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Environmental Conservation in Northern Tanzania: A Historical
Analysis of its Impact on Maasai Communities

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Abstract

This thesis examines the history and transformation of conservation practices in northern Tanzania, with a particular focus on the Tarangire-Manyara Ecosystem. By tracing developments from the colonial period through the postcolonial era to contemporary times, it highlights how conservation has consistently been shaped by political, economic, and social interests beyond the sole protection of the environment. Colonial and postcolonial policies alike often marginalized the Maasai, leading to displacement, restrictions on land use, and the disruption of pastoralist livelihoods. Although the rise of community-based conservation in the 1980s opened new opportunities for collaboration, the institutional frameworks remained limited, and direct recognition of Maasai rights was rare.

To complement the historical analysis, the thesis incorporates qualitative interviews with a representative of an NGO working in the study area and a Maasai community member working within the association. These perspectives illustrate both the challenges and the potential of current conservation models. While issues such as language barriers and differing expectations persist, the interviews reveal that dialogue, communication, and mutual understanding are essential for building more equitable and sustainable conservation practices.

The findings suggest that conservation in Tanzania cannot be understood only as an environmental project, but rather as a complex process shaped by the relationship between the state, NGOs, and local communities. This thesis contributes to the growing scholarship on environmental conservation history in Africa by bridging historical analysis with contemporary perspectives and by emphasizing the centrality of community voices in shaping more inclusive conservation models.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Geschichte und die Transformation von Naturschutzpraktiken im Norden Tansanias, mit einem besonderen Fokus auf das Tarangire-Manyara-Ökosystem. Durch die Nachzeichnung der Entwicklungen von der Kolonialzeit über die postkoloniale Ära bis in die Gegenwart wird aufgezeigt, wie der Naturschutz immer von politischen, wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Interessen geprägt war, weit über den reinen Schutz der Umwelt hinaus. Sowohl koloniale als auch postkoloniale Politiken marginalisierten häufig die Maasai, was zu Vertreibungen, Einschränkungen der Landnutzung und zur Unterbrechung pastoraler Lebensweisen führte. Obwohl der Aufstieg gemeindebasierter Naturschutzinitiativen in den 1980er Jahren neue Möglichkeiten der Zusammenarbeit eröffnete, blieben die institutionellen Rahmenbedingungen begrenzt, und eine direkte Anerkennung der Rechte der Maasai war selten.

Zur Ergänzung der historischen Analyse beinhaltet die Arbeit qualitative Interviews mit Vertreter*innen einer NGO, die im Untersuchungsgebiet tätig ist, sowie mit einem Mitglied der Maasai-Gemeinschaft, das innerhalb der Organisation arbeitet. Diese Perspektiven verdeutlichen sowohl die Herausforderungen als auch das Potenzial aktueller Naturschutzmodelle. Obwohl weiterhin Probleme wie Sprachbarrieren und unterschiedliche Erwartungen bestehen, zeigen die Interviews, dass Dialog, Kommunikation und gegenseitiges Verständnis entscheidend sind, um gerechtere und nachhaltigere Formen des Naturschutzes zu entwickeln.

Die Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass Naturschutz in Tansania nicht ausschließlich als ökologisches Projekt verstanden werden kann, sondern vielmehr als ein komplexer Prozess, der durch die Beziehungen zwischen Staat, NGOs und lokalen Gemeinschaften geprägt ist. Diese Arbeit leistet einen Beitrag zur wachsenden Forschung über die Geschichte des Naturschutzes in Afrika, indem sie historische Analysen mit gegenwärtigen Perspektiven verbindet und die zentrale Rolle der Gemeinschaften bei der Gestaltung inklusiverer Naturschutzmodelle betont.

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List of Acronyms

AKS	Ancestral Knowledge Systems
AWF	African Wildlife Foundation
CBC	Community-Based Conservation
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCW	Community Conservation Warden
HAT	Human African Trypanosomiasis
IEK	Indigenous Ecological Knowledge
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
IT	Information Technology
LMNP	Lake Manyara National Park
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MNRT	Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAs	Protected Areas
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPWFE	Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire
TANAPA	Tanzania National Parks Authority
TAWA	Tanzania Wildlife Authority
TNP	Tarangire National Park
TPW	Tanzanian People & Wildlife
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
VEO	Village Executive Officers
WMA	Wildlife Management Areas

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

The history of conservation in Africa is closely linked to colonial rule, which drastically changed the way land, resource governances, and local livelihoods were organized and used. The implementation of colonial conservation, especially in the form of national parks and game reserves across the continent, was not only an ecological project, but a process motivated and shaped by imperial ideologies of population control, science, and colonial perceptions of African environments (MacKenzie, 1988; Neumann, 1998; De Bont, 2015). Consequently, the role of conservation and broadly, the environmental interests of Europe on the African landscapes in the expansion of the European empire from the 17th century remains a debate of interest in post-colonial African environmental historiography (Beinart, 1989; Freund, 2003). By and large, the scholarship has been critiqued for presenting distorted narratives in some cases, and even completely omitting some crucial historical occurrences, in other cases (Khan, 1994).

While Beinart (1989) noted that the history of ecological change and the character of African ecological ideas had remained largely unexplored in academia, these topics are now receiving increasing attention in global and anthropological studies, as scholars try to integrate diverse perspectives into the study of environmental history in Africa. As underlined by Kideghesho (2009), the interest in indigenous approaches towards environmental conservation has grown in the last decades, but their inclusion in governmental policies remains marginal across Africa. This global interest also comes from the fact that many animal species are under threat of extinction (Kideghesho, 2009).

