the border, despite speaking the same language and having many other similarities, differed in their "behaviour" with regard to land use:

... the Maasai in Tanzania, they do not have a behaviour to demarcate their area. They do not have what they call their area. They just build what they call a *boma* [traditional house], where they keep their livestock, burn it and move. They do not have an area they call ... "this is mine". If you go in all areas where these Maasai are living, they have started such kind of areas [demarcated] ... Now, these people when they came ... [and] started to demarcate their own areas. When it started, people were saying "why are you demarcating?" These people [Tanzanian Maasai] started saying "We are Maasai, and in Tanzania we do not do demarcation and those people [those who demarcated] are Kenyans." That is how we find the Kenyans.

According to interviews with both locals and key government and non-government officials, evictions from the area designated as a buffer zone were indiscriminate. For the conservation authorities, the evictions of Tanzanians along with "the Kenyans" was a "collateral damage" (Interview, 2017). For local interviewees and key interviewees from local NGOs, the fact that the evictions were indiscriminate was a clear sign that the government's intention was to clear land for

conservation businesses⁷ and to control resources, and that the narrative about the presence of Kenyans was formed to brand it as a matter of national security in order to make military intervention justifiable. Mr Mar, a resident of Loliondo, argued that the deployment of national security forces and the use of violence in internal matters, which under other circumstances would have been considered highly problematic, was made justifiable by depicting the Tanzanian Maasai as Kenyans and as conservation's enemies:

It is politically easy to say it is Kenyans rather than saying you are evicting a Tanzanian. But even if it was a Kenyan, I believe the use of bullets is not allowed. Shooting people, I don't believe it is acceptable.⁸

When I travelled to Maasai Mara, on the Kenyan side of the border between Tanzania and Kenya, during the peak of the eviction process in October 2017, I met several Tanzanian herders who had escaped the violence in Loliondo and together with their cattle to seek refuge with their Kenyan friends and relatives. The state's competition with the locals for resource control and access culminated in the eviction of locals to make way for full state control, which would have been more difficult without framing locals as invaders, immigrants or anti-conservation. By directing the focus on citizenship and rebranding pastoralists as "invading Kenyans", the government effectively concealed the real purposes of the evictions. The presentation of the Loliondo Maasai as trespassers and as Kenyans made their evictions justifiable and necessary for saving wildlife, which was presumed to be under threat of extinction. Furthermore, rendering conservation a security question provided the government with support from Tanzanian public and conservationists, as well as the ability to use the more capable national security apparatus in internal matters to quell resistance whenever civilian mechanisms failed to achieve the government's goals.

However, the situation in Loliondo should be seen in the context of wider changes in Tanzania. Generally, there has been a shift towards reconsolidating government control over increasing ecotourism profits (as noted in the preceding section). The formulation of the Wildlife Management Act of 2009 and the establishment of TAWA, a paramilitary unit responsible for the protection of wildlife outside existing state-owned protected areas,⁹ are signs of a shift towards recentralisation of conservation management. Furthermore, there are ongoing efforts to exclude people from within protected areas where local people were previously allowed to remain.¹⁰

The Impacts of Green Violence on People's Relations with Wildlife

Violent interventions in the name of conservation lead to troubled relations between wildlife conservation authorities and communities (Brockington and Igoe 2006; Duffy et al. 2019; Lunstrum 2014). On the one hand, the retaliatory relations between communities and conservationists (more broadly) that I was told about while doing fieldwork had much to do with the presence of a sense of resentment among communities towards conservationists, and communities'

perception that any wildlife related research was a plot to appropriate their resources. On the other hand, the retaliatory relations may contribute to loss of livelihoods for local communities that are evicted, along with those who are supposedly outsiders, and thus harm the relation between local communities and the wildlife, as they would lead to changes in how communities see the wildlife, as well as the creation of “polarised landscapes” (Brockington et al. 2008), with a “rift” between human and non-human spaces (Foster et al. 2010). One interviewed Maasai village leader expressed this as follows:

... this [wildlife conservation] is a curse for us, for our grazing, because why should they [conservation authorities] otherwise take our land from us if it doesn't give benefit as well to us. It is ... clear to us that wildlife are not a blessing, and what's even worse is the attitude of game officers towards them [the Maasai]. They beat them, shoot at them, [and] arrest their cows, and the enmity as a result is a very strong one.

He further argued that people would no longer easily accept conservation authorities' decisions:

In the future, whatever decision the government will come with, we will fight it. We will never accept it. They make decisions as government, but the people will fight it when it comes to the ground.

Resistance may take various forms. It can be outright confrontation, as in the numerous instances during which the residents of Loliondo allegedly swore to fight for their land (e.g. Patinkin 2013; The Citizen 2018). It may be manifested in surges of organised revolts by people affected by violent conservation, like the conditions that pressed pastoralists in Mali to join “jihadist” groups (Benjaminsen and Ba 2019). As Dowie (2009:xxvi) notes, evictees can be driven to take “desperate survival actions” against conservationists' interests. Such developments may serve to legitimise further militarised interventions to disarm locals, as Lunstrum (2014) argues. This could have negative implications for wildlife and general security. By contrast, resistance can also take the form of “weapons of the weak”, as less symbolic actions to avoid confrontation with authorities (Holmes 2007; Scott 1985). Increasing incidences of wildlife poisoning and retaliatory killings by communities in Tanzania have been reported in recent years (Mariki et al. 2015; Masenga et al. 2013). As one village leader whom I interviewed argued, “they [conservation authorities] need communities more than they need guns to do conservation”. He also argued that conservation authorities needed to engage communities through participatory decision-making.

Conclusions

In this paper I set out to analyse why violence is used in conservation and how the practice is legitimised in specific contexts. Through the analysis, I have aimed to contribute to the debate on militarisation and the use of violence in conservation by examining how the use of overt violence has been justified in a specific non-poaching context in Tanzania. At national level, the Wildlife Conservation Act of 2009 clearly underscores the need for the establishment of a paramilitary unit

under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism in order to protect wildlife outside existing protected areas. This points to a return to the old “fences and fines” approach in which violence played a crucial role in the establishment of protected areas, but this time expanding them outside the existing protected areas. At national level, the official explanation for militarisation seems to be linked to poaching and narratives of decline in wildlife numbers.

With regard to specific contexts, such as Loliondo, the emergence of militarisation and use of violence has had to do with more than saving iconic species that might be threatened with extinction. It has been a way to ensure the expansion of exclusive protected areas. Violence, both in its overt and covert forms, has been an integral part of Tanzania's conservation history. In the 1990s, the Tanzanian government, partly pressed by international and local pressure groups and partly to present a “people-friendly” façade to capture donor funding, shifted its focus towards recognising communities' role in conservation, and allowed partial local control over resources and direct engagements between villages with tourism operators (Igoe 2005). However, direct engagement of communities with businesses at a time when tourism became lucrative reinvigorated the government's interest in reconsolidating control over local resources (Benjaminsen et al. 2013). The state then started sabotaging such arrangements by allocating the same land to new investors, which was fiercely resisted by communities. Violence thus emerged as a response to the different forms of resistance that arose from the communities challenging the state's resources claims. In so doing, conservation authorities in Tanzania drew on two narratives. On the one hand, they drew on biodiversity extinction narratives, to show how population growth, fragmentation of ecosystems and isolation of core protected areas were discursively linked to this decline. According to the authorities, the Serengeti was facing serious threat from a growing population along its boundaries, which called for the creation of a buffer to be managed by the new paramilitary unit. This was part of the wider process of militarisation in Tanzania, the justification of which has been linked to poaching and wildlife trafficking. On the other hand, Loliondo is located near the border with Kenya and there is a long history of cross-border seasonal migration of wildlife, pastoralists and their livestock. One narrative that has emerged among Tanzanian authorities in recent years is that many of those living in Loliondo are Kenyans who take advantage of Tanzanian resources. This historical migration pattern has thus been “rebranded” as invasion in order to make it acceptable to many non-Maasai local actors and other national and international actors, and thus justify the state's use of force to “protect” Tanzania and its resources. The rebranding has curbed any opposition to evictions that otherwise might have emerged from the Tanzanian public and international community, helped the state to gain support from conservationists, and justified military-like actions and the use of violence. Additionally, rebranding the resistance by locals as “encroachment” has depoliticised locals' fundamental political questions regarding landownership and benefit sharing.

This paper also contributes to the debates on the role that crisis narratives play in promoting violence in conservation. Specifically, my findings raise the following questions: What does expansion of protected areas at the scale proposed by

neoprotectionist extinction narratives really entail? How does it unfold in different contexts? What are its social and ecological implications? It should be noted that biodiversity loss is real, but the choices of whether, how and where to conserve are political decisions with social and ecological consequences (Brockington et al. 2008). For example, wildlife numbers in the East Africa have significantly declined despite collective expansion of exclusive protected areas in recent decades (Ogutu et al. 2016) and it is important that we question the scholarly legitimacy of arguments that are in favour of further expansion of protected areas. I argue that framing biodiversity loss, whether due to poaching or habitat destruction, as an urgent matter or as an issue of national and global security helps to legitimise authorities' claims as guardians of conservation while simultaneously undermining locals' negotiating positions and it makes violence justifiable. The sense of emergency communicated by such narratives creates what Naomi Klein calls "democracy-free zones" (Klein 2007:140), a situation in which the customary need to gain consent from and an agreement with local people does not appear to apply. It serves long-standing interest in controlling resources, particularly financial benefits from wildlife tourism, and it legitimises violence. In the case of Loliondo, the absence of media coverage of an event that displaced and ruined the lives of c. 25,000 people is partly a testimony to the legitimising effect of such narratives.

The violence in Loliondo might not be representative of how the use of extinction narratives turns out elsewhere. However, given conservation's history of dependence on predominant narratives and violence, it is likely that similar experiences exist elsewhere (for a possible example, see Bocarejo and Ojeda 2016). As Schleicher et al. (2019) note, proposals for large-scale expansion of protected areas may affect the lives of up to one billion people globally. However, the Tanzanian state does not necessarily entirely depend on global extinction narratives to legitimise violent evictions. It has a long history of violently evicting people in the name of conservation and crisis narratives only give existing state interests to control resources a further nudge. Whether there is a direct relation between militarisation at national level and its use at local level could be a subject for future research.

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Endnotes

¹ I later learned that there had been similar incidents in which villagers had attacked researchers due to their perceived affiliation with the Tanzanian government.

² Source: document titled "Evaluation of Game Controlled Areas in Tanzania: Phase I, Loliondo and Kilombero" dated 2011 and accessed from the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI).

³ The IPBES platform is at <https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>

⁴ As Tanzania is a very centralised state, "the government" in this paper refers to the national government.

⁵ For example, Major General Gaudence Milanzi, an ex-army commander, currently serves as the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. Similarly, Major General Khamis Semfuko leads the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA).

⁶ Article by Gerald Bigurube titled "The Serengeti of My Dreams" in *Gorilla*, a subscription magazine published by the Frankfurt Zoological Society, in 2014.

⁷ Some interviewed locals claimed that some businesses were involved in supporting and facilitating the evictions. Although it was hard to find reliable evidence, local eyewitnesses claimed that the OBC provided support. Also, reports of previous rounds of evictions showed that operations were sponsored by the OBC (e.g. http://www.tanzaniapastoralist.org/uploads/1/0/2/7/10277102/loliondo_land_conflict_has_ended_-_22_sept_2013.pdf)

⁸ Source: a video interview at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMPfjKy2pM>

⁹ Financial support for the establishment of TAWA was provided by both the Frankfurt Zoological Society and GZS (<https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/28017.html>)

¹⁰ To the south of Loliondo, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), a World Heritage Site since 1979 and multiple land use system since 1959, is moving towards a non-multiple land use model. According to an unpublished CAA report produced in August 2019, more than 70,000 people may face relocation, (unpublished). The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has been pressuring the Tanzanian government to "voluntarily relocate" people out of the NCA. In its assessment reports from 2012 and 2019, the committee noted that population growth within the NCA was a grave concern to the integrity of the World Heritage Site and suggested that the state should take measures, including voluntary relocation of people of the NCA. A map in the NCA's report shows "zoning" arrangements with reduced settlement sizes and livestock grazing areas, and includes the strip of land in Loliondo (c. 1500 km²) where evictions took place in 2017, in the NCA, confirming that the intention is to expand exclusive protected area space.

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