

Communities, conservation, and conflicts in the Tanzanian Serengeti

PRESERVING RIGHTS TO GAIN BENEFITS



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This chapter addresses issues related to **securing access and rights to resources, and gaining benefits from the resource** within the context of one community-based initiative in the **village of Ololosokwan in Tanzania**.

The case study describes important **instruments that enable village natural resource management** including the Tanzanian **land laws** that devolved responsibility and authority for land management to the village level, **local government legislation** that defines Village Councils and their governance, **new market opportunities from tourism**, and **effective forms of political negotiation** by the community in the face of hostile policy decisions.

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Introduction

Ololosokwan village is located in northern Tanzania along the Kenyan border, adjacent to the Maasai Mara National Reserve in Kenya and the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. The village's Maasai Community is situated within one of the most wildlife-rich areas in the world. Hundreds of thousands of wildebeest, zebra, and other ungulates¹ pass through the community's lands during their annual migration between the Maasai Mara and the Serengeti plains.

Ololosokwan's wildlife resources have enabled it to become Tanzania's leading example of community-based ecotourism. Beginning in the late 1990s, the village has developed two ventures with private tourism companies that now earn the community upward of \$55,000 annually. These are the most substantial revenues that any village in Tanzania earns from wildlife-based enterprises, and have been used for communal investments in an array of social services and infrastructure projects.

The creation of these benefit flows from tourism have also spurred local actions to improve the community's land and resource management institutions and practices. Wildlife has become a significant economic asset in Ololosokwan, and the community is gradually building its own management capacity in order to better capitalize on this growing opportunity.

But the community's gains in developing these new opportunities have been accompanied by entrenched conflicts over the use, control, and management of lands and resources in Ololosokwan. The village is situated within a controversial safari hunting concession granted by the central government in 1992, which encompasses Ololosokwan and a number of neighboring villages. This hunting operation, combined with efforts by both central and district governments to restrict Ololosokwan's tourism ventures, provides a strong challenge to the village's land-use practices and socioeconomic interests.

An additional conflict in Ololosokwan revolves around different perspectives of and interests in "community-based conservation," as manifested in attempts



Ololosokwan village's Maasai Community is in one of the world's most wildlife-rich areas, enabling it to become Tanzania's leading example of community-based ecotourism. But the community's gains have been accompanied by entrenched conflicts over the use, control, and management of lands and resources.

¹Ungulates are hoofed mammals.



The residents of Ololosokwan are predominantly Maasai agropastoralists. The total population is around 3,000–3,500 people.

by the state to implement its Wildlife Management Area initiative in the village despite local skepticism and resistance.

These recent conflicts exist against a backdrop of long-term contests over land and resource rights and access in Ololosokwan, including the displacement of the Maasai from the Serengeti National Park in 1959.

Ololosokwan provides an important case study of the political economy of these struggles for local benefits and rights to resources and livelihoods, set within one of the most biologically important wildlife areas in the world. This includes the issue of how community-based conservation functions in theory and in practice and according to the contrasting interests and aims of different social and political groups.

Historically, conservation in the Serengeti ecosystem has largely meant the exclusion of local people from using lands and resources through the establishment of state-protected areas and enforcement of restrictive laws. While the rhetoric of conservation in the area has changed to focus increasingly on local participation and benefit-sharing, this shift is not necessarily apparent in the local dynamics of resource management. The outcomes of these struggles for benefits, resource rights and access, and the meaning of community-based conservation will have a great impact on the future of wildlife and people in Ololosokwan and throughout the greater Serengeti ecosystem.

Part I: Ololosokwan village— People, environment, and history

The Maasai Community of Ololosokwan

Ololosokwan village lies in the northwestern corner of Loliondo Division² in Ngorongoro District, Arusha Region, bordering Serengeti National Park to the west and Kenya's Maasai Mara National Reserve to the north (Figure 1).

²This area includes all of the lands lying adjacent to the eastern boundary of Serengeti National Park between the Kenyan border and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and is generally referred to herein as "Loliondo."

Ololosokwan lies within the eastern range of the annual ungulate migrations that define the

Serengeti ecosystem.

of households in Loliondo incorporate agricultural cultivation into their livelihoods as a diversification strategy (McCabe 2003; O'Malley 2000).

Although the proportion of households involved in agricultural activities is high in Loliondo, very little land in Loliondo is under cultivation³ (Homewood et al. 2001). While neighboring rangelands in Kenya on group ranches outside the Maasai Mara National Reserve have been rapidly converted to wheat fields over the past 30 years,⁴ Loliondo has experienced relatively little agricultural conversion despite similar soil, rainfall, and demographic characteristics. This variance is attributable to the lack of infrastructure in Loliondo and its remoteness from markets for crops (Homewood et al. 2001), as well as effective local resistance to outside attempts at large-scale alienation of lands for farming during the late 1980s.⁵



The Serengeti environment

Ololosokwan is a part of the greater Serengeti ecosystem and contains a biologically varied and resource-rich environment. Rainfall is medium to high for East African savannahs, averaging around 700–1,200 mm for the Loliondo area. Vegetation in Loliondo is typical of *Acacia* savannah-grassland mosaics of the greater Serengeti ecosystem.