As highlighted by Iliffe (1979), the exclusion of local practices in conservation was not unique to Tanganyika; it reflected broader trends across Africa, where conservation policies often reinforced colonial power structures rather than addressing ecological concerns. The British, Dutch, and French colonial officials and settlers frequently portrayed African landscapes as degraded wildernesses, framing them as in need of environmental protection. This perspective disregarded the long-standing human presence and ecological management practices of indigenous African communities (Neumann, 1998; Brockington, 2004). Most of these ideas were rooted in European conservation models that saw nature as separate from human society, reinforcing the idea that African land-use practices, particularly pastoralism, hunting, and the

use of fire, were inherently destructive (Beinart, 1989). However, this dualistic notion of nature and humans has been extensively critiqued, as discussed below. For instance, some scholars underlined how this portrayal of nature by colonial thinking was highly problematic, as it justified the exclusion of local communities, the criminalization of indigenous land use practices, and the imposition of exploitative environmental policies that often led to ecological degradation rather than conservation (MacKenzie, 1988; Beinart, 1989; Carruthers, 1995).

This research contributes to the emerging scholarship on decolonization of the environmental history of Africa by critically engaging with the dominant Eurocentric historiography and centring African perspectives where possible. Moreover, it tries to question narratives that romanticize precolonial practices and criminalize colonial ones (Murombedzi, 2003), while also resisting the tendency to portray African communities solely as victims or passive recipients of external influence. The study recognizes the plurality of knowledge systems and seeks to highlight historical forms of agency, adaptation, and resistance. By examining how indigenous knowledge has been shaped, marginalized, or strategically reconfigured or silenced through asymmetric power relations, the research tries to offer a broader understanding of conservation history in East Africa.

1.2 The Environment and the Empire: Conservation as a Colonial Project in Africa

Colonial environmental interests in Africa and the highly debated practices of colonial conservation were rooted in the romanticist Victorian imaginations of a lost pristine nature-undisturbed landscapes and ecosystems (Beinart, 1989). These ideas justified the aggressive implementation of the Command-and-Control conservation approach across colonial Africa (MacKenzie, 1988). The Command-and-Control conservation model, also known as Fortress Conservation, emerged from 19th-century Western ideals that proceeded on the argument that nature can regain its pristine condition if it is protected from human activity. This approach was first exemplified by the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, where Native Americans were forcibly removed to create a “wilderness” for public enjoyment and scientific study (MacKenzie, 1988). Colonial powers adopted this model across Africa to establish protected areas, aiming to control land and resources while preserving wildlife for scientific purposes and sport hunting (Neumann, 1998; Gissibl, 2016). The fortress conservation model, which prioritized the creation of human-free nature reserves, was at the heart of colonial conservation policies. This model assumed that the best way to protect wildlife was to remove human presence altogether, often leading to multiple incidents of environmental dispossession

and even physical displacement of local populations. The establishment of the most important game reserves and national parks in Africa, such as the Kruger, Selous, and Serengeti, followed this logic, with entire communities forcibly removed to make space for protected areas (PAs) (Carruthers, 1994; Leader-Williams et al., 1996; Munro, 2021).

Another key force shaping conservation in Africa was the emergence of green imperialism. As colonial administrators encountered new ecosystems, particularly on tropical islands and in the Global South, they began advocating for environmental preservation, partly to protect the economic value of colonial resources and partly influenced by romanticized “Edenic” landscapes (Grove, 1995; Murombedzi, 2003). This form of environmentalism became closely linked with imperial governance and also contributed to the development of conservation strategies, such as establishment of national parks.

Alongside this, missionaries also played a role in shaping the configuration of colonial conservation in Africa by promoting the idea that communities needed to be “civilized” through European, and often religious, values and practices (Murombedzi, 2003). As part of their civilizing missions, missionaries usually advocated for colonial agricultural education and discipline to reform what they considered harmful practices (Murombedzi, 2003; MacKenzie, 1988).

It is also necessary to outline how the impact of colonial arrival took shape across African environments. Colonial environmental impact, which started principally as wildlife conservation, subsequently went beyond pure interest in wildlife species and extended to soil and agriculture. This mostly happened because colonial administrations selectively promoted certain land-use practices that aligned with their economic interests, promoting cash crops like sisal, coffee, and tea grown using European farming practices, while discouraging African agrarian practices (Homewood et.al., 2009). Central to this process of agrarian change was land dispossession, as colonial officials frequently enacted laws and policies to alienate African communities from their ancestral territories to make way for settler agriculture and conservation plans. Tensions and revolts often arose among local communities due to these policies, while post-colonial administrations continued to justify removing communities by presenting environmental protection as a strategic national priority (Brockington & Igoe, 2006).

1.3 Problem Statement

As observed, while conservation was often framed as a necessary measure for protecting biodiversity, historically, it has been implemented mostly in ways that marginalize indigenous populations. This thesis seeks to critically examine the extent to which post-colonial conservation policies in Tanzania represent a departure from colonial conservation frameworks or whether they continue to reproduce exclusionary practices under new approaches and models. As indigenous communities, the Maasai of Tanzania experienced environmental dispossession in many ways in the hands of the modern state arrangements. Since the pre-colonial era, they have a long history of dependence on land-based livelihoods that have been closely tied to pastoral grazing systems, nomadic agrarian production, hunting, and collection of wild vegetables and fruit. Over the years, state regulations from both colonial and post-colonial governments, but also external global environmental pressures, have continuously affected these practices. The long history of land and resources dispossession from the Maasai communities has deeply affected their relationship with the environment and has also put their traditional ecological knowledge and conservation practices at risk. Yet, not much historical analysis on this topic has been conducted, highlighting the need to rewrite African environmental history to include local perspectives, past legacies, global environmental pressures, and postcolonial management (Beinart & MacGregor, 2003, as mentioned by Freund, 2003).

1.4 The Aim of the Research

The primary goal of the study is to conduct a historical analysis of state conservation policies in Northern Tanzania, from colonial administration to the post-colonial era, with a particular focus on how they affected Maasai land-based livelihoods. The long periodization is motivated by the fact that early post-independence rhetoric promised a radical shift from fortress conservation to a more inclusive approach that seeks to conserve nature while promoting the livelihood needs of local communities. The study focuses on examples of conservation management in areas within the Maasai Steppe, a region historically inhabited and used by the Maasai for pastoralism, hunting, and seasonal migration, making it a key site for examining how shifting conservation policies have impacted indigenous land use and access over time. Focusing in particular on the area of Tarangire and Manyara National Parks, the study aims to examine how conservation evolved into the early 2000s in response to the colonial and postcolonial conservation pressures that characterised each historical era.

An additional aim is to move beyond the conventionally dominant Eurocentric historiography in reconstructing Africa's environmental past by including African intellectual and decolonial perspectives, and by analysing cases in which local communities actively shaped environmental outcomes through their own forms of knowledge, adaptation, and resistance. The approach also seeks to not idealize or romanticize pre-colonial conservation systems, but rather to understand how knowledge was shaped, suppressed, or reconfigured through unequal power relations, while resisting the trap of portraying African communities as victims or passive recipients of external influence.

1.5 Key Research Questions

To achieve these aims, the thesis addresses the following two key research questions:

1. How did colonial conservation affect the land-based livelihoods and conservation practices of the Maasai communities around Tarangire National Park?
2. How has the relationship between conservation and the Maasai communities evolved from the early post-colonial era to the 2000s, particularly in light of increasing global pressures on the need to ensure environmental justice through implementation of inclusive conservation?

1.6 Thesis' Structure

The thesis is structured to critically analyse the historical and contemporary relationship between conservation policies and Maasai communities in northern Tanzania. The chapters follow a chronological and thematic approach, enabling an analysis of both historical legacies and contemporary policy developments.

Chapter 1 introduces the theme of environmental conservation in Africa, providing a discussion of colonial conservation approaches with examples from African countries. In addition, it gives a broad contextualization of how global forces also contributed to shaping environmental conservation throughout Africa, both in the colonial and contemporary periods.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on colonial and post-colonial conservation practices, with particular attention to the fortress conservation model and the rise of environmentalism as a global movement. This chapter engages with key academic

works that critique fortress conservation as a continuation of colonial land dispossession. It also engages with scholarship that examines the intersections between conservation and indigenous knowledge. Additionally, it analyses alternative portrayals of colonial conservation, which try to move away from binary ideas on colonial conservation, but instead examine the ideological processes and external pressures that shaped environmental conservation across Africa and in Tanzania specifically.

Chapter 3 begins by contextualizing the study site and the Maasai Steppe region, providing background on the area's environmental and historical significance. It then outlines the methodology and research design used in this study. The chapter explains the choice of document analysis to investigate conservation policies in the Tarangire region over time. It describes the types of documents reviewed, discusses the limitations of the approach, and presents the theoretical framework guiding the analysis, which draws on postcolonial theory and political ecology to examine power dynamics in conservation.

Chapter 4 examines the main findings related to the continuity or discontinuity between colonial and post-colonial conservation governance. It analyses how post-colonial Tanzania maintained many of the conservation frameworks established by British colonial authorities, despite adopting a nationalistic discourse on the need to return land to African people and ensuring environmental justice. It explores the contradictions within post-independence conservation policies, on one hand, seeking to assert sovereignty over natural resources, and on the other, reinforcing exclusionary land-use policies that continued to marginalize indigenous communities.

Chapter 5 provides an assessment on whether global conservation pressures have facilitated greater community participation in conservation or whether they have reinforced the marginalization of local communities. It then proceeds by analysing community-based conservation through the use of reports of NGOs working in the Tarangire-Manyara area. In addition, interviews are conducted with representatives from an NGO to understand the history, the role, the implementation and the effectiveness of cooperative conservation projects between the government, the NGO and the Maasai.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by synthesizing the main findings across different historical periods, connecting colonial, postcolonial, and contemporary conservation practices. It also shows how the study's aims were met, evaluating the use of postcolonial and political ecology

frameworks and the chosen methodology, and offering suggestions for future research in the field of environmental history and conservation in Africa.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Colonial Conservation and the Fortress Conservation Model

Throughout history, the emergence of nation-states, settler colonialism, and changes in land-based livelihoods, along with the interaction between scientific and indigenous knowledge systems, have all shaped societies and their natural environments. Since the late 19th century, debates around natural resource management and conservation have emerged within both colonial administrations and African communities, and these discussions remain ongoing today (Adams & Mulligan, 2003; Garland, 2008). This historical context is highly relevant to understanding the impact of conservation in Tanzania, where enduring legacies of colonial conservation continue to shape everyday life. The history of colonial conservation has provoked considerable debate among scholars, particularly regarding its motivations and impacts on local communities. Scholars from various disciplines, including environmental history and science, development studies, and anthropology, have contributed to this complex body of literature (Mackenzie, 1988; Carruthers, 1995; Grove, 1996; Neumann, 1998; Beinart, 2009; De Bont, 2015).

Several scholars provide a clear theorization of the concept of “Fortress Conservation”, as one of the main influences behind colonial conservation practices. As noted by Munro (2021), the emergence of fortress conservation in Africa started in the late 19th century, when colonial authorities introduced hunting restrictions and established game reserves to control wildlife use. A key event was the 1900 London Convention, officially called the Convention for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Birds and Fish in Africa, which was an early international treaty aimed at controlling hunting and protecting wildlife in Africa. According to MacKenzie (1988) and Munro (2021), the main people behind this treaty were British aristocrats and big-game hunters and wealthy elites who wanted to keep hunting in Africa as a privilege for themselves. The objective of the convention was tied to the subsequent foundation of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire in 1903. While justifying elite European sport hunting as a controlled and “civilized” activity, the Society went beyond sport to promote a structured, administrative model of conservation across the British Empire (Prendergast & Adams, 2003). From the 1920s onward, this model expanded with the creation of national parks, and after the Second World War, fortress conservation had become the dominant model across the continent (Munro, 2021).

Although a growing body of scholarship has explored the environmental changes and sociopolitical dynamics of conservation across Africa, much of it frames the narrative in a binary way, contrasting colonial conservation policies with community resistance or dispossession (Neumann, 1998). While this perspective has been crucial in revealing the exclusion embedded in conservation history, it sometimes neglects the more complex relationships between state authorities and African communities, where power, resistance, and negotiation were often entangled rather than only juxtaposed (Butz, 2009; Homewood et al., 2009).

For instance, scholarly literature on Tanzania's colonial history has paid increasing attention to the role of conservation as a tool of imperial control and environmental transformation. Iliffe (1979) offers an overview of Tanganyika's historical trajectory, highlighting how colonial rule reshaped social, political, and economic structures. Koponen (1988) traces how German colonial interventions disrupted indigenous environmental practices in Tanganyika (modern-day Tanzania), emphasizing that policies like the regulations on burning practices unintentionally altered ecosystems. These changes, intended to enforce a colonial vision of environmental order, contributed, for example, to the spread of trypanosomiasis, particularly through the proliferation of dense bush that created ideal breeding grounds for tsetse flies. Bluwstein (2022) similarly underlines how colonial disruptions of African land use practices led to unforeseen ecological and epidemiological consequences. What these theories demonstrate is how environmental interventions impacted the environment and had the opposite effect of what conservation should achieve.

Under British colonial rule (1919–1961), conservation policies became more institutionalized and aligned with Western ideals of wilderness. Scholars such as Neumann (1998) and Beinart (1989) describe how the British implemented what has come to be known as the “Command-and-Control” model of conservation, which enforced the separation of humans from nature through the creation of game reserves and national parks. This approach was based on racialized assumptions of African environmental mismanagement, portraying indigenous communities as inherently destructive and incapable of practising sustainable land stewardship. The establishment of several protected areas across East Africa mirrored these ideologies. As Kiffner et al. (2022) note, British colonial conservation in Tanzania did not only seek to protect biodiversity, but it also aimed to control communities by restricting their movement, hunting practices, and land use.

The vast majority of critical historians and political ecologists argue that conservation under colonial regimes primarily served the interests of imperial authorities, often leading to the displacement of indigenous peoples, the criminalization of traditional land use, and the appropriation of resources for settler elites and sport hunters (Carruthers, 1994; Neumann, 1998; Brockington, 2002). From this perspective, colonial conservation is viewed not as an ecological necessity but as a tool of exclusion and control. For instance, MacKenzie (1988) in *The Empire of Nature* describes how imperial and settler hunting practices in southern Africa were highly destructive, leading to drastic declines in wildlife populations.

On the other hand, some scholars adopt a different view, suggesting that while conservation during the colonial era was flawed, it was also driven by concerns about environmental degradation and shared international goals. For instance, De Bont (2015) emphasizes that certain protected areas have played a crucial role in safeguarding biodiversity, even if the methods were problematic according to today's standards. This debate underscores the importance of evaluating both the socio-political and ecological legacies of colonial conservation.

Missionary expeditions played a big role and helped lay the ideological groundwork for fortress conservation by promoting a Western, often Christian, vision of nature as something separate from and in need of protection from human use, particularly indigenous use (Akena, 2012). In the Ugandan context, Akena (2012) illustrates how Christian missionaries utilized Western education not for genuine liberation, but to convert Africans, alienating them from their traditional knowledge and ultimately serving to solidify colonial rule.

Surely, the emergence of conservation policies in colonial Africa cannot be separated from the broader dynamics of imperial conquest, racialized land control, and capitalist economic transformation. Scholars have long emphasized that these policies were not neutral or ecologically motivated but closely tied to settler and colonial interests that reshaped landscapes for political and commercial ends (MacKenzie, 1988). An illustrative example of how colonial conservation policies in Africa were shaped by imperial ideologies can be seen in the regulation of hunting practices. In southern Africa, hunting was essential to African communities for food and trade, yet as British colonists promoted sport hunting as a symbol of imperial dominance, subsistence hunting was increasingly criminalized. Beinart (1989) notes that such practices were stigmatized as "laziness", a label used to delegitimize local livelihoods and push Africans into wage labour, while also justifying the creation of game reserves that excluded them.

Furthermore, as Beinart (2003) shows, the introduction of merino sheep for wool production in South Africa from the late 18th century fundamentally altered local ecosystems and displaced indigenous forms of land use. The new pastoral economy required vast enclosures, which led to widespread land dispossession, particularly of the Khoikhoi and Sotho populations, whose traditional grazing systems were considered inefficient or harmful. Conservation measures such as fencing ordinances, grazing controls, and game legislation were implemented not as genuine ecological responses but to consolidate settler economic interests and labour control (Beinart, 2003).

Similarly, Jane Carruthers' works in South Africa underscore how the establishment of the Kruger National Park in 1926 was not the result of a sudden environmental awakening, but the culmination of various exclusionary ideologies that blended settler interests with imperial ideas of "wilderness". As Carruthers (1995) points out, in early 20th-century Transvaal, the establishment of game reserves did not represent a particularly progressive approach to conservation, as similar initiatives already existed elsewhere in colonial Africa. Moreover, the reserves were closed to the public and lacked clear long-term planning. The government's involvement was largely driven by external pressures rather than a genuine commitment to wildlife protection (Carruthers, 1995). Lastly, hunting and subsistence practices were increasingly criminalized, not because of their environmental impact, but to force indigenous communities into wage labour and limit their economic autonomy (Carruthers, 1994). In this view, conservation was a mechanism of both environmental control and colonial domination.

Across the continent, similar patterns unfolded. In East Africa, the creation of protected areas such as the Serengeti National Park often involved the violent removal of indigenous communities, whose presence was considered incompatible with conservation. As Neumann (1998) notes, conservation functioned as a form of land alienation masked by ecological interests. indigenous land use was systematically delegitimized by colonial officials and scientists, and local knowledge systems were disregarded in favour of imported European ecological models (Neumann, 1998). Complementing this, Hoppe (2003), as quoted by Imperato (2005), emphasizes how precolonial African societies had developed sophisticated ecological practices to coexist with challenges such as trypanosomiasis, effectively managing the interactions between humans, livestock, wildlife, and disease vectors. Disease outbreaks emerged primarily during the colonial period, when these indigenous systems were disregarded (Imperato, 2005). Together, these perspectives show that colonial conservation and land

policies must be understood not in isolation, but as part of broader colonial projects of imperial subjugation, resource and population control.

Brockington's (2002) research on the Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania further reinforces this critique. His analysis reveals how conservation was continuously imposed through force in the post-colonial period, with local pastoralists expelled from the reserve in the early 1980s under the pretext of ecological preservation. In reality, these actions were often driven by external NGOs with little regard for the social and economic needs of the local population. Brockington (2002) argues that the fortress conservation model not only disrupted livelihoods but also created long-standing tensions between conservation authorities and local communities, undermining the very goals of environmental protection.

2.2 Rise of Environmentalism and Global Influences on Conservation Programmes

Colonial encounters with African communities and unfamiliar environments are often portrayed as highly complex, shaping early environmental thinking in ways that cannot be reduced to a single narrative. Among the theories developed to interpret these encounters was the concept of ecological imperialism, developed by Crosby (2004), who described it as a process of environmental domination and transformation closely tied to imperial expansion. The theory highlights how European colonialism was driven not only by military and political strategies but also by the introduction of European species and ecosystems into colonized lands. According to Crosby (2004), the success of European settlers in regions like North America and Australia was largely due to the transfer of plants, animals, and diseases that transformed local environments to resemble European ones. These biological imports, such as wheat, cattle, and pathogens like smallpox, often disrupted native ecosystems and societies, giving Europeans a significant advantage (Crosby, 2004). As he highlights, a key part of ecological imperialism is the idea that nature itself becomes a tool of empire, used to reshape both the land and its inhabitants.

Some scholars offer a different perspective that seeks to move beyond binary ideas on colonialism and its total disregard of the ecological relations of African communities, and tries to understand conservation through different lenses. For instance, De Bont (2015) explores how complex and sometimes contradictory ideas about nature and indigenous people coexisted in early conservation discourses. He emphasizes that indigenous groups were not always depicted as threats to conservation, but were often idealized as being inherently in harmony with nature.

This “naturalization” of indigenous people, however, served to both romanticize and depoliticize their presence in protected areas (De Bont, 2015). Moreover, while this framing occasionally led to efforts to preserve indigenous practices as part of the ecological knowledge, De Bont (2015) also notices how this also facilitated their marginalization when these practices conflicted with the dominant conservation goals of the colonial state.

In addition, De Bont (2021) reconstructs the emergence of modern environmentalism in the first half of the 20th century, focusing on how conservation took shape at the intersection of internationalism, science, and empire. He does not simply denounce colonial conservation as an oppressive system but rather analyses how it became a site of global scientific research and diplomacy. Using the example of Albert National Park in the Belgian Congo, De Bont shows how the park was framed as a natural laboratory intended to serve not only colonial prestige but also the global scientific community. Conservation, in this context, was not neutral; it surely reflected Eurocentric values, but it also reflected the aspirations of scientists and diplomats who viewed protected areas as part of a shared international mission (De Bont, 2021). He highlights how these actors sought to position themselves above national politics, using conservation as a means to foster international cooperation while often relying on the authority of science to legitimize exclusionary policies (De Bont, 2021). Nonetheless, rather than condemning these actors, De Bont invites readers to see them as part of a transitional moment in which environmental protection began to be imagined as a global responsibility, even if this often came at the cost of marginalizing local knowledge and inhabitants (De Bont, 2021).

Grove (1995)’s argument adds another perspective to the idea that conservation in Africa was shaped only by the fortress conservation ideology. Grove challenges the idea that environmental awareness only started in the 19th century in Europe or North America, by proving that true concern for nature and early conservation efforts had already begun during earlier periods of European colonial expansion, mainly between the 17th and 19th centuries. These ideas developed especially on tropical islands, where Europeans came into contact with unfamiliar environments and, in some cases, incorporated certain practices or observations into their own understanding of the environment (Grove, 1995). As the author notices, this often happened within unequal power structures, where knowledge was frequently appropriated without consent, reinterpreted through a European lens, or used to support colonial goals rather than truly respected. In the light of this, the fortress conservation parameter is not enough to

understand conservation in Africa, and it is important to acknowledge that environmentalism has older and more global roots than usually assumed.

Garland (2008) also offers a powerful critique of wildlife conservation in Africa by situating it within broader structures of global inequality. Rather than viewing conservation as a colonial or neocolonial imposition, she encourages a deeper understanding of how it operates as part of a global capitalist system. Conservation in Africa, she argues, generates significant symbolic and economic value, but this value is often captured by international actors, leaving African states and communities with limited control (Garland, 2008). She highlights how neoliberal reforms have weakened the ability of African governments to regulate conservation effectively. Privatization, weaker regulations, and efforts to bring in foreign investors have made it harder for local communities to keep the profits from wildlife and tourism. Meanwhile, the portrayal of African nature in global tourism continues to rely on colonial-era fantasies, masking the complex realities of inhabited and historically shaped environments (Garland, 2008).

Garland (2008) also highlights the need to reimagine how African environments are represented, proposing a shift toward more realistic narratives and more local involvement. This would mean moving away from exclusionary conservation models and towards approaches that genuinely benefit African communities and recognize their knowledge systems (Garland, 2008). This research aligns closely with Garland (2008)'s perspective. By focusing on conservation practices in Tanzania, it explores how global power dynamics shaped and continue to shape environmental governance. Understanding scholarly literature on African history and ecological dynamics proves to be highly necessary to analyse the environmental transformations brought by colonialism in Tanzania.

Although scholars may differ in how they view colonial conservation, most agree that it was very invasive. While many particularly focus on these continuities in the postcolonial era, others highlight the need to consider changing political and global influences as well to understand the reasons behind the similarities and changes in environmental management.

2.3 African Livelihoods and Environmental Conservation: Histories and Critique

Much of the existing literature on conservation in Africa, both colonial and postcolonial, emphasizes how conservation policies have drastically disrupted the livelihoods of communities like the Maasai. These accounts often highlight forced evictions, restrictions on mobility, and the criminalization of traditional land use practices as key consequences of

conservation interventions. Much of the scholarship present is oriented towards an analysis that emphasizes state control and conservation ideology, while ignoring and disrupting local and subaltern forms of agency (Brockington, 2004; Homewood et al., 2009; Goldman, 2011; Kusiluka et al., 2001).

For instance, Sifuna (2012) in his study of Kenya's and Botswana's customary uses of wildlife, underlines how the Ogiek of Kenya's Mau Forest and the San (Basarwa) of the Kalahari Desert in Botswana traditionally relied on hunting and gathering for survival, using wild animals as a primary source of food and essential nutrients like protein and minerals, long before the advent of agriculture. However, colonial wildlife regulations severely disrupted their customary practices, restricting their access to game meat and undermining their traditional way of life.

Goldman (2011) describes the Maasai as "strangers in their own land," noting how the creation of parks and land restrictions suddenly turned them into outsiders within their own territory. She argues that local memories are essential for understanding how specific places are valued, used, and remembered, both by the local community and in the broader context of environmental change. Often, conservation areas are established along with a narrative that frames these landscapes as untouched wilderness, ignoring their true histories (Brockington 2002, as quoted by Goldman, 2011). Revealing the reality is important: these lands were inhabited by people, and many were forcibly removed to maintain the illusion of pristine nature (Goldman, 2011). Homewood et al. (2009), Butz (2009), and Lukumay (2000), in their studies of Maasai practices, also draw attention to how both colonial and postcolonial policies have disrupted longstanding land-use practices and marginalized indigenous environmental knowledge.

It is important to note that, while this portrayal remains the most prevalent in the literature, in some cases there are explicit attempts to balance this narrative by recognizing the value of communities' ecological knowledge. Hughes (2006) examines the history of Maasai displacement, land alienation, and the profound changes in their social and political organisation under both colonial and postcolonial rule, which inextricably had a huge impact on environmental management. The author argues that these colonial interventions and measures were deeply transformative, and required a high degree of adaptation from the communities' side (Hughes, 2006). Rather than viewing conservation as a neutral or as a mere external imposition on African communities, this scholarship highlights the complex relationships between land, identity, and resistance, calling for a more inclusive and historically

grounded approach. The works by Butz (2009) and Lukumay (2000) begin to address these nuances by exploring Maasai environmental knowledge. This includes how communities have adapted land-use practices, asserted environmental knowledge, or resisted through non-confrontational methods.

Some scholarly voices offer a direct critique of the portrayal of these communities as victims without real decisional power. Shanguhya (2024) in his study on Kenyan communities highlights how they were not simply passive participants in the colonial conservation process. Like European settlers, they pursued their own economic and social goals, sometimes by resisting or bypassing state restrictive conservation measures. While large-scale violence was not the norm, resistance occasionally took militant forms, as seen in during the so-called Mau Mau Uprising or Kenya Emergency (1920-1963). During this period of war, a massive anti-colonial rebellion against British rule and land dispossession broke out in 1952, and the state of emergency was declared (Shanguhya, 2024). As the author underlines, although the British violently suppressed the movement, it played a key role in accelerating Kenya's path to independence.

Fratkin (2001) and Hazzah (2006) highlight the Maasai's complex ways of living with their environment, noting that traditional activities like moving with their herds, practicing pastoralism, using controlled fire, and engaging in small-scale farming and hunting have supported both community well-being and ecological balance. These ways of managing land were influenced by both the natural environment and established social rules and customs that determined who could use which resources. In addition, Murombedzi (2003) argues that it is a mistake to think pre-colonial societies had no real systems for managing natural resources. In fact, he believes that their traditional institutions, especially community-based systems that governed life in pre-colonial African societies, were basis for subsequent conservation areas and management. Furthermore, Murombedzi (2003) challenges the common view that conservation only began when Western-style national parks were established, and argues that many modern conservation ideas actually resemble or build upon older African pre-colonial systems.

A further aspect to take into consideration is the impact of African communities on the environment. As Murombedzi (2003) shows, the usual portrayal of community activities refers to these practices as being inherently sustainable, without really considering their actual environmental role and how they originated. Specifically, the activities mentioned are rotational

grazing, fire management, and hunting, presented as the main sustainable and long-standing activities which were present before the introduction of colonial regimes (Murombedzi, 2003). As Kideghesho (2009) notes, communities have long developed sustainable ways of managing their natural environments, drawing on deep, place-based ecological knowledge. Kideghesho (2009) also argues that the exclusion of local communities from conservation efforts has significantly contributed to environmental degradation during both colonial and postcolonial periods. He suggests that even today, traditional practices may provide not only ecological advantages but also a more economically sustainable alternative to costly, enforcement-driven conservation models that depend on external funding sources like tourism and international aid.

While much of the literature rightly emphasizes the importance of recognizing the role of indigenous knowledge, the discussion is far from unilateral. A smaller but highly interesting clique of scholars, such as Du Toit (2002), critiques the assumption that African traditional practices were inherently sustainable, arguing instead that sustainability is context-dependent and not culturally guaranteed. Du Toit (2002) points out that in traditional African communities, hunting practices were often shaped by the need to obtain the most meat with the least effort. While this approach posed little threat to wildlife when populations were small and tools were basic, the situation has changed drastically. With increasing population pressure and easy access to firearms, such methods now contribute to the rapid depletion of wildlife outside protected areas (Du Toit, 2002). His analysis suggests that these practices were not inherently sustainable, but rather, remained so under specific historical and ecological conditions.

This clique of literature is essential for tracing the dynamic responses of pastoralist communities to changing conservation regimes and shifting access to land and natural resources. Furthermore, it is useful to shift from an over romanticist African environmental historiography and contribute to a more critical historical perspective.

2.4 Indigenous Knowledge: Definitions and Implications for Research

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is especially significant in relation to land-based livelihoods, as it guides how communities interact with their environment through practices such as farming, herding, hunting, and gathering, activities that are deeply embedded in cultural and ecological knowledge systems (Artelle et al., 2018). According to UNESCO (2025), “this knowledge is passed down through oral traditions, songs and daily practices, and reflects a profound understanding of the region’s biodiversity, weather systems and ecological balance. It

demonstrates a deep connection to the land which, along with practices, must be acknowledged and prioritized in agenda-setting”. This definition emphasizes its key characteristics, such as its deep connection to specific places, its transfer through informal means, and its importance for the daily survival of many indigenous peoples. IK is usually passed down from generation to generation, and because it is shaped by local cultures, histories, and environments, it cannot be easily defined in one single way. It is diverse and depends on the context in which it is developed and used (Jessen et al., 2021).

Akena (2012) notes that IK is defined as a multidimensional body of understanding, often viewed as inferior by European culture since the scientific revolution. For indigenous people, it's a “lived world”, a form of reason that sustains communities and is crucial for their long-term adaptation to the environment. It represents a challenge to colonial categorization and a tool for reclaiming suppressed ways of knowing (Akena, 2012). European colonizers strategically positioned their own “Western knowledge” as the sole form of legitimate understanding, portraying it as inherently objective and universally applicable. Kincheloe (2006), as quoted by Akena (2012), explains that this functioned to establish a singular worldview that consolidated European power while simultaneously discrediting IK systems as “savage, superstitious, and primitive”. The deliberate delegitimization of these diverse ways of knowing, rooted in the specific social contexts of their creation, was not accidental but rather a calculated move part of the imperial project of dominance and exploitation.

The key counterpart to IK during the colonial period was the newly introduced scientific knowledge, which colonial authorities and early conservationists considered superior and more reliable for managing natural resources (MacKenzie, 1988). This belief is evident in both the writings of early conservationists and colonial government officials and was frequently used to justify the imposition of new conservation policies and scientific management techniques, which were claimed to be more rational and efficient than indigenous approaches (Mascarenhas, 2003). While this viewpoint was dominant among colonial officials, contemporary scholarship instead recognizes the effectiveness of IK and its role in promoting sustainable resource management.

The main conclusion present in literature is well represented by scholars such as Akena (2012), who argues that the imposition of Western knowledge through formal education disempowered indigenous communities by undermining their established norms, values, and cultural frameworks. The author specifically highlights that this external knowledge production, often

presented as a commodity of colonial exploitation, disregarded the fundamental principles of indigenous societies.

Anyway, some scholars encourage a more comprehensive view that goes beyond the clash between Western science versus IK. For example, Beinart et al. (2009) argues that, while science often reflected colonial power, it was not always purely coercive. Scientists held different roles, and local knowledge was sometimes acknowledged or integrated. The authors suggest moving beyond one-sided critiques and instead studying how scientific knowledge was created, used, and sometimes blended with IK, using examples from veterinary science in southern Africa (Beinart et al., 2009).

In addition, while indigenous Knowledge (IK) and Western science are often presented as opposing systems, Jessen et al. (2021) propose that they can effectively collaborate and complement each other. Their work does not suggest a simple integration of IK into Western science, which can lead to assimilation. Instead, they advocate for treating IK as a distinct, yet equally valuable, framework that can inform and strengthen conservation and stewardship efforts (Jessen, et al., 2021).

Starting from the 1990s, IK began to receive growing attention in scholarly debates. Much of the attention is given to the role it plays in informing conservation practices, shaping human relationships with nature, and maintaining cultural traditions. For instance, Mascarenhas (2003) discusses the central role that IK continues to play in the everyday lives and land-based livelihoods of many communities in Tanzania. It emphasizes how traditional knowledge systems have long guided practices such as farming, weather prediction, and natural resource management. The author also points out that these systems were significantly disrupted during the colonial period, when Western scientific knowledge was imposed as superior and indigenous practices were often dismissed or marginalized. This imposition did not erase local knowledge systems, but led to a dual structure in which both systems coexist, though not always equally valued. Mascarenhas argues that despite decades of being sidelined, IK remains relevant and resilient, and should be formally recognized and integrated into national development and environmental strategies, particularly because of its sustainability and rootedness in local contexts (Mascarenhas, 2003).

Mapinduzi et al. (2003) provide an example of how IK can enhance ecological research. Their study combines Maasai pastoralists' knowledge with scientific methods to assess the effects of

grazing and farming on biodiversity in northern Tanzania. By working with pastoralists, they identified key plant species and evaluated traditional grazing reserves. Their findings show that pastoral landscapes, guided by indigenous practices, had greater plant diversity and lower erosion risks compared to agro-pastoral areas, emphasizing the value of incorporating IK into ecological research and conservation (Mapinduzi et al., 2003).

Biermann's (2011) reflections on knowledge, power, and decolonization offer a crucial framework for non-indigenous scholars engaging with indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). Firstly, she critiques the dominance of Western epistemologies in academia and urges scholars to examine how research methods and teaching practices can either reproduce or resist colonial power structures. Secondly, Biermann (2011) defines IK as Ancestral Knowledge Systems (AKS), in other words, frameworks of understanding deeply rooted in community, family relationships, land-based practices, and oral traditions. The author emphasizes that these knowledge systems are shaped by specific historical and spatial contexts and have endured despite the ongoing influence of colonial power structures. Moreover, Biermann (2011) argues that AKS should be recognized as valid and powerful epistemologies in social science. In this sense, decolonizing research, means more than revising methodologies; it involves acknowledging the social and historical context in which research takes place, addressing questions of equity, and reflecting critically on researchers' own positionalities (Biermann, 2011).

To summarize, this literature helps frame how traditional knowledge is not a static tradition, but a dynamic system constantly negotiating with environmental and political landscapes.

2.5 Post-Colonial Conservation

Most scholars writing on the field of postcolonial conservation acknowledge the lasting legacies of colonial rule, particularly the ways in which it shaped perceptions of African communities and their relationship to the environment (e.g. Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998). The authors provide a detailed account of the legal framework governing conservation areas, tracing its development through colonial ordinances, post-independence amendments, and more recent legislative acts. Importantly, they relate these legal changes to the problematic issue of land rights, showing how pastoral and agricultural communities have been increasingly marginalized as state-controlled conservation grew in scale. The main takeaway is the inextricable link between nature conservation and the rights of local populations, stressing that sustainable conservation

policies must integrate community-based approaches that respect customary land rights (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998)

Fortress conservation and the older “fences and fines” model, which excluded local populations from land, wildlife, and forest management, often violated land rights of local communities and caused resistance (Kideghesho, 2009). As one of the responses to the failures of earlier strict “fortress conservation”, post-colonial authorities introduced the principle of local support, which holds that protected areas can only be successful and sustainable if the communities living nearby accept and support them (Brockington, 2004). In other words, without this backing, conservation efforts are unlikely to endure over time. However, Brockington (2004) notes that securing genuine local support is often challenging because conservation policies may impose displacement or restrictions on resource use, which create tensions and resistance. Moreover, power imbalances between local communities and authorities can limit meaningful participation or consent (Brockington, 2004). As Western (2001) points out, a key mistake in protectionist approaches is overlooking the impacts of conservation on local people.

Adams and McShane (1996), as quoted by Skidmore-Hess (1998), contribute to this discourse by critiquing the colonial narrative that frames rural Africans primarily as poachers or threats to wildlife. They argue that such portrayals erase the longstanding connections these communities have to their environments and disregard the traditional knowledge systems they used to manage resources sustainably. In contrast to externally imposed campaigns, the authors emphasize the value of post-colonial community-based approaches, such as Zimbabwe’s CAMPFIRE initiative and Rwanda’s Mountain Gorilla Project, which provide local populations with ownership and tangible benefits, leading to more effective and equitable conservation outcomes (Skidmore-Hess 1998).

Goldman (2011) argues that genuine participation should be recognized as a basic human right, not just a superficial request for consent while decisions remain top-down. Goldman emphasizes that excluding local people not only threatens their rights but also risks ecological damage, whereas inclusion can offer new insights on conservation. Exclusion, she warns, can lead communities to neglect or misuse resources, undermining both conservation and local livelihoods (Goldman, 2011).

Co-management emerged in the 1980s as a response to the limitations of centralized conservation approaches, and refers to the shared distribution of power, responsibilