



Politics and Perceptions of Participation in Nature Conservation Initiatives: a Qualitative Case Study in Talek, Kenya



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Amber Spierings – 931127790060

Supervisor: Robert Fletcher, PhD

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Abstract

In the past, various approaches have been taken to protect wildlife while enhancing human development in Kenya's Mara, and in southern and eastern Africa at large. In recent years, the conservancy model of private conservancies has emerged which has redefined the much discussed relationship between nature and humans. This thesis adopts a community-based perspective and focuses on the concept of participation in order to learn how private conservancies include participatory processes and take into account local communities' needs. This thesis conducts a qualitative case study on a conservancy in Kenya's Mara, called Olare Orok Conservancy. Drawing on semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and field notes and observations, this thesis investigates how participation is translated into practice, who is included and not, and how (lack of) participation in the conservancy affects participant's ability to improve their social and material wellbeing. Findings indicate that, despite a much used language of participation, the conservancy's management is dominated by male elites and most landowners and women are excluded from active participation in the conservancy's management and decision-making. At the same time, however, the conservancy is perceived as generating positive effects on participants social and material well-being, suggesting that optimization of participation can optimize these effects. Based on the results of this study, the final section makes recommendations for the conservancy in order to achieve this.

Table of content

Chapter 1. Introduction	5
Background and problem statement	5
Study objectives and research questions	7
Study area	7
Thesis structure	8
Chapter 2. Theoretical and conceptual framework	9
Participation in the development process	9
Participation: from the margins to mainstream development	9
Participation in natural resource management: from fortress to community conservation	10
Defining participation in the development process	12
Approaches to participation in development	12
Intensity of participation: participation typologies	13
‘Participatory exclusions’	15
Conclusion	15
Chapter 3. Research Methodology	17
Research design	17
Data collection and analysis	17
Limitations of research methods	18
Chapter 4. Translation of Participation into Practice	21
OOC’s efforts to include participation	21
Translation of participation in the management structure OOC	21
Participatory formats	24
Types of participation and the role of women	25
Nominal participation	25
Passive participation	25
Consultative participation	26
Activity-specific participation	26
Chapter 5. Perceptions of the Conservancy and Participation	27
Landowners’ perceptions of the conservancy	28
Lack of cooperation	28
Alienation from land	28
Tourism partners prioritized	29
Landowners’ perceptions of participation in the OOC	29
Barriers to participation	29

Facilitators of participation	31
Chapter 6. Discussion and Conclusion	35
Summary and implications of research findings	35
Discussion of results	37
Practical recommendations.....	39
Limitations and future research recommendations	39
References	41
Appendix 1.....	46
Appendix 2.....	47

Chapter 1. Introduction

Background and problem statement

Every year, thousands of tourists visit Kenya's Maasailand for one of the country's greatest natural assets: wildlife. The Mara, as the area is commonly referred to by locals, is internationally well-known for the Maasai Mara National Reserve (MMNR) as well as many wildlife conservation areas, which are home to exceptional wildlife populations. But also the culture and lifestyle of its ancestral inhabitants, the Maasai people, attracts many visitors to the area. Yet, some claim that Kenya's wildlife is in constant danger. Researchers have found that wildlife numbers in Kenya have declined, even coming to the conclusion that Kenya lost about 70% of its wildlife over the last 30 years (Ogutu et al., 2016). This is not only affecting Kenya's multibillion dollar tourism industry, predominantly built upon wildlife tourism, but also affects the livelihoods of many rural communities in the Mara, whom are already amongst the poorest in the country.

In the past, different approaches have been taken to protect wildlife in the Mara, and in southern and eastern Africa at large. Considerable debates have been taking place, which have mainly led to discussions on the relation between nature and humans. In practice, this has resulted in the raising of issues of how to deal with people living in and around nature areas where biodiversity is threatened (Büscher & Whande, 2007). Whereas people were mostly excluded from, and indeed often displaced by, nature areas for the greater part of the 20th century, since the 1980s conservation approaches often seem to aim for the complete opposite: creating politically feasible and ethically just conservation approaches (Adams and Hulme, 2001; Brockington, Duffy & Igoe, 2008; Hutton, Adams & Murombedzi, 2005; Van Wijk, Van der Duim, Lamers & Sumba, 2015). Conservation has seen the rise of a new language, emphasizing 'participation and devolution'. Consequently, various alternative conservation approaches have developed in which the participation of local communities, including through the formation of tourism initiatives, is seen as key to protect wildlife, while at the same time enhancing human development.

In addition to this increased preference for win-win solutions through conservation with development, nature conservation has seen a shift towards more market-based approaches more recently (Adams, 2004; van der Duim, 2011) in which private sector investments play a significant role. Various actors from the private sector often invest in large plots of land from governments or local communities for nature conservation. As observed by van der Duim et al. (2011, p. 3), this shift has led to the establishment of various "novel institutional arrangements" for tourism, conservation and development in

southern and eastern Africa, in which private sector, public sector and civic society actors collaborate. The goals of these institutional arrangements are threefold: “(a) developing an economically viable (tourism) business in order to generate sufficient benefit streams to (b) improve people’s livelihoods and (c) create a net positive contribution to conservation” (van der Duim, 2011, p. 3). It has been argued that, in these arrangements, the value of nature for tourism often becomes a means to derive a livelihood from private or communally-owned land (Brockington et al., 2008).

One of these ‘novel institutional arrangements’ that has spread rapidly around the Mara, and is often regarded a success, is the conservancy model. Wildlife conservancies can be defined as “land managed by either an individual landowner, a group of owners, or a body or corporate for the purposed of wildlife conservation and other compatible land uses to better livelihoods” (KWCA, 2018). The underlying assumption of this model is that through a process in which local communities are participating in, and at the same benefitting from, the management and conservation of wildlife on their land, greater support for conserving wildlife will be generated. The wildlife conservancy’s primary appeal as a ‘panacea’ for various environmental and social issues is thus that it can ostensibly promote wildlife conservation, generate income for local communities, as well as promote non-exploitative uses of natural resources. According to the Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association (KWCA, 2018), 15 conservancies protect more than 450,000 acres of animal habitat in Kenya’s Mara today. The KWCA moreover states that this has led to a doubling of the lion population, as well is benefitting about 3,000 households with \$4 million from tourism every year.

Others have, however, highlighted the other side of the coin. Several scholars found that it is actually only a small portion of wildlife revenues that contributes to local household incomes - a significant larger portion seems to benefit local elites and tourism investors (Homeland et al., 2012; Thompson et al., 2009). Bedelian (2012), comes to the same conclusion and explains that the uneven distribution of revenues is a result of the former subdivision of rangelands, which also tended to only benefit local elites. These studies have provided us with important insights into the economic advantages conservancies in the Mara (might) bring to local communities. However, as also acknowledged by Homeland et al. (2012), the social impacts of these conservancies remain to be researched.

In order to fill this gap in academic literature, this thesis conducts a social analysis on the performance of conservancies in the Mara. This thesis specifically focuses on people’s level of participation within the conservancies and how people themselves experience this. In order to do so, this thesis conducts a qualitative case study on one conservancy in the

Mara, called Olare Orok Conservancy (OOC). In this conservancy, individual landowners lease their plots of lands to a few tourism investors in order to form the wildlife conservancy. In return for setting aside their land for conservation, the individual landowners receive a direct monthly payment. This thesis aims to learn lessons on how to optimize local participation in conservation by investigating how participation is functioning in the OOC, taking an community-based perspective. I argue that this is an important initial step to creating more equitable and socially just conservancy models.

Study objectives and research questions

This thesis has several objectives, including investigating: 1) the levels and forms of participation in the conservancy model of the OOC; 2) landowner's perceptions of the conservancy and participation; and 3) how local participation is functioning in the conservancy in terms of enhancing landowner's livelihoods. This thesis has three main questions and seven sub research questions:

- How is participation translated into practice in the conservancy?
 - Is the management of the conservancy characterized by participation?
 - What local participation approach is taken by the conservancy?
 - Using Agarwal's participation typology (2001), what form of participation can be identified and what is the villager's level of participation?
 - What is the position of women within the conservancy?
- What is the villager's general perception of participation in the conservancy?
 - What is the villager's general perception of the conservancy?
 - What is the villager's perception of participation in the conservancy?
- How well does local participation function to support local people's ability to enhance their livelihoods?
 - In what ways are people (not) able to enhance their livelihoods by participating in the conservancy?

Study area

The wildlife conservation under investigation in this study, Olare Orok Conservancy (OOC), is located in Narok county in the Rift Valley province, Kenya. This south-western part of Kenya is also referred to as the Maasai Mara, or more briefly the Mara. Typically, the Mara has two rainy seasons, with the 'long rains' occurring from March to May and the 'short rains' lasting from October to December. Talek is the largest trading centre in the Mara and located south of the conservancy. This area is home to a community of Maasai people who are predominantly living a pastoral lifestyle and thus economically and culturally

heavily dependent on their cattle, sheep and goats. The study area has witnessed a rapid development of tourism, exemplified by the number of tourist facilities which has grown significantly over the last decade. As described by the Mara Conservancies (2018), fewer than 40 lodges were located in this area in 2004, but today this area is home to nearly 200 lodges. Even though Maasai have traditionally grazed their livestock in coexistence with wildlife, the rapid growth of tourism, combined with rapid growth of human and livestock populations and the increased privatization of land, has resulted in Maasai and wildlife 'competing' for space (Bedelian, 2012; Ogutu et al., 2016).

Thesis structure

This thesis continues with chapter 2 in which the theoretical framework is discussed. This chapter elaborates on the concept of participation, which plays a major role in this thesis. The third chapter outlines the methodology of this study, followed by chapter 4 focusing on ways in which participation is translated into practice in the OOC. In chapter 5 I focus on landowners' perceptions of participation in the conservancy, as well as ways in which participation in the OOC enables landowners to enhance their livelihoods. Finally, in chapter 6 I present a summary and discussion of the research findings.

Chapter 2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

Participation in the development process

The concept of local participation is a major focus of this thesis and it is therefore important to elaborate on the various theoretical approaches to local participation that exist in academic literature and how these theories will guide this thesis. This conceptual framework starts with a brief overview of the history of participation in development, followed by the definitions of participation, including differentiations on different approaches to and degrees of participation in development generally. Furthermore, this section elaborates on the role of participation in natural resource management specifically. Finally, the concept of livelihoods is discussed and defined to as this thesis also looks into the ways in which people are able to enhance their livelihoods by participating in the conservancy.

Participation: from the margins to mainstream development

Over the years, theoretical approaches to participation in development have repeatedly changed due to changing political climates and the development of new schools of thought (Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Guijt & Shah, 1998, Chambers, 1992). Participation has a long genealogy in development thinking and practice, but it is generally acknowledged that participation entered international development discourse in the 1970s. During this period of time, frustration rose over the dominant top-down approaches to development. It was realized that these approaches did not work as desired for those for whom the project's outcomes were originally designed, while criticism also grew concerning the heavy reliance on 'expert' knowledge under these approaches (Chambers, 1992; Guijt & Shah, 1998). In search for a solutions to these problems, development discourse started to shift from modernization thinking towards a systematic search for alternative and more locally sensitive approaches.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, participation continued to expand and deepen its role in development thinking and practice. This era witnessed many early experimentations and a proliferation of participatory methodologies, which focused on taking into account local communities' needs and respecting and including local knowledge. For example, radical thinkers, such as Freire (1970), promoted Participatory Action Research which advocates research in communities that emphasizes participation with communities and collaborative reflectivity. But also the international development institutions and agencies like the World Bank experimented with new approaches, such as the Basic Needs approach, which focuses on marginalized groups (World Bank Document, Basic Needs). The concept of participation

gained further momentum when it saw a resurgence in academic literature (Chambers, 1983, 1993; Oakley, 1991; Brohman, 1996). Most notably the work of Chambers (1983, 1993), in which he provided detailed analyses on Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal and argued for 'putting the last first', contributed considerably to the widespread acceptance of participatory approaches in development. By the mid-1980s, the concept of participation had become a persistent and popular theme in development thinking and practice. As described by Guijt and Shah (1998, p. 4), participation seemed to have become 'the new synonym for 'good' and 'sustainable'".

In the 1990s, however, criticism on the 'popular' use of participatory methods grew significantly. This critique mainly revolved around the mainstreaming of participatory methods in development, which led to an limited, instrumental view of participation which paid inadequate attention to wider political, social and economic dynamics (Cleaver, 1999); ignored the local power relations and inequalities (Mohan & Stokke, 2000); and led to the marginalizing of participation's underlying objectives of empowerment and liberation (Rahman, 1995). To illustrate, Cleaver (1999, p. 608) states that "participation has been translated into a managerial exercise based on 'toolboxes' of procedures and techniques, it has been 'domesticated' away from its radical roots." Nowadays, participatory approaches remain dominant in development today, but these critiques have made us aware that participation should be subject to greater critical analysis which should pay attention to the politics of the local. Seemingly participatory projects may still exclude significant groups such as women, as participation is shaped and determined by relations of power and gender (Agarwal, 2001). As a result, certain kinds of knowledge are often being excluded.

Participation in natural resource management: from fortress to community conservation
The general discussion on participation in development runs parallel to the debate about participation in natural resource management. For the greater part of the 20th century, the dominant strategy for nature conservation has been the use of protected areas from which people were excluded (Adams and Hulme, 2001; Brockington, Duffy & Igoe, 2008; Hutton, Adams & Murombedzi, 2005; van der Duim, Lamers & van Wijk, 2015). Protected areas are regions specifically set aside and managed primarily for nature and biodiversity conservation, exemplified by the creation of many National Parks and Game Reserves. This approach to nature conservation has commonly been referred to as 'fortress conservation' or the 'fences-and-fines' approach, as this approach was characterized by fairly top-down and state-dominated management. Often, physical fences were used to seal off the areas to be preserved, as well as arrests were carried out and fines were levied to those entering the protected areas (illegally).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the fortress conservation approach led to a troublesome relation between humans and nature conservation (van der Duim et al., 2015). Local people living in and around these protected areas were primarily regarded as a threat to biodiversity and were therefore separated from nature by the use of strict enforcement methods (Peluso, 1993). The theoretical justification for this approach was provided by the 'balance of nature' concept or the equilibrium theory, which assumes that ecosystems are inherently self-regulating and will eventually come back to a steady-state if not interrupted by any human activity (Forsyth et al., 1998; Wu and Loucks, 1995). Consequently, many people have been marginalized through physical, material and discursive dispossession (Matose, 2016). Not only did local communities have to physically leave the areas in which they had lived for generations, they were simultaneously materially dispossessed from the resources and cultural practices on which they were heavily dependent for their (economic) survival. Moreover, this act of separation deprived local people from having a say in nature conservation practices. Fortress conservation thus came at a price and has resulted in many conflicts over land access and ownership, as well as conflicts between conservationists and park-adjacent communities (Adams, 2004; Brockington & Igoe, 2006; van der Duim et al., 2015).

By the end of the 1970s, however, this fortress conservation approach came under heavy fire due to numerous reasons. First of all, some argued that protected areas were too small and fragmented to successfully protect wildlife (Adams, 2004). Secondly, critics of the fortress conservation paradigm pointed out the social wrongs of excluding people from their resources and argued that inclusion of local communities in conservation would actually lead to improved conservation (Adams & Hulme, 2001). Thirdly, strict protection of nature areas was very costly as it requires many financial, material and human resources. These resources were simply not sufficiently available to continue strict enforcement in many cases, especially in the context of developing countries (Songorwa, 1999). Moreover, at this time the international development climate was changing and started to give prominence to bottom-up participatory approaches in their development objectives, eventually leading to a shift in conservation thinking as well (Büscher and Dressler, 2007; Büscher & Whande, 2007). Finally, from the 1980s onwards a succession of many international conventions and agreements took place, putting the notion of 'sustainable development' on the political development agenda. This concept suggested that conservation programmes should achieve win-win solutions: protecting and improving the environment and human livelihoods. The notion of sustainable development thus initiated the idea of a fusion between conservation and human development (Mfune, 2012). As a result of the critiques on fortress conservation and the changing development climate,

new alternative approaches to conservation started to emerge, challenging the fortress conservation approach.

In search for a solution to these problems, alternative conservation approaches started to emerge from the 1980s onwards. These 'new conservation' approaches became commonly known in Africa and elsewhere as community-based conservation (Hulme & Murphree, 1999; Adams & Hulme, 2001). Based on the assumed relation between the two, these new conservation initiatives attempt to enhance both conservation of biodiversity and human development simultaneously. In order to achieve these combined objectives, community conservation aims to provide incentives for local people, such as economic benefits or increased ownership over an area. These incentives are thought to make people aware of the value of biodiversity, eventually resulting in their support for conserving it (Salafsky & Wollenberg, 2000; Campbell & Vainio-Mattila, 2003). Consequently, conservation has seen the rise of a new language, mainly encompassing 'participation and devolution' (Mfuni, 2012, p. 16), and in the context of natural resource management, devolving greater power to local communities is now widely accepted by governments, development institutions, and NGOs (Agarwal, 2001).

Defining participation in the development process

Despite such popular emphasis on the issue, there is no consensus on a definition of participation in development processes, as the concept seems to mean different things to different people. The meanings of participation is a rendition of the person defining it and the angle one takes to the research topic resulting in different views on how participation should be defined, what the objective of participation projects is, who should be involved in participatory projects, and how participation is to be brought about (Agarwal, 2001). Agarwal (2001, p. 1624) therefore defines participation as following: "at its narrowest participation in a group is defined in terms of nominal membership, and at its broadest in terms of a dynamic interactive process in which the disadvantaged have a voice and influence in decision-making". This thesis, however, proposes the definition of participation as an active process by which beneficiaries are able to influence the outcome of the project and simultaneously are able to enhance their wellbeing in terms of income and personal growth. Taking from this definition, this thesis argues that people do not only have to be actively involved in the decision-making process, but also have to be involved in the (economic) benefits of nature conservation.

Approaches to participation in development

One way in which local participation in development projects is often classified, is on the basis of the project's relationships with their intended beneficiaries (Barrow &

Murphree, 2001; Cleaver, 1999; Oakley, 1991; Wells & Brandon, 1992). Two main approaches to participation can be identified; the 'beneficiary approach' and the 'participatory approach', also referred to the means/end divide. The first approach, the beneficiary approach, is supported by the idea that participation is a necessary means for achieving better project outcomes. Projects with a beneficiary approach aim to achieve tangible social and economic benefits for local communities. In addition, they put considerable emphasis on ensuring that these associated benefits are experienced more broadly and fully in the local community (Garrod, 2003). Those on the receiving end of these projects have, however, often no role in generating these benefits.

The second approach is the participatory approach is supported by equity and empowerment arguments. Proponents of this approach argue that participation is a process facilitating the capability of people to improve their own lives. Contrary to projects taking the first approach, they go beyond simply generating tangible benefits for local people. Projects with a participatory orientation aim to actively include the local community in the decision-making process. When participation is indeed viewed as a participatory process, it can be defined as "the ability of local communities to influence the outcome of development projects such as ecotourism that have an impact on them" (Drake, 1991, p. 132). While the beneficiary and participatory approach to local participation have always coexisted, the currently dominant community development paradigm suggests a shift towards the participatory approach in nature conservation (Adams & Murphree, 2001).

Intensity of participation: participation typologies

Another way in which scholars have attempted to provide clarification on different meanings of participation is by differentiating between intensity of participation, i.e. different forms and degrees of participation. Developed in 1969 already, but still retaining considerable relevance (Cornwall, 2008) is the ladder of citizen participation by Arnstein. In her differentiation between different types of participation, Arnstein (1969) used those on the receiving end as a starting point of her analysis. According to her typology, participation ranges from 'non-participation' on the bottom, to 'tokenism' in the middle, and eventually to 'citizen control' on the top of the ladder. Each rung on the ladder corresponds with the level of power citizens have to influence or determine the end project – the further up the ladder, the higher the power to do so.

Contrary to Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation, Pretty (1995) focused on those using participation as a means (i.e. development organizations). Based on the different ways in which development organization perceive and use participation, he suggested a seven-group participation typology. This typology starts with the categories 'manipulative

participation' and 'passive participation', where people actually have no decision-making power; people are only being informed about decisions already taken; and participation is often nothing but pretense. Subsequently, Pretty moves to 'better' forms of participation (Cornwall, 2008), including participation by consultation, participation for material incentives and functional participation. Here, people participate for example by answering questions to external organizations or offering their labor. Still, people often only have a stake for inclusion on the short-term and their decision-making power is relatively limited or only serves the goals of the external organization. The final two categories are characterized by Pretty as 'interactive participation' and 'self-mobilization'. In interactive participation, people are actively involved in planning and implementation of projects, as well as have a certain level of control over local decisions and resource allocation. When people start taking initiative themselves and make decisions independently of external organization, Pretty speaks of self-mobilization.

Both Arnstein (1969) and Pretty (1995) have highlighted that it is impossible to use the concept of participation without any further clarification on what participation entails for those affected by it and those using participatory approaches. Moreover, both the participation ladder and typology move from relatively 'bad' forms of participation to 'better' forms of participation. The participation typology put forward by White (1996), however, does this less so. White's typology is "used less a ladder and more as a way of working out how people make use of participation" (Cornwall, 2008, p. 271). She identified four forms of participation, characterized by White as 'nominal', 'instrumental', 'representative' and 'transformative'. Moreover, she has identified the corresponding function of participation and the different interests for both those using the participatory approaches and those affected by it, for each four. The emphasis on these different interest, highlights White's argument that participation is political in essence, as "there are always tensions underlying issues such as who is involved, how, and on whose terms" (White, 1996, p. 6). Her typology provides a useful tool for identifying these questions and thereby moving away from non-political understandings of participation.

Building further on these aforementioned typologies, Agarwal (2001) developed a typology taking people's activeness as a point of departure. Moreover, Agarwal argues that collective participation is increasingly the norm and she therefore focuses on local communities at the receiving end of projects instead of people as individuals. Agarwal's typology includes six levels of participation. She starts with 'nominal' and 'passive participation', where people are simply members or passively contribute by attending meetings, to forms of participation with levels of people's activeness. Agarwal then moves to more active forms of participation, including 'consultative', 'activity-specific' and 'active participation'. The

final form of participation, described as 'interactive (empowering) participation', is characterized by people having a voice and power to influence certain decisions. Contrary to Pretty (1994), Agarwal (2001) does not include self-mobilization in her typology, as she argues that "in fact not all self-initiation need signify participatory success of the overall program" (p. 1625). She explains that people might, for example, start taking initiatives independently from external organizations and start their own group, because they were not satisfied with or disadvantaged in the already established group.

'Participatory exclusions'

These aforementioned different types of participation have received a reflexive critique. Seemingly democratic, devolved and participatory development initiatives, even when interactive, still run the potential for excluding significant sections of a community, such as women or the poor. Agarwal (2001, p. 1623), refers to this phenomenon as "participatory exclusions". She argues that participation is determined by underlying systemic factors, influencing once socioeconomic status and power in a society. Agarwal found that these factors include certain social rules, norms and perceptions that exist in a society or community. For example, rules on entering an initiative, i.e. membership criteria, but also for example standards that exist in a society on how men and women are supposed to behave in public, who is allowed to attend and speak up during meetings. Also endowments and attributes of participants influence participatory processes. This could for example refer to potential participants' educational levels, age, or position in a hierarchical structure, e.g. class. At the same time, it has been demonstrated that the role of meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes of conservation initiatives favourably affects the overall success of the initiative in terms of equity and efficiency. It is therefore critical to consider in this thesis what these 'participatory exclusions' are in the case under investigation.

Conclusion

The uncritical nature with which participatory approaches in development generally, and in natural resource management in developing countries specifically, was initially welcomed, has given way to more measured evaluations. It has become clear that the concept of participation cannot be discussed without further clarification on what participation entails for those affected by it. While the beneficiary and participatory approach to local participation have always coexisted, the currently dominant community development paradigm suggests a shift towards the participatory approach in nature conservation (Adams & Murphree, 2001). This thesis defines participation in nature conservancies as an active process by which beneficiaries are able to influence the outcome of the project and simultaneously are able to enhance their wellbeing in terms of income

and personal growth. Taking from this definition, this thesis argues that people do not only have to be actively involved in the decision-making process, but also have to be involved in the (economic) benefits of nature conservation.

Participation typologies provide us with the tools to gain more detailed insights into what form participation takes in development projects. In order to gain these insights for wildlife conservancies in Kenya's Maasailand, this thesis applies the typology of Agarwal (2001), as Agarwal, similar to this thesis, focuses on those at the receiving end of the projects as well as those that are systemically excluded. Also, she acknowledges that self-mobilization is not necessarily an indication of the good performance of the project. As this thesis, among other things, aims to investigate how well nature conservancies function to support the ability for people to improve their livelihoods, including self-mobilization as a final category will not help in doing so.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

In this section, a short description of the study area is described, followed by the nature of this research, the structure of methods that were used for data collection and data analysis. Qualitative methods were used in this study, such as observation and semi-structured interviews and open-ended coding. These will be elaborately described in the following section.

Research design

The aim of this thesis is to understand people's levels of participation within the OOC and how people themselves experiences this. Therefore, a qualitative single case study has been conducted. While case studies have been criticized for lacking external validity and lacking the basis for making statistically valid generalizations, they have been argued to achieve great internal validity (de Vaus, 2001; Yin, 2003). The meaning of local participation is argued to be context depended – its conceptualization depends on the context and the people within it (Pretty, 1995; Cornwall, 2008). A case study design allowed me to conduct an in-depth analysis of people's experiences in their real-life context; helped to find out the 'why' and 'how' of these participation processes; and allowed me to investigate this topic in the Mara in more detail in relatively limited time (Yin, 2003).

Data collection and analysis

Fieldwork for this study was carried out in March and April 2018 in and around Talek, Kenya. Upon arrival, I got acquainted with the research area by making general observations and ethnographic fieldnotes. During this phase of data collection, I also introduced myself to village officials. Taking local customs into account, it was important to first visit the village chiefs and ask for permission to interview people before continuing with collecting further data. After the initial contact was made, I made use of snowball purposive sampling to gather more research participants. Even though snowball sampling is criticized for being subject to possible bias, it was the most appropriate sampling strategy for this research as it was not clear from the start on for me who was included in the conservancy and who not.

In total, I conducted 24 individual semi-structured interviews with key representatives of OOC, including conservancy managers, community liaison officers, landowners, tourism partners and organizations (Appendix 1; Appendix 2). Conducting semi-structured

interviews was most appropriate for this study as it allowed the me to ensure that the main questions were asked while, at the same time, it provided both the me and the interviewees with a fair degree of freedom in what to talk about or how to express it, thus providing me with an in-depth insight into understandings and meanings of participation (Gillham, 2000; Ritchie et al., 2013). I used the assistance of a Maa interpreter for interviews with landowners, which were held in Maa, whereas interviews with other key informants were generally held in English. The length of the interviews ranged from 1 to 3 hours, also depending on whether the Maa interpreter had to translate the research questions for the interviewees, which generally took longer than an interview in English. The interview protocol consisted of questions regarding the establishment of the conservancy, the partnership model within the OOC land lease programme, formal and informal rules for participation, the distribution of revenues, the impact of the conservancy on nature conservation and community livelihoods and future challenges for the conservancy. I audio-recorded the interviews, after which they were transcribed semi-verbatim. Open-ended coding was used to find notable commonalities and differences in the perspectives of the interviewees. Since anonymity was guaranteed to all interviewees, a coding system is used to refer to interviewees. KII refers to key informant interviews (Appendix 1) and CI is refers to community interviews (Appendix 2).

Additional data was collected through the use of 16 unstructured interviews and field observations. These unstructured interviews took place in informal settings, such as during safaris, dinner or on a market day. As I tried to be part of the community as much as possible during her fieldwork, valuable information was sometimes given in rather informal settings. Notes were written down as extensively as possible within 24 hours after these conversations. The field observation included simple observations, a sort of looking around in 'real life'. I made use of her senses to examine the physical spaces in which people lived, worked and interacted. Daily ethnographic fieldnotes were taken to document these observations. Both the notes of the unstructured interviews and the ethnographic fieldnotes were used to compliment the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews.

Limitations of research methods

The chosen research methods for this study have a number of limitations. First of all, it is important to discuss my role as a researcher in interpreting the perceptions of research participants. This research focuses on measuring the perceptions of local landowners on the concept participation. The researcher does not have, however, any knowledge of the local language spoken in Talek, Maa. I used a local interpreter during interviews when the interviewee did not speak or was not fluent in English. Still, I am limited in being able to

interpret the answers of the interviewees and the translation the interpreter gave on the spot. Especially since semi-structured interviews are utilized as the main research method, the interpreter has to be able to translate the researcher's questions on the spot. Semi-structured interviews were believed to be the most suitable method as this method provides both the researcher and the interviewee with a degree of freedom to discuss topics other than on the interview guide. On the other hand, a more structured interview guide would have provided the local interpreter the chance to better prepare the translations of certain questions and would have guaranteed a certain degree of consistency in the translation of questions. It was up to the researcher to weigh the pros and cons and freedom of discussing topics other than on the interview guide was valued higher than consistency in translation by using a structured interview guide.

Secondly, sampling bias is a limitation of the chosen sampling method. The first persons I approached in this research can be seen as the gatekeepers of information. They were in the position of referring me to certain persons or not. Drawing on a personal example, it becomes clear that it is important to be aware of this limitation at all times. I asked a key informant if he perhaps had some contacts that would be interesting for me to interview and learn from. I received contact details of numerous male landowners. Prior to my question for more contact details, we had an interesting conversation in which the key informant assured me that women were also actively involved in the conservancy. I therefore asked him to also share some contact details of female landowners or committee members, as I explained him that this would be valuable for my research. He looked in his little booklet, wrote down a name of a female committee member, followed by the first two numbers of her telephone number, and then told me that he did not have her phone number unfortunately. For me personally, it felt like he was not willing to share this information with me, perhaps afraid that the woman would tell me the situation is different than he described. At a later stage in my research I was, fortunately, able to come into contact with women through other people that were willing to share contact details. It made me realize that using snowball sampling runs to risk of generating a research sample that is actually a subgroup within a sample. Close contact with many community members and regularly checking with them whether I was on the right track supported me in decreasing this risk.

Finally, even though I made an effort to become part of the community as much as possible, it is important to note that I was in the field for only a relative short amount of time (two months). In addition, these two months were during rainy season. Topics that are discussed during the interviews are influenced by the weather – of which grazing is the most obvious example. Grazing conflicts, even though still present, were perhaps not as

prevalent during my field visit as would have been during a dry season. People's perceptions of certain issues discussed during the interviews could have been different in an other time of the year. If limited resources, such as time and money, would not have been as much of an issue, I would have been interested to do the same research in a period that includes both a rainy and dry season.

Chapter 4. Translation of Participation into Practice

The first section of this chapter focuses on how the OOC attempts to include participation in practice, in terms of the management structure and the platforms it provides to realize participation. The second section of this chapter will dedicate itself to the different forms or types of participation within the OOC, also looking at the role and position of women within the conservancy.

OOC's efforts to include participation

Translation of participation in the management structure OOC

Key informants of the conservancy described how the conservancy is subdivided into different committees, and how this structure of management is allowing for members to participate in the management and decision-making of the conservancy (KII, 1, 2, 3, 5). In addition, based on field observations and community interviews, it became clear that this management design is characterized by a strong hierarchical division between the different bodies. Figure (1) presents the different committees and/or management bodies of the OOC in hierarchical order. The conservancy consists of the following groups: (1) tourism partners; (2) land committee; (3) managers; (4) rangers; (5) grazing committee; (6) community liaisons officer; and (7) landowners.

The tourism partners are perceived as the backbone of this conservancy model, as they are the main investors of the conservancy. Being the financial core of the partnership gives the tourism partners certain leverage over other partners in the management and decision-making of the conservancy. As noticed by a member landowner: "financial power comes with a great deal of political power" (CI 17). The tourism partners are part of the board of the conservancy. Their tasks and responsibilities include paying the rent to the landowners and hiring management staff.

The board positions of the OOC are shared with the land committee. This committee consists of the representatives of the land holding company of the landowners, Olare Orok Wildlife Conservancy Ltd. Each lease contract of the landowners is held under this non-profit company. Within the partnership, this land committee is responsible for directing the policies of the conservancy. At the same time, however, as revealed by the community interviews, this land committee is still largely dependent on the tourism partners in decision-making.

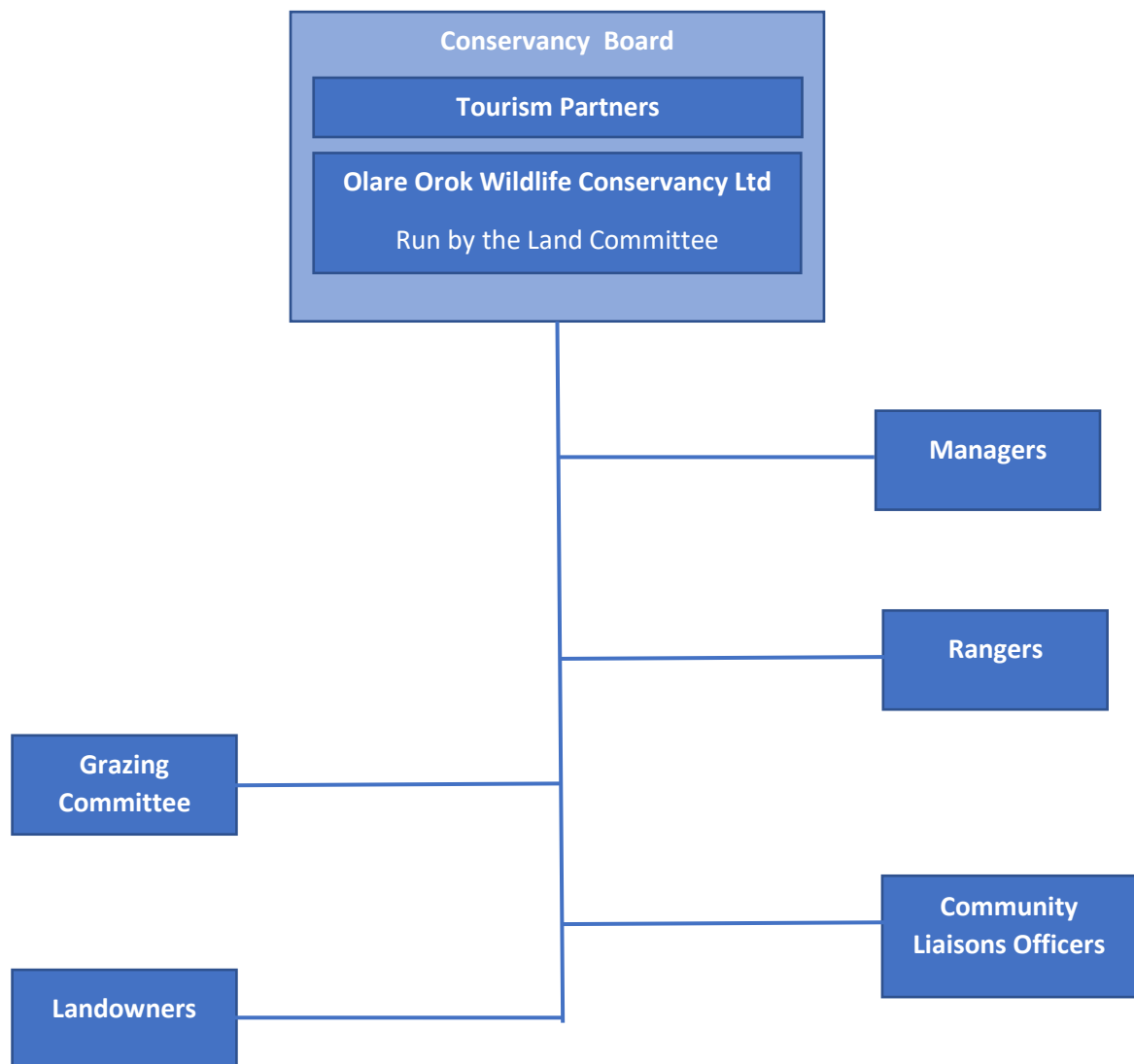


Figure 1. Hierarchical map of groups involved in the OOC

The managers of the conservancy are hired by the board of directors and are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day activities within the conservancy. They are largely accountable to the board of the OOC. The rangers simply have to execute everything that is implemented and determined by the management of the OOC.

Another interesting body within the management structure of the OOC is the grazing committee. As the name perhaps already suggests, this committee monitors and enforces the grazing policy of the conservancy. As revealed in interview with a key informant:

“the integration of grazing of livestock in the conservancy is based on the belief that cattle is an important component of the culture and livelihood of the Maasai people. Also, for the entire ecosystem in the Mara the grazing of cattle is super important. At the same time, different land uses within the conservancy, such as tourism, wildlife conservation and livestock production, are conflicting. A grazing committee is therefore formed to make sure that a rotational grazing system is used and grazing happens in a controlled way” (KII 2).

Community interviews, however, revealed that the grazing committee in the OOC is rather a messenger body: “the committee cannot do much to change the grazing policy, but just have to make sure that policy determined by the management is implemented and communicated to all the landowners” (CI 13).

The community liaisons officer of the conservancy liaises between the landowners and the management of the conservancy. The officer acts as a contact point and is located in a physical office in the village of Talek (field observations). The community liaisons officer is an important gatekeeper in the process of getting any complaints from landowners to management of the conservancy as is demonstrated by the following example taken from fieldnotes:

When asking a landowner of OOC about whether he feels involved in decision-making in the conservancy, he starts to laugh cynically: “no not at all”, he answers. “If we have a complaint, we can go to the community liaisons officers and he is supposed to go to the board of directors with this complaint. But it seems like the complaints are only piling up in his office.” He starts laughing cynically again and jokingly continues: “and we don’t know when this pile will burst!” (Field notes, 26.03.18).

The majority of the people included in the conservancy are general member landowners. They lease their land to the conservancy, but are not part of any committee. The landowners are subject to the policies of the conservancy. An annual general meeting is the format through which landowners have the opportunity to voice their opinion and concerns. Moreover, member landowners should be able to ‘elect’ committee members. Experience, however, shows that members are not elected, but rather appointed by members in higher positions. Re-elections have not taken place since the establishment of the conservancy. The same people are in the same positions since the establishment of the conservancy (CII 5, 8, 17).

Participatory formats

Meetings are the main participatory format used in the OOC and hold the potential for a certain degree of collective action. The meetings are a way of bringing together the aforementioned different groups involved in the OOC, such as the tourism partners, landowners and the management. Meetings provide the opportunity to supply information to conservancy members present, and to discuss and deal with current conservancy related issues. By doing so, the meetings not only serve the purpose of communication within the conservancy, but also provides a platform for landowners to raise their voice.

The majority of the landowners interviewed indicated that the Annual General Meeting (AGM) was especially important to them, as this provided them the chance to express their opinions, concerns and raise questions (community interviews). This yearly meeting is the only moment in the year when all different groups involved in the conservancy come together. As indicated in the interviews, the tourism partners usually never talk to the landowners, so the AGM is the one time per year that the landowners and the tourism partners sit together in one room. Topics most discussed during this meetings are the grazing policies and the lease payments (KII 1, 2; CI 2, 15). Even though landowners have pointed out that they are satisfied that the AGM provides them the opportunity to talk to people in higher ranks within the conservancy and raise any concerns to them, when asked whether they felt like action is taken after the AGM, the majority responded negatively.

Also the setup of these meetings reflect the strong hierarchy within the conservancy. Data from community interviews revealed that the management is usually sitting behind a large table in front of the rest of the conservancy members. Even though key informants indicated that "everyone is welcome, men and women" (KII 2, 4), experience of general conservancy members shows that the vast majority attending the AGM is men.

The board of the conservancy has indicated to meet 4 times per year with the board only. The grazing committee tends to meet every two to three months, but ad hoc meetings are also very common (CI 5, 6). Member landowners, however, have expressed their concerns in interviews about having too little information on what is going on in the conservancy, due to inadequate communication and a lack of meetings in which they can be present. Practical difficulties in bringing a large group of people together, such as costs and dispersion of members, have been indicated as the reason why meetings including member landowners only take place once a year.

Types of participation and the role of women

This section looks into the different ways in which people are participating in the OOC. As the community of conservancy members is very diverse and consists of people in different positions, analysing different participation types provides more detailed insights on what way people are participating. Agarwal's (2001) participation typology is applied to do so.

Nominal participation

One of the fundamental membership criteria of the OOC is that members should own land within the conservancy's boundaries. The majority of the people that do so and have decided to sign a contract to be included in the partnership, fall under the category of nominal participation. They are simply members of the OOC, receive their monthly lease payment, and have the option to attend the AGM, but beyond that have no actual role in conservancy management and decision-making.

Overall representation of women in the OOC is low. With some exceptions, most women are not even nominal members. It has been estimated that only one to two percent of the landowners in the conservancy is female, usually widowed women (KII 2). As the total of landowners included in the OOC is 157, this comes down to one to three women out of 157 landowners in total. Several people have indicated that this is due to the Maasai tradition of women not owning any property (CI 7, 10, 12, 17). Traditionally, land is registered to men and as mentioned previously, owning land is a fundamental membership criterion.

Passive participation

Landowners who are not members of any committee nor hold another management position within the OOC have indicated that a lack of communication with them has resulted in them being informed about conservancy related decisions only after they have already been made. Characteristic responses are:

"I do attend every annual meeting, but I know that I do not have the power to bring anything to the table. They just inform us about what is coming the next year" (CI 3).

"Our cattle is struggling, they are hungry and do not have enough place to graze. The grazing committee knows this, but does not do enough about it. Instead, they just keep informing us about new grazing schedules and already existing protocols, without taking our points into account" (CI 9).

The majority of the women are not even nominal members of the OOC and tend to know very little about decisions made within the conservancy. A few women have indicated in interviews being able to obtain some information through her husband. Also, since two years, four women are, at least on paper, part of the land committee. Even the women who are committee members and attend committee meetings and general meetings, responded negatively to the questions about whether they can speak up in these meetings. A female committee member explains:

I do attend all meetings, but it is hard to be taken seriously in a group of Maasai men". When I ask her if she feels free to speak-up, she responds: "I am free to speak up, but I hardly do it. It is getting better though. When I had just joined the committee I was too shy to even say anything" (CI 7).

Consultative participation

Despite the absence of many landowners from decision-making, grazing committee members are consulted by those that are in decision-making positions. Grazing is a hugely debated topic in the dry rangelands of the Mara as grass for grazing of cattle is scarce, especially during dry season. The management sometimes consults the grazing committee to get informed about which zones within the conservancy are best to allow cattle to graze (KII 4). Even so, the ultimate decision lies in the hands of the management and grazing committee members' views are only considered as advise (KII 2). Just as the vast majority of landowners, grazing committee members are not party to most decisions.

Activity-specific participation

Women's representation in formal positions of the OOC is typically low, however, there is an example of an activity with high female presence. After it was realized that women are largely uninformed about what is going on within the conservancy, the OOC set up a community outreach group for women. In total, eight women's groups have been established by now and they have weekly meetings. The outreach programme aims to increase women's financial stability, improve their skills and give them more voice. The trust of the conservancy provides the groups with materials, trainings and a platform to sell their products. Every individual group has formed a micro-savings group and a share of the sales are reinvested a system of loans. Even though women have responded positively towards the community outreach programme in interviews (CI 7, 17), it does not directly contribute to their involvement in formal decision-making concerning the conservancy.

Chapter 5. Perceptions of the Conservancy and Participation

This chapter presents the general perceptions of conservancy landowners of the participation in the conservancy. Whereas the previous chapter looked into how the conservancy attempts to translate participation into practice, this chapter focuses on landowner's experiences and perceptions of participation. Table 1 provides an overview of the major results of the open coding analysis of community interviews. The table shows the general conservancy perceptions and participation perceptions, subdivided in the themes 'general perceptions', 'barriers' and 'facilitators'. In addition, six major categories are shown, followed by associated concepts emerging from the analysis. Results are discussed in the order presented in the table and supported by quotations from data that were assessed.

Table 1

General Perceptions of Conservancy and Participation

	<i>Major categories</i>	<i>Associated concepts</i>
General perceptions	<i>Lack of cooperation</i>	<i>No cooperation with MMNR/conservancies, fragmentated management, fencing of land, blocking wildlife corridors, mismanagement.</i>
	<i>Alienation from land</i>	<i>No access to resource, land as Maasai's identity.</i>
	<i>Tourism partners prioritized</i>	<i>Conservancy works good for investors, lopsided distribution of benefits.</i>
	<i>Lack of trust</i>	<i>Corruption, absence of elections.</i>
Barriers	<i>Lack of transparency</i>	<i>No insights in decision-making, lack of understanding, no access to budget distribution, unaware of contract's terms and conditions, barrier to speak up and involvement.</i>
Facilitator	<i>Access to resources</i>	<i>Lease payments, loans, payment on time, not enough, welcome payment, development of Talek, school, health.</i>

Landowners' perceptions of the conservancy

Two categories have been found in interviews relating to landowner's general perception of the OOC, including 'lack of cooperation' and 'lack of trust', which are discussed in the following section.

Lack of cooperation

The category 'lack of cooperation' refers to the view of landowners that they are not involved in conservancy related communication, as also elaborately discussed in Chapter 4. This category, however, also goes beyond cooperation within the conservancy. Landowners have indicated to be dissatisfied with the cooperation between different conservations and the national park. The following example represent a common response:

"There is no cooperation between the park and the conservancies at this moment. That is necessary, because animals migrate. And these migration ways are now blocked by the fences that people use. The speed of change with the fencing is really high. People are now fencing their land with trees and even with electricity, which is super dangerous for wildlife. But you know, they have to protect themselves. It is because people are restricted to let their cattle graze in the park. No grazing means that the grass is very high. And animals like zebra will move to the communities and the predators like lions will follow them and come to the communities" (CI 13).

As commented by a landowner: "the fencing can be interpreted as sign of mismanagement of the conservancy and the park" (CI 3). Fencing of private land is a trend that is currently developing rapidly in the Mara (field observations). Many parts of the Mara are now subdivided by fences. Fenced off land is used a reserve for dry season. Especially families with fewer livestock are trying to protect the relatively small plot of land they have by using natural tree fencing. Richer households often use electric fencing. Even though fencing of private plots is prohibited in the OOC, trends and developments outside the OOC do influence wildlife and humans within the conservancy.

Alienation from land

Another common theme that often reoccurred in interviews when talking about landowners' perceptions of the conservancy, is the feeling to be alienated from land: "I cannot even go in there and check how my land is doing" (CI 9). Now that land is leased out for the protection of wildlife, landowners cannot access their plots. A explained by a landowner:

“We are Maasai, we are pastoralist. Our cattle and land are part of our culture and our identity. It seems as if they do not understand that this is important to us. Wildlife seems to be prioritized above humans” (CI 13).

Even though landowners have temporarily leased out their land, they perceive it as their personal resource from which the OOC is alienating them.

Tourism partners prioritized

There is a shared view by landowners that the current partnership prioritizes the needs of the tourism partners, as well as that the larger part of financial benefits ends up with the tourism partners. There is a shared perception that the design of the partnership is working in favour of the tourism partner of the OOC:

“The conservancy is currently working good for the investors, but the challenge is how to make it work good for the landowners” (CI 14).

Interestingly, tourism partners have a completely different perception. In interviews, they have indicated that it is actual they who carry to burden in the partnership established. They refer to the fact that monthly lease payments are fixed and do not depend on the number of tourists visiting the conservancy. If tourist numbers decline, tourism partners still have to pay the lease. In addition, they stressed out that all facilities in Talek are made possible by the presence of ecotourism and the investments of tourism partners in the area:

“The problem is that the landowners do not see what we invest in. Everything you see here, the schools, the health centre and the water tank, would not have been here is it was not for the tourism camps in the conservancy” (KII 7).

Landowners’ perceptions of participation in the OOC

Barriers to participation

Interestingly, when discussing participation in community interviews, landowners often talk about participation in terms of barriers to participation. This theme can be described as comprising factors that keep conservancy members from participating in the conservancy. This may apply to people or situations that discourage people to participate. Two major categories are found to be related to this theme: lack of trust’ and ‘lack of transparency’.

Lack of trust

The first category, 'lack of trust', refers to the view supported by many landowners who do not trust the management of the OOC. Concepts associated with this category include 'absence of democracy' and 'corruption'. Landowners have indicated that, since the establishment of the OOC, the same people have been in managing positions. Also, landowners have never been able to vote for leaders, rather the leaders have been self-assigned or appointed by others with relative high power in the OOC's management and decision-making. In addition, re-elections have not taken place since the establishment of the OOC in 2006. So despite the language of democracy used by the OOC's leaders, experiences of landowners proves the opposite. Promises are simply not fulfilled, leading to a lack of trust among landowners. Characteristic responses include:

"I do not trust our leaders, because there is a lot of corruption! How can it be that [personal name] has been in the same position since the start of Olare Orok?! (CI 15).

"I know that money has been made available for the compensation of human-wildlife conflicts. For example, when a lion attacks someone's cattle, this person should be eligible for financial compensation for the loss of his cattle, and they hope that the Maasai then don not kill the lion. But in OOC I do not know anyone that has ever been eligible for this compensation. And we all have an idea where the money went to" (Landowner and NGO representative (CI 11).

Lack of transparency

The second related category falling under the theme 'barriers to participation' is found to be 'lack of transparency'. Landowners have indicated to experience a lack of business transparency. A situation often described in interviews is the signing of the contracts when setting up OOC in 2006. Many have pointed out that the vast majority of landowners did not know what was in the contract and thus did not know what they exactly signed for. One landowner responded: "they just wanted my finger, that is all" (CI 16) to indicate that he was not informed about the terms and conditions in the contract, but those present wanted him to sign the contract. It is important to note that the majority of the community is illiterate and is therefore dependent on those who can read and write for explanation. The following response vividly explains:

"There must be more transparency. You know, with the signing of the contracts, people did not even know what they signed up for. People did not even get a copy of the contract. I personally took 2 days to read the contract, they wanted me to sign immediately, but I wanted to take my time. I also hired a lawyer and paid 2000 KSH

for an interpretation of the contract. I also luckily made a photo copy of the contract. Most people don't even know what the contract says, they cannot read. And they do not have a copy of the contract. People that ask for one do not get any response. The interpreter that was available for landowners the day of signing is biased of course" (CI 14).

Besides the signing of the contracts, lack of transparency also refers to other policies and rules of the conservancy. Landowners have indicated they would like to get more detailed insights into how the conservancy's budget is distributed. Also decision-making on grazing policies has been pointed out as a grey zone for which more transparency is needed on the process of how policies are determined and applied. As rightfully commented by a landowner: "we can only voice our concern or ask questions about things we actually know" (CI 8). This indicates once again the importance of transparency for landowners to be able to actively participate in the OOC.

Interesting to mention is that a lack of transparency within the conservancy has also been identified by many landowners to be the reason to not be willing to sign again after the lease agreement is expired. Many landowners pointed out that transparency has to be improved massively for them to be willing to sign a second time, greatly affecting the future of the conservancy.

Facilitators of participation

In addition to the barriers to participation, landowners have also indicated facilitators of participation. Facilitators can be described as factors that enable participation. The major category related to this is the facilitator 'access to resources'.

Access to resources

Access to financial capital has been described by landowners as the main facilitator for participation. Often, the monthly lease payments were described as money that was a very welcome addition to their income. As described by a landowner: "Although the payment is a very small amount, it does help. My kids can go to school now. It is the main reason for me to participate in Olare Orok" (CI 5). Besides the monthly lease payments, the OOC also provides opportunities to take out small loans.

Various income generating activities exist in the wider Mara (Thompson et al., 2009). All activities are related to either livestock, agriculture, conservation or off-farm activities. For the community of Talek, however, options are more limited. As Talek is surrounded by wildlife habitat, agricultural related activities such as cultivation are discouraged by wildlife damage. Most of the community members are pastoralist and livestock related activities

are the main way to generate income for most of the households. The establishment of the OOC has, however, provided members the chance to generate extra income, as well as diversify their income (community interviews). Landowners have pointed out that conservation income first and foremost contributes to basic needs, as well as children's education for a few.

Even though the exact amount of the lease payments is depending on the size of the landowner's plot within the OOC, for the majority of the landowners conservation income is not enough to sustain their livelihoods. A member landowner indicated: "do not get me wrong, the additional income is very welcome in this area, but not enough to provide us with the basic needs" (CI 8). On average, landowners receive a fixed monthly lease payment of 179 USD¹ per month (Box 1). It has however been indicated in interviews that parcel sizes vary greatly among landowners and this estimation should therefore be treated with caution. Many people have much smaller parcels than 63 hectares and only few have parcels larger than 63 hectares (KII 5; CI 11, 15).

The stability of this relatively small conservation income is highly appreciated by the landowners. To revise, lease payments are fixed and therefore not depending on incoming tourist numbers. Landowners have indicated that the stable nature of the payment has made it easier for them to cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, such as extreme dry seasons and low tourism seasons. A local government representative explains how past experiences have led to fixed payments:

"A few years ago, tourism was basically non existing in the Mara due to political issues. The political uprisings after the elections of 2007 led to an economic and humanitarian crisis. What we saw then was people were suffering in this area. Tourists did not want to come anymore and people, therefore, could not generate income anymore from tourism. We did not want to this to happen again. The structure of the payment in the OOC is design in such a way to prevent this. If anything happens again to tourism, at least the landowners still get payed" (KI 3).

¹ Based on an exchange rate 1 USD = 100.80 Kenyan shilling

Box 1

Educated estimated of monthly lease payments

154 conservancy members together have 9720 hectares of land. If we divide 9720 by 154, landowners have 63 hectares of land per person on average. Currently, 3440 KES (34 USD) per hectare per year is the price as agreed upon in the contract. 63 hectares multiplied by 3440 KE comes to 216.720 KES per year. If we divided this by 12 to get an estimation of the monthly lease payment, it comes down to 18.060 KES (179 USD) per month per landowner on average.

In addition to access to financial capital, the conservancy has also led to increased access to physical resources such as drinking water and health facilities. The conservancy's projects related to community development have, for example, resulted in water tanks for clean drinking water as well as contributed greatly to the establishment of Talek's first public health facility (KI 5, 6). Conservancy members often referred to the fact that the area of Talek has developed rapidly in the last decade:

"Do you see a of this?". A senior landowner of the OOC points towards the buildings in the village. "This would not have been here if it was not for conservation and tourism". We did not have schools, water tanks and the health facility. Now there is even a bank to take out our loans. Not that long ago, people were suffering in terms of Cholera and other waterborne diseases, so the communities has benefitted a lot.

Access to physical resources goes beyond the members of the conservancy. Also non-member villagers of Talek can make use of the aforementioned facilities.

Grazing conflicts

Taking a more holistic view on the extent to which landowners are able to enhance their livelihoods financially, grazing fines provide an interesting case. Despite the OOC's rotational grazing system and it's many rules concerning grazing, illegal grazing is a common phenomenon in and around Talek (KII 6, field observations). Numerous landowners have also indicated in community interviews that they regularly receive a fine

for illegal grazing regularly. It has been stressed in interviews that there is simply not enough grass for the cattle of all landowners, and the rotational grazing system seems to work inefficiently for most of them. Even though landowners claim to have indicated this problem numerous times to the management of the OOC, nothing has changed up until now.

Fines differ per park and conservancy, but landowners have indicated that on average fines for illegal grazing are 10.000 KES (+/- 100 USD²). The following quote describes how illegal grazing fines affect a landowners income:

“Let’s say I receive about 200 dollars per month from the conservancy. There are months that I get caught 4 times per month for illegal grazing in the park. Every time I receive a fine of approximately 100 dollars. So if you add it up, at the end of the month I have 200 dollars of income, but 400 dollars of fines. That is a negative balance for me” (C 15).

Interestingly, landowners have indicated to continue with illegal grazing. Some have said that is it simply necessary to do so as their cattle is struggling (CI 3, 8, 11). Few have indicated that continuing with illegal grazing is an act of resistance against the management of the OOC:

“I still let my cattle graze in the conservancy, even though it is not allowed. I hope that the management sees it and will finally listen to us. Maybe they change the strict policy” (CI 4).

² Based on an exchange rate 1 USD = 100.80 Kenyan shilling

Chapter 6. Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis aimed to investigate how participation is functioning in conservancies in the Mara. This thesis has done this by conducting a qualitative case study on Olare Orok Conservancy in Talek and accordingly investigated: 1) the levels and forms of participation in the conservancy model of the OOC, 2) landowner's perceptions of the conservancy and participation, and 3) how local participation is functioning in the conservancy in terms of enhancing landowner's livelihoods. In this chapter, the findings of this study will be discussed in relation to existing literature in order to explain new understandings about participation in conservation. This section start by summarizing the findings of this study and continues by discussing its larger significance. Based on the results of this study, recommendations are made to improve participation and conservancy practices in general. After that, the limitations of this study will be discussed. Last, this study makes recommendations for future research.

Summary and implications of research findings

On paper, the OOC has attempted to translate the concept of participation into the management structure by devolving power to different groups and committees. The OOC holds a AGM in which conservancy related concerns can be discussed with all different groups of the conservancy present. The structure of the OOC's management is, however, characterized by a strong hierarchy. The investors of the conservancy have leverage over others as they are the financial core of this conservancy. Other members of the conservancies have no real say or power in decision-making.

More detailed insights into participation within the OOC is provided by the use of Agarwal's (2001) participation typology. Although different types of participation have been identified, ranging from nominal to activity-specific types of participation (Agarwal, 2001), the majority of the landowners are nominal members. Still, none of the various types of participation present in the conservancy add up to the desired active participation. Landowners are not party to most decisions made in the conservancy and even those that are part of a committee remain passive participants, far from active or interactive participation as discussed by Agarwal. In addition, this study found that women's representation in the conservancy is typically low. This is due to a combination of the conservancy's membership criteria, one needs to own a plot within the conservancy's boundary, cultural boundaries. That is, it is not in the tradition of the Maasai culture that women own land. Few women are part of a committee, but have indicated to rarely speak up and those that do indicated that feel like their opinion carries little weight.

Landowners' experiences and perceptions of the conservancy and participation reveals that they experience various barriers that keep them from actively participating in the conservancy's management and decision-making. A lack of transparency, lack of communication and lack of cooperation between the conservancy and its environment are some of the categories found in the analysis of landowner's perceptions that has some serious implications for the conservancy's future. Many landowners have indicated not to be willing to sign again when contracts have expired.

Moreover, this thesis found that the conservation as a livelihood strategy is mainly focused on income diversification. The lease payment is an income for landowners that contributes to coping with temporary adversity. The current amount of the payment does, however, not allow for a permanent adaptation of livelihood strategies. The conservancy influences access to livelihood assets, mainly financial, physical and social capital. These livelihood resources combined allow different outcomes to be realized. Livelihood outcomes associated with the conservancy include increased income security, increased food security and health.

A recurring theme in this thesis is that conservancy related problems have essentially been caused by concentrated, unchecked power wielded by a privileged few. In other words, lack of active participation by the majority of the conservancy's members has been found to produce uneven societal outcomes. Lack of active participation not only has implications for those who do not have a voice, also the functioning and the future of the conservancy is negatively affected. This thesis propounds a community-based conservation approach as a means of ensuring wildlife conservation, while meeting the needs of local communities. This entails recognizing people's voice and their managerial capabilities. In the OOC, this is currently not the case. The majority of the conservancy member are passive participants who do not have a voice in the management and decision-making of the conservancy. Having a voice in the OOC is crucial since decisions are made on a daily basis that greatly affect their lives and their abilities to enhance their livelihoods.

In addition, a lack of active participation in the OOC has implications for the functioning of the conservancy. Findings of this thesis suggest that the management currently takes a short-term perspective. The management of the OOC takes a beneficiary approach to participation, aiming to achieve fast tangible social economic outcomes for the landowners, in which those on the receiving end have no role in generating these benefits. Findings of this thesis suggest, however, that by taking the beneficiary perspective, the management forgets to look at the long-term effect of this perspective. The findings of this thesis suggests that the future of the OOC is insecure due to a lack of active participation. Due to participation in the OOC being characterized by lack of transparency and communication,

the majority of the landowners is not willing to sign a conservancy contract when the current contract is expired. Findings indicate that levels of participation in the OOC should development towards active and interactive levels in order to remain the sustainability of the conservancy model.

Discussion of results

Nowadays, the call for partnerships in conservation is very common resulting in the establishment of various types of conservation models (van der Duim et al., 2011). The OOC is a new type of private partnership in which private investors, the tourism partners, are partnering with local communities, the landowners. The private conservancy model of the OOC is based on the belief that a partnership creates a synergy which leads to win-win solutions for different parties involved. In theory, in the private partnership of the OOC wildlife is protected, landowners can enhance their livelihoods by participating, while private investors can operate their ecotourism businesses in a unique space densely populated by wildlife. Many resemblances can be found with the currently widely accepted community conservation paradigm characterized by a language of 'participation and devolution (Adams & Hulme, 2001; Hulme & Murphree, 1999; Mfuno, 2012). The lack of active and interactive forms of participation in the conservancy investigated in this study, however, suggests a discrepancy between participation rhetoric and its performance in reality (Brockington, 2008; Goldman, 2003; Igoe & Croucher, 2007).

This thesis argues that this discrepancy can partly be explained by the intersection of the community based paradigm with market-based conservation approaches, in which private sectors investments play a significant role (van der Duim, 2011). The mix of the narratives of community conservation paradigm with the narratives and approaches of market-based approaches has resulted in wider networks of actors supporting and governing conservancies – leading to the mainstreaming and spread of OOC's conservation model in Kenya's Mara (Bedelian, 2014). This thesis has provided renewed focus on and detailed insights in participation in conservation models in which community-based and market-based narratives have merged. Findings of this study raises questions on the role of participation in these mixed narrative conservation approaches.

Even though participation is found in this thesis to be crucial for the functioning of the conservancy, active and interactive forms of participation by which the voice and managerial capabilities of the local communities are taken seriously, seem to be in conflict with the wishes of the private investors, i.e. the market. The exclusion of cattle and human settlement in the OOC show that private investors conform the wishes of the market. Any

partnership involves different and sometimes conflicting interests coming together, however in the case of a private partnership this thesis has found that the financial core (i.e. tourism partners) has significant more power in prioritizing their interests and wishes.

In addition, this thesis found that as a consequence of this concentrated, unchecked power in management and decision-making by a privileged few, the effects of this private partnership conservation approach are not optimized. These results are in line with other studies focusing on neoliberal conservation approaches who also found that the effect on people's livelihoods is not necessarily positive (Bedelian, 2014; Igoe and Brockington, 2007). This study however adds the argument that a lack of active and interactive participation by the majority of conservancy member plays an essential role in limiting the positive effect on people's livelihoods.

Furthermore, the findings of this thesis have confirmed that it is important to define participation both in terms of participants having a say in decision-making processes, as well enhancing the ability for potential participants to improve their livelihoods socially and/or materially. The typology that this thesis draws upon, offered by Agarwal (2001), is a tool that allows for the evaluation of the former, analysing people's degree of involvement in management and decision-making. This typology is found to be useful to evaluate post hoc the types of participation that has occurred in a development or conservation initiative, but can also be used a priori by initiatives to determine what methods are required to achieve the type of participation needed in the initiative. This typology is, however, lacking the ability to evaluate the involvement of participants in the (economic) benefits of nature conservation. The findings of this research indicate that this is equally as important to local communities, as well as is the found to be the facilitator for people to be involved in conservation partnerships in the first place.

Finally, especially as market-based approaches in conservation and development practice in general are becoming more popular, the findings of this study suggest that participation should play a major role in conservation and development projects affecting local communities in developing countries. Private actors have been found in this study to have naturally greater power in decision-making, because they often represent the financial core of a conservation partnership. Active participation of local communities in such partnerships should be prioritized to make sure that local communities' needs are respected and taken into account. In addition, this ensures that the livelihoods of potential participants are affected in a positive way, as well as it has positive effects of the project itself in term of efficiency and long term durability.

Practical recommendations

Based on the findings in this thesis, 9 specific recommendations are offered in this section which would improve the overall functioning of the OOC in the interest of all parties involved.:

- 1) Provide all landowners with a copy of their original contract, including an executive summary of the terms and conditions in the local Maa language reviewed by an independent entity;
- 2) Make the distribution of the conservancy's budget public;
- 3) Design a management plan and involve all stakeholders in the making of this plan in order to find a consensus;
- 4) Spread of copy of this management in the local Maa language;
- 5) Organize >1 general meeting per year;
- 6) Verbally explain the conservancy's policies and any changes during general meetings;
- 7) Review the current organizational structure for effective management of the conservancy;
- 8) Recruit female staff for all organizational layers of the conservancy.
- 9) Put into operation a democratic process from the ground up in which all stakeholder can vote for representatives and leaders on a regular basis (e.g. every 5 years).

Limitations and future research recommendations

This thesis 'zoomed in' on a specific case study. On the one hand, this provided detailed insights into the perceptions and politics of participation in one specific case. However, it is important to note that the results of this study are not generalizable to a wider population. In order to design more effective participatory processes in nature conservation, future research should focus on participation processes in other conservancies in Kenya's Mara and could, subsequently, perform comparative studies between these different case studies. As the conservancy under investigation in this case study is often replicated and spread throughout Kenya's Mara, it would be interesting to see how participation is translated in other conservancies. I propose four defining questions that could serve as the basis for future research; 1) Who participates and who not?; 2) How is participation translated into practice?; 3) For what purpose?; 4) What are the implications for the conservancy and the participants?. In doing so, future studies could use the theoretical framework of this study as a building block. It is important to note that

Agarwal's (2001) participation typology is useful for the questions related to identifying degree's of participation, however, is lacking the tools to evaluate the (economic) benefits for potential participants. This thesis proposes that future studies build on the definition of participation provided in this thesis, and thus look at participants' involvement in decision-making and how they benefit socially and materially from participating. In this way, we can learn from an analysis of differences and comparisons in participation processes in different contexts. This would pave the way to investigate and operationalize pre-conditions for pro-active participatory conservation approaches.

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Appendix 1

Coding and profile of key informant interviewees

Code	Profile	Date
KII 1	Community Liaison Officer	16.03.18
KII 2	Manager	20.03.18
KII 3	County government official	25.03.18
KII 4	Tourism Partner	02.04.18
KII 5	Maa Trust representative	06.04.18
KII 6	Maa Trust representative	28.04.18
KII 7	Tourism Partner	28.04.18

Appendix 2

Coding and profile of community interviews

Code	Profile	Date
CI 1	Village Chief	15.03.18
CI 2	Village Chief	15.03.18
CI 3	Junior Landowner	18.03.18
CI 4	Landowner	18.03.18
CI 5	Senior Landowner / Grazing committee member	20.03.18
CI 6	Junior Landowner / Grazing committee member	21.03.18
CI 7	Female Committee Member	23.03.18
CI 8	Junior Landowner	23.03.18
CI 9	Senior Landowner	30.03.18
CI 10	Landowner	02.04.18
CI 11	Landowner / Grazing committee member	02.04.18
CI 12	Landowner	05.04.18
CI 13	Senior Landowner	10.04.18
CI 14	Landowner	12.04.18
CI 15	Landowner	12.04.18
CI 16	Landowner	15.04.18
CI 17	Female Committee Member	23.04.18