³IRA (2001) provides a figure of 4.4% of the total land area of Loliondo Game Controlled Area as under cultivation, compared for example to 35% of Simanjiro Game Controlled Area, although we surmise that both of these figures are overestimates of agricultural land cover in these locales.

⁴Large-scale agriculture in Maasai group ranches surrounding the Maasai Mara increased from 4,875 hectares in 1975 to 46,700 hectares in 1995, and these changes are implicated in a 58% decrease in the Mara's resident large mammals during this period (Homewood et al. 2001).

⁵During the late 1980s, there was widespread land speculation and "land grabbing" occurring in rural areas of Tanzania (URT 1994; Shivji 1998). At this time, the Ministry of Lands held applications for land allocations in Loliondo, largely for individual commercial farmers coming from outside the local communities, which totaled more than 100% of the total land area in Loliondo (F. Shomet, personal communication). Local Maasai leaders and their communities worked to prevent these alienations through a variety of political strategies, the most important one being the expeditious completion of surveying and titling of the villages' respective lands.

The enduring presence of large wildlife populations in this part of the Serengeti ecosystem is based on the historic Maasai coexistence with wildlife in Loliondo.

Ololosokwan lies within the eastern range of the annual ungulate migrations that define the Serengeti ecosystem.⁶ Hundreds of thousands of wildebeest and other large ungulates move south through Ololosokwan and neighboring village lands every year following the onset of the rains. Resident species such as giraffe, impala, and buffalo are also common in Ololosokwan. Large predators remain remarkably widespread throughout Loliondo compared to nominally unprotected areas in other parts of Tanzania and neighboring countries. Maddox (2001) describes a significant cheetah population in Loliondo, and notes the “large numbers of lions, hyenas, and jackals.”

The enduring presence of large wildlife populations in this part of the Serengeti ecosystem is based on the historic Maasai coexistence with wildlife in Loliondo. O’Malley (2000) notes that the “Maasai don’t eat wild meat, and generally don’t kill wild animals,” with the notable exception of lions that prey on domestic stock, and that as a consequence, “poaching of wildlife remains minimal in the Loliondo area.” Loliondo’s remoteness inhibits the incursions by meat poachers and licensed resident hunters from urban areas that frequently occur in other parts of northern Tanzania, which are closer to large towns and cities.

As a result, wildlife populations in Loliondo have not exhibited the contemporary declines that have occurred in other parts of Tanzania. Monitoring data reveal no significant changes between wildlife numbers from Loliondo from the late 1960s and early 1990s⁷ (Campbell and Borner 1995). In contrast to areas west of Serengeti National Park, “a pastoral land use to the east of the national park [in Loliondo] has resulted in significant wildlife populations and no marked changes in density on either side of the protected area boundaries” (Campbell and Borner 1995).

Given the extensive use of village lands in Loliondo by both resident species and the vast migratory wildebeest herds, the conservation of wildlife in this area is of great importance to the Serengeti ecosystem. Changes in land or resource use that lead to an increase in wildlife exploitation or the spread of agricultural cultivation, as has reduced wildlife populations across the

⁶The greater Serengeti ecosystem is defined based on the annual range of the area’s 1 million wildebeest, as comprising approximately 25,000 km² of lands in both Kenya and Tanzania. Contiguous state-protected areas form the bulk of this area, including the Maasai Mara National Reserve (Kenya), Serengeti National Park, Ikorongo Game Reserve, Maswa Game Reserve, Grumeti Game Reserve, and Ngorongoro Conservation Area (Tanzania). The Serengeti system contains one of the world’s greatest concentrations of grazing ungulates and large predators, including approximately 1,000,000 wildebeest; 200,000 zebra; 440,000 Thomson’s gazelles; 7,500 spotted hyenas; and 2,500 lions (Sinclair 1995).

⁷There is no published wildlife monitoring data for Loliondo available for the ten years or so since that time.

Changes in land or resource use that lead to an increase in either wildlife exploitation or agricultural cultivation would pose a substantial threat to the maintenance of the Serengeti's wildlife populations.



border in Kenya around the Maasai Mara, would pose a substantial threat to the maintenance of the Serengeti's wildlife populations.

Wildlife conservation in the Serengeti, past and present

The wildlife of the Serengeti has played an important role in the land and resource uses and rights of the human communities living in the area. Serengeti is based on the Maasai word “Siringet,” which means a great wide open place or plain, and formed an important part of the tribe's historic range. The Maasai moved into the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro area around the

end of the eighteenth century, coming from the north and displacing other people such as the Barabaig on their way to becoming the dominant ethnic group in the Serengeti by the 1800s (Homewood and Rodgers 1991).

The 1890s witnessed profound environmental and political changes in Tanzanian Maasailand and throughout East Africa, with the onset of European rule and the outbreak of catastrophic rinderpest and smallpox epidemics. During this decade the first laws restricting wildlife uses—at first primarily enacted to protect large game from uncontrolled exploitation from European settlers—were propagated by the German colonial administration (Baldus 2000).

Serengeti National Park was first established in 1940, although at that time, as in other early protected areas, the colonial administration permitted native people to continue residing there (Neumann 1998). But by the 1950s pressure from European conservationists had increased for the Maasai and other native people to be evicted so that the Serengeti could serve European preservationist aims and “remain a piece of primordial wilderness” (Grzimek and Grzimek 1960). In 1959, the British administration⁸ achieved this aim by means of a treaty with the resident Maasai, who were then evicted from the park and their land rights there formally extinguished.⁹

⁸Tanganyika became a League of Nations protectorate administered by the British following World War I.

⁹The agreement for the Maasai to leave Serengeti in return for concessions in the Ngorongoro highlands was signed on behalf of the communities in the Serengeti by a dozen *Laibon*, or traditional medicine men, who do not exercise any customary political powers or decision-making authority within the community. In any case, there is evidence that these people did not understand what they were agreeing to when they signed the agreement; and the Maasai in the region essentially view their departure from the Serengeti as a forced eviction by the colonial government (Bonner 1993).



“Serengeti” is based on the Maasai word “Siringet”—a great wide open place or plain. The Serengeti was an important part of the tribe’s historic range.



In 1959, a British treaty evicted the Maasai from the Serengeti and extinguished their land rights there. As a result, to the Maasai of Loliondo, wildlife conservation and national parks are largely synonymous with land loss and exclusion.

Many elders who reside in Ololosokwan today were among those who lost their homes in the Serengeti in 1959 (Y. Saing’eu, personal communication). The legacy of the evictions from the Serengeti, combined with decades of subsequent land and resource rights struggles on the part of the resident Maasai in the adjacent Ngorongoro Conservation Area (Shivji and Kapinga 1998; Bonner 1993; Homewood and Rodgers 1991), is a central factor in shaping the attitudes of the communities in Loliondo toward conservation, wildlife, and land tenure security. Wildlife conservation and national parks, to the Maasai of Loliondo, are largely synonymous with land loss and exclusion. This historical experience colors the dynamics of community-based conservation in the area today.

Part II: Wildlife and tourism— Opportunities and conflicts in Loliondo

The growth of community-based ecotourism in Ololosokwan

During the course of the last 20 years, Tanzania’s political and economic environment has experienced manifold changes. The socialist policies of founding President Julius Nyerere gave way to economic liberalization and structural adjustment programs guided by the World Bank and

International Monetary Fund in the late 1980s, and the one-party state gave way to multiparty politics beginning with the national elections of 1995.

One of the foremost results in these changes has been a great increase in foreign investment and private enterprise in Tanzania since the late 1980s.

The growth of the tourism industry has been among the most significant elements in those trends, growing at around 10% annually during the 1990s. In 1990, tourism earned an estimated \$65 million in foreign exchange, but by 2001 this had grown to \$725 million, accounting for 12% of Tanzania's GDP at that time (World Bank/MIGA 2002). Due to this growth, by the late 1990s the main tourist destinations in the national parks were increasingly overcrowded, and tour operators began looking to village lands outside the parks for more authentic and exclusive tourism products.

With some of the most spectacular wildlife and scenery in northern Tanzania, Loliondo was one of the first places tour operators looked for new opportunities. Tour operators initiated a variety of access agreements with the communities in Loliondo giving the operators rights to bring clients into the area for camping and walking safaris in exchange for set payments to the village. These agreements have proliferated over the past five years, and

today seven villages in Loliondo earn a sum total of up to \$100,000 annually from tourism carried out on their lands (Wildlife Working Group, unpublished data).

While Loliondo has been the leading area in Tanzania for community earnings from ecotourism ventures, within Loliondo, Ololosokwan village has been the pacesetter. The village currently has two major sources of tourism income. The first is a permanent lodge built by an international ecotourism company that is governed by a 15-year joint venture agreement. According to this arrangement, Ololosokwan is paid \$25,000 annually for use of a 25,000-acre concession area surrounding the lodge, with the fee increasing 5% per annum for the duration of the agreement, in addition to \$3.15 per tourist bed night. From 1999–2000 to 2002–2003, revenue accruing to the village through this agreement increased from \$31,600 to \$37,640.98 (Wildlife Working Group, unpublished data).



As the main tourist destinations in the national parks became crowded, tour operators began looking to village lands outside the parks for new venues.

Loliondo was among the first.



Ololosokwan now has two major sources of tourism income, a permanent lodge built by an international ecotourism company and a campsite on village land used by several luxury tour operators.

Ololosokwan has also designated a campsite on the village land adjacent to the Klein's Gate to Serengeti National Park that is used by several luxury tour operators. Operators using this campsite pay \$20 per bed night to the village and \$10 per bed night to the Ngorongoro District Council. In 2002–2003, the village earned \$18,066.53 from two of the companies using this campsite, in addition to \$2,723.32 in individual wages. Thus, Ololosokwan currently earns, based on figures for 2002–2003, upward of \$55,000 annually from tourism activities undertaken on village land, a source of communal income that has grown from negligible amounts less than five years ago (Figure 2).

Almost all of the Village Council's annual income is from tourism (Figure 3), which means that Ololosokwan now has an annual community budget of about \$57,000, whereas prior to the late 1990s it had minimal levels of income and thus very few expenditures (Figure 4). Tourism revenues have been used for village development projects such as building and maintaining school classrooms and employing teachers, construction of village offices, the village dispensary, and water projects. Individuals have been reimbursed for health expenses, and the village has paid for the bursar fees for secondary and university students from Ololosokwan. Tourism revenues, therefore, provide not only infrastructure development for a relatively isolated and marginalized community, but also a developing social services safety net in terms of issues like health and education.

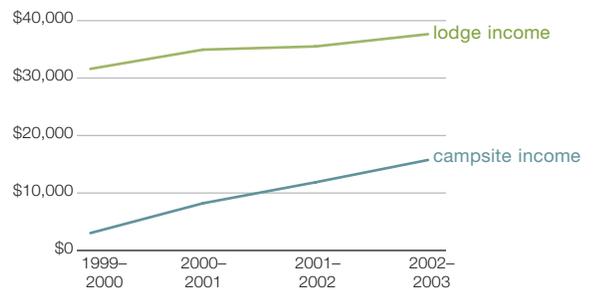


Figure 2: Growth in income to Ololosokwan village from tourism. The campsite income represents only one of four companies using the village campsite; the lodge income represents income from the lodge concession. Source: Wildlife Working Group, unpublished data.

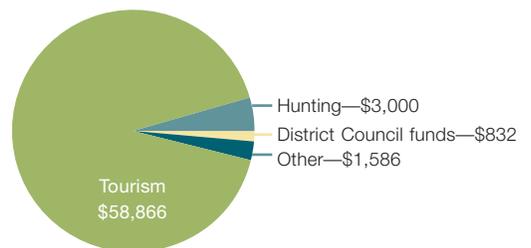


Figure 3: Ololosokwan village income, by source, for 2002. Figures are in U.S. dollars. Source: Ololosokwan Village, 2003.

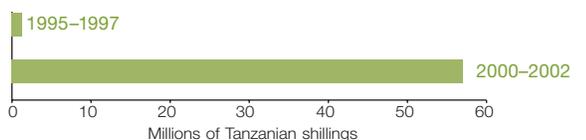


Figure 4: Average annual Ololosokwan village government expenditures during the periods 1995–1997 and 2000–2002. Source: Ololosokwan Village, 2003.

Commensurate with the development of profitable tourism enterprises have been efforts on the part of the community to strengthen its natural resource management practices and institutions. In addition to expenditures on village infrastructure, limited tourism revenues have been reinvested in conservation. Four village game scouts are paid by the village government to enforce local rules and regulations and prevent illegal wildlife uses.

Ololosokwan has passed village by-laws¹⁰ in order to regulate the use and management of natural resources in the village. These include mandating the village government to produce and enforce measures protecting, conserving, and controlling illegal hunting. The by-laws also require that tourism

The by-laws and land-use plan represent the village's attempt to take a long-range view of its development and resource management options and to take the initiative in determining land and resource uses in the village.

revenues are placed in the appropriate village bank account, and that earnings and expenditures are reported to the Village Assembly at least four times annually.¹¹

The by-laws provide a zoning plan for the community's land uses that establishes areas set aside for wildlife, tourism, and traditional dry season grazing of livestock. This

land-use plan, with the by-laws to enforce it, represents the community's "vision" of natural resource conservation and management. The by-laws also prevent individuals from moving into areas set aside for collective uses, and attempt to legally control immigration into Ololosokwan in general. The by-laws and land-use plan represent an attempt by the village, partly spurred by the new opportunities for wildlife-based benefits provided by tourism, to take a long-range view of its development and resource management options and to take the initiative in determining land and resource uses in the village.

¹⁰According to the provisions of the Local Government (District Authorities) Act of 1982.

¹¹These by-laws face uneven implementation and village management capacities are limited, which can lead to problems with the allocation and use of tourism revenues. Earlier this year, for example, the village leadership faced accusations from the Village Assembly of misusing funds and carrying out several unauthorized transactions. Unsatisfied with the explanation from the leadership, the community demanded an independent informal commission be convened and prepare an audit of the income and expenditures of all the village revenues. A 51-page report was prepared by a five-member team composed of individuals from both within and outside the village, extensively documenting village accounts from tourism and other sources going back several years. This report satisfied the community, as well as documented the extent to which the community as a whole is engaged in the management of these enterprises and able to hold the village leadership accountable.

VILLAGE BY-LAWS AND LAND-USE PLANS IN TANZANIA

Tanzania has one of the strongest and most devolved systems of local governance among the countries in East and Southern Africa. Communities in rural areas are divided into villages, which are managed by Village Councils composed of 25 elected leaders including a Village Chairman. Village Councils are corporate bodies, and are in turn answerable and accountable to Village Assemblies, which consist of all the adults living within the village area.

This system of local governance dates back to the mid-1970s, when the socialist *ujamaa* program of Tanzania's founding President Julius Nyerere established villages on a legal basis in order to provide a structured means of organizing rural communities for collective agrarian production. While Nyerere conceived *ujamaa* villages as largely a means to mold scattered, decentralized, and impoverished rural communities into the country's socialist development agenda—at this time, the Nyerere government was in the midst of relocating about 5 million Tanzanians, many forcibly, into villages under Operation Vijiji—the seeds were also being sown for rural empowerment through the structure of village governments.

The Local Government Act of 1982 entrenched the powers of village governments by, among other things, enabling villages to make their own by-laws. These by-laws must not violate any other laws of the country, including by-laws passed at the district government level, but as long as they do not, they are legally binding and fully enforceable in courts of law. By-laws must be passed by both the Village Assembly, approving the proposed by-laws drafted by the Village Council or one of its subcommittees, as well as the District Council.

The village by-laws enabled by Tanzania's local government legislation provide communities with a potentially powerful tool for creating statutory land and natural resource management rules and procedures at the local level. In the mid-1990s, a few CBNRM practitioners began using village by-laws as a natural resource management and empowerment tool in parts of northern Tanzania. By-laws passed by communities address issues such as immigration and settlement rules within the village; resource-use regulations dealing with hunting, tree cutting, grazing, etc.; and the use of funds generated by the community from tourism and other resource uses.

A critical element of most village by-laws is using them to complement and enforce land-use plans, which zone village lands according to different spatial and temporal land and resource uses. A core aspect of land-use plans in much of northern Tanzania, for example, relates to zoning communal grazing lands, on the one hand, and agricultural or settlement areas allocated to individuals, on the other. Land-use plans and by-laws can also be used to legally entrench traditional grazing patterns using dry season reserves and livestock movements.

The implementation of land-use plans and village by-laws has now become a central component of CBNRM capacity-building and empowerment tools in Tanzania. For example, this process is now mandated in guidelines and regulations for CBNRM in both the wildlife and forestry sectors.

—Fred Nelson



Safari hunting in Loliondo

In addition to its recent popularity for tourism activities, Loliondo is one of the richest and most lucrative tourist hunting concessions in Tanzania. All of the village lands of Ololosokwan fall within the boundaries of the Loliondo hunting block. Tourist hunting in Tanzania is centrally controlled with little local input into quota-setting, block allocation, or management (Leader-Williams et al. 1996b). Revenues go to the central government with a proportion (approximately 20%) returned to the District Councils in areas where hunting occurs. Within this context of centrally controlled activities occurring on village lands, tourist hunting in Loliondo has been one of the most contentious natural resource management issues in the area for the past ten years.

In 1992–1993, the government granted a lease for the Loliondo hunting block concession that included Ololosokwan’s village lands. The village, despite possessing a title deed to the land, was thus suddenly faced with a foreign concession holder who had been granted rights to hunt on village lands.

Prior to 1992, the Loliondo Game Controlled Area was used by the Tanzania Wildlife Corporation for hunting and game cropping activities. In 1992–1993, a lease for the Loliondo hunting block concession

was granted by the government to a member of a royal family from the United Arab Emirates. The concession is held under the name of Ortello Business Corporation (OBC) and was originally granted for a ten-year period, but was revised in 2000 to run until the end of 2004. Although the majority of revenues flow to the central government, each of the six villages in the hunting block receives an annual cash payment of between 3,000,000 and 5,000,000Tshs.¹² (Tanzanian shillings) from OBC, as opposed to the government, as a form of benefit-sharing (Ndoinyo and Meitaya 2002).

The granting of the OBC hunting lease in Loliondo in 1992 immediately sparked national and international controversy, popularly known in Tanzania as “Loliondogate.” The crux of the matter was that the Loliondo villages, despite possessing title deeds, were suddenly faced with a foreign concession holder who had been granted rights to hunt on their lands.

The villages had not been consulted prior to the granting of the concession and viewed it as a significant incursion upon their land rights. OBC’s hunting activities have infringed upon their ability to practice conventional livestock

¹²Approximately \$3,000 and \$5,000 in U.S. dollars, respectively.

With its Tourist Hunting Regulations of 2000, the government attempted to give the hunting block concession exclusive rights to the land they had leased, essentially prohibiting tourism ventures within a hunting block or wildlife protected area outside of National Parks and Ngorongoro Conservation Area. In Ololosokwan, this translated into an attempt to shut down activities worth over \$55,000 per year to the village.



management activities and movements between seasonal pastures (Ndoinyo and Meitaya 2002). OBC has also built permanent structures on village lands without requisite authorization from village governments. Although the people in Ololosokwan have actively protested this hunting block allocation, they have not pursued any form of litigation.

In addition to the land tenure and livelihood problems posed by the OBC lease, these hunting activities provide the most direct threat to Ololosokwan's tourism revenues. Tourist hunting and nonconsumptive tourism activities conflict when conducted in the same place at the same time. They have conflicted in Loliondo as both parties are displeased with the presence of the other, and no formal efforts have been made to segregate these uses through zoning.

The central government has sought to prevent tourism activities in Loliondo in order to provide exclusive access to the village lands in the hunting block to OBC. Three years ago, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism released the Tourist Hunting Regulations of 2000, which prohibit "game viewing, photographic safari, walking safari or any wildlife based tourist safari within a hunting block or within any wildlife protected area" except for National Parks and Ngorongoro Conservation Area (MNRT 2000). These regulations essentially prohibit tourism ventures outside of National Parks in village lands such as Ololosokwan. Subsequently a number of tour operators in Loliondo and elsewhere in northern Tanzania were informed that their activities in village lands that overlap with hunting blocks were illegal and should cease henceforth (Nelson 2003; Kallonga et al. 2003a). In Ololosokwan, this has meant the attempt to foreclose on the village's tourism ventures, which are worth over \$55,000 per year to the community.¹³

¹³An important illustration of OBC's economic implications for the villages in the Loliondo hunting concession comes from Ololosokwan's neighbor, the village of Soit Sambu (refer to Figure 1). Soit Sambu is the central community in terms of OBC's hunting operations, and it is on this village's lands that the main infrastructure developments have taken place (construction of buildings, water off-take, airstrip). As a result of this concentrated, permanent activity by OBC in this village, Soit Sambu has no tourism ventures occurring on its lands comparable to Ololosokwan's and the other villages in western Loliondo, despite having wildlife populations and tourism potential similar to Ololosokwan.

Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and competing perspectives on community-based conservation

Another source of conflict impacting on Ololosokwan's local ventures is rooted, perversely, in community-based conservation itself, or at least how such concepts are interpreted by variant parties and interests. Tanzania's Wildlife Policy, released in 1998, advocates devolving managerial responsibility for wildlife to local communities and enabling these communities to capture economic benefits from the resource in order to create incentives for conservation.¹⁴ The policy's aim is for "rural communities and private land holders to manage wildlife on their land for their own benefit" (MNRT 1998).

Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are the policy's proposed administrative mechanism for accomplishing this objective. The policy intends for

communities to designate WMAs on their village lands in order to conserve wildlife and its habitats, and in turn that communities will be granted limited wildlife user rights from the government so that local people can manage and benefit from the resource (MNRT 1998).

More recently, the Ministry has released Wildlife Management Area Regulations, which provide WMAs with legal form and include detailed stipulations for their establishment and management (MNRT 2002). The regulations describe 15 pilot areas in the country where WMAs will be formed on a trial basis to evaluate their impact. One of these consists of six villages in Loliondo, including Ololosokwan (MNRT, 2002).

Although these regulations now provide the opportunity for communities to legally create WMAs, some Loliondo villages, such as Ololosokwan, resist doing so. One consideration is the content of the WMA Regulations. The regulations provide a complex framework of management for WMAs whereby villages will select and contribute land to form a WMA. A WMA will then be

Another source of conflict is rooted in community-based conservation itself. Although government regulations now allow communities to create Wildlife Management Areas, villages like Ololosokwan resist doing so because the regulations would force them to cede authority for tourism management to an external body, thus possibly reducing their revenues.

¹⁴Tanzania spent much of the decade of the 1990s reviewing and revising its wildlife management practices and policies. This was driven by the devastating loss of elephant and black rhino populations in the 1970s and 1980s, increasing conflicts between local communities and protected area managers, and shifts in thinking throughout East and Southern Africa at this time favoring more decentralized approaches to wildlife management (see Leader-Williams et al. 1996a).

managed by a representative organization that the communities will form. Once it has completed various prerequisite steps, such as preparing land-use plans, registering with the Tanzanian government, and preparing a management plan for the WMA, this representative “community-based organization” (CBO) will be granted limited user rights to wildlife living in the WMA.

Benefits from wildlife uses and investments in the WMAs will be controlled and managed by this CBO, not by the village governments. For villages such as Ololosokwan, this means ceding authority for tourism management and control of benefits to an external body, and possibly reducing its revenues. In addition, the regulations are complex and bureaucratic, and are vague in certain key sections such as relating to benefit-sharing of revenues in WMAs between the communities and the state (Kallonga et al. 2003b). The Director of Wildlife is given the authority to authorize all investments in WMAs, a power which has not existed, for example, thus far in the development of tourism in Ololosokwan.

But a more fundamental reason for opposition to the implementation of WMAs in Ololosokwan is rooted in the historical context and the villagers’ attitudes toward conservation based on their own experiences. WMAs are being promoted by a central authority, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, in concert with the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), an international conservation NGO that provides considerable financial and technical support to protected area management in Tanzania. FZS is also, however, an organization with a long history in the Serengeti and in working to create the National Park and evict the Maasai in 1959 (Adams and McShane 1992; Bonner 1993). This creates considerable suspicion on the part of local communities as to the nature and purpose of WMAs. A village leader of Ololosokwan explained his opposition to the proposal this way:

“The German organization, Frankfurt Zoological Society, has pushed the idea of WMA—they are the ones who grabbed Serengeti and Ngorongoro. Now they allege that they want to create a conservation area on behalf of the community. We the community of Ololosokwan reject this agenda and we will never accept it!” (KIHACHA 2002)



Local people in Ololosokwan, and throughout much of Loliondo, view WMAs as merely the latest in a long series of outside conservation efforts to displace them and appropriate their lands and resources. Such local perspectives are not unique to Loliondo; similar conflicts between communities and WMA formation have occurred in the Simanjiro District, adjacent to the Tarangire National Park, where the historical context of alienation and encroachment on village lands from conservation authorities is similar (Igoe and Brockington 1999). And near the western border of Serengeti National Park, the formation of WMAs has been used as a pretense for the violent eviction of a community of over 70 households from a “buffer zone” near the protected area boundary (LHRC 2003).

These conflicts are somewhat ironic in that they pit one form of ostensible community-based conservation, in the form of WMAs, against another—Ololosokwan’s village-based tourism enterprises. These enterprises are based on self-determined land-use plans and by-laws that they perceive reflect their interest and that represent a more genuine, community-based conservation strategy.

Whereas Ololosokwan’s existing tourism ventures are clearly subject to a high degree of local control, the regulations designed to implement WMAs give limited authority to local people, and may actually extend central control over tourism activities and other wildlife-based enterprises. Rather than building on the existing village governance and land tenure structure, WMAs attempt to create an entirely new institutional arrangement for local resource management (e.g., through creation of local representative CBOs that will hold wildlife user rights).

WMAs in Loliondo appear less like a devolutionary effort to support local resource management objectives, and more like a new manifestation of outside interests and conceptualizations of what communities *should* do to perpetuate centralized conservation practices.

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Ololosokwan provides an example, relatively rare in Tanzania, of a poor and marginalized rural community tapping into the economic opportunities created by new and growing forms of global commerce.

Part III: Lessons for community-based conservation from Ololosokwan

The critical success of Ololosokwan's experiences results from the development of substantial direct communal benefits gained from tourism activities occurring on village lands that are contractually controlled by the local community. The management and control of this wildlife-based income is fully devolved and subject to participatory management at the village level. Clear improvements in village approaches to natural resource management, such as the payment of village game scouts and formulation of village by-laws, have accompanied this benefit generation.

This important example of local benefits and opportunities from natural resource management has resulted from three key aspects of the local and national environment:

- The first results from the boom in tourism in Tanzania during the past decade due to liberalized economic policies at the national level and increasing demand for African tourism products.¹⁵ Ololosokwan thus provides an example, relatively rare in Tanzania, of a poor and marginalized rural community tapping into the economic opportunities created by new and growing forms of global commerce.
- The second aspect is the existence of clearly delineated village lands and a local governance structure in Tanzania that defines Village Councils as corporate bodies and provides for their accountability to the village community as a whole. Unlike many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa where "community" is a vague and legally undefined term and communal land rights are unclear,¹⁶ Tanzania provides a strong local institutional

¹⁵As an example of this increasing demand, the October 2003 *National Geographic Travel* magazine profiles Ololosokwan's tourism concession at Klein's Camp as one of the 120 greatest natural, cultural, and spiritual destinations in the world.

¹⁶For example Namibia, where the creation of conservancies for community wildlife management first requires a process of self-definition of communities to decide who is a member and who will participate in management, and even where this process is completed the conservancy does not possess exclusive land tenure rights to the demarcated area (Jones 1999).



The vision of community-based conservation promoted by the central government and other outside conservation interests, in the form of gazetted Wildlife Management Areas, is viewed by local people as almost as much of a threat as the safari hunting concession on their lands.

base for devolved natural resource management and proprietorship (Wily and Mbaya 2001).

- Finally, perhaps the most critical aspect of community-based conservation's progress in Ololosokwan has been the village's ability to defend its interests and maintain its valuable tourism enterprises despite major sustained challenges from outside interests, particularly the central government.¹⁷

This relationship between local interests and actors, on the one hand, and the centralized resource management interests of the state, on the other, is a central theme in the past, present, and future of wildlife conservation in Ololosokwan. Wildlife conservation interests have led to increasing central control of lands and resources in the Serengeti system for the past century, often at the expense of local people. The evictions of the Maasai from Serengeti National Park have created strong suspicions and hostility toward conservation interests among communities such as Ololosokwan.

These attitudes have been reinforced in recent years due to continuing clashes between locals and central authorities that revolve around wildlife and land use. The lease of Loliondo as a tourist hunting concession creates problems for local livelihoods and land-use practices, and directly threatens the community tourism revenues that have become the village's first major opportunity to benefit from wildlife resources on their lands. Rather than support local initiatives or promote wildlife's value as a form of village land use, central authorities have consistently worked to increase their own control of lands, resources, and revenues generated.

This trend extends to the development of community-based conservation itself; the vision of community-based conservation promoted by the central government and other outside conservation interests, in the form of gazetted Wildlife Management Areas, is viewed as almost as much of a threat by local people as is the safari hunting concession on their lands. A striking characteristic of natural resource management in Loliondo today are these competing visions of "community-based conservation," one

¹⁷But also the district government and a foreign private hunting operation.

The competing visions of “community-based conservation,” one promoted by outsiders and resisted by the villagers, and the other strongly supported locally but obstructed by outsiders, are striking. As yet, there is no broad and concerted effort among central or local governments or conservation organizations to support the local vision.



promoted by outsiders and resisted by the villagers, and the other strongly supported locally but obstructed by outsiders. There is, as yet, no broad and concerted effort among central or local governments or conservation organizations to support the local vision of what constitutes beneficial forms of natural resource management and conservation.

One of the most important lessons from Ololosokwan is the degree to which the community has succeeded during the past five years in defending and perpetuating its interests despite this nearly complete absence of outside support. There have been no significant donor projects or grants in support of the village’s tourism joint ventures.¹⁸ Rather, the principal donor-funded activities related to community-based conservation in Loliondo have focused on promoting the establishment of WMAs, which the communities themselves do not view as being in their interest and which has become a source of conflict and anxiety at the village level.

The only significant sources of support—more in terms of technical assistance and informal leadership rather than financial value—have come from a few local NGOs and advocacy groups.¹⁹ These groups have played an important role in providing the villagers with information on their legal rights and on external policy developments, and in building local management capacity such as through the preparation of village by-laws and land-use plans. It is notable that genuine support for community interests and wildlife-based benefit generation in Ololosokwan has come from local civil society activists that have traditionally been *opponents* of conservation initiatives.

What has enabled Ololosokwan to become Tanzania’s leading example of village-level wildlife-based income is the community’s skillful navigation of the adverse policy environment. It has been able to firmly control many of the resource uses on the village lands—with the notable exception of OBC’s

¹⁸Limited assistance, however, was provided for the development of the village’s campsite by both the Serengeti National Park’s management and by the African Wildlife Foundation, an international conservation organization.

¹⁹These include the Ujamaa-Community Resource Trust, Oxfam-Ngorongoro, and Pastoralist Women’s Council.

Rural communities have considerable political influence and power over natural resource management outcomes at the local level, even in a young and still weak democracy such as Tanzania's. Community-based conservation should ideally work to support local interests and initiatives to build capacity and increase local control.



safari hunting activities—despite considerable pressure from powerful foreign donors and central authorities.

This suggests that rural communities have considerable political influence and power, even in a young and still weak democracy such as Tanzania's, over natural resource management outcomes at the local level. Community-based conservation should ideally work to support these local interests and initiatives to build capacity and increase local control. This task, in Ololosokwan and much of northern Tanzania, is fundamentally a political one that aims to influence the distribution of power and authority in order to enable local people to create opportunities based on the value of their lands and natural resources. There is no more politicized issue in Loliondo than the management and control of natural resources, but there is also no more important element than that of creating incentives for locally sustainable resource management in the region.

Conclusion

Ololosokwan's experiences reflect both the considerable potential of community-based conservation as well as the substantial obstacles facing such livelihood and natural resource management approaches. Although wildlife-based benefits from new and growing market opportunities have developed quickly and local management capacity is gradually improving, obstacles to this progress have come from multifaceted conflicts between local and external interests.

Ultimately Ololosokwan is an example of the local potential and economic opportunities that community-based conservation must capitalize on, but which in this case have received little support from external interests or institutions. Formal community-based conservation initiatives in the form of Wildlife Management Areas represent a principal source of conflict and a challenge to the local agenda for wildlife conservation, tourism development, and land-use determinations. Central management authorities have not strengthened local capacity and authority, but rather are embarked on an

effort to weaken it and impose their vision for wildlife management in the area. Although the village has accomplished much as a result of its own leadership and political leverage, in the long run a more broadly supported vision for community-based conservation in Loliondo will need to take shape. This means new support for local objectives, initiatives, and strengthened resource rights, if locally based natural resource management practices are to be a sustainable contributor to livelihoods and conservation in this part of the Serengeti ecosystem.

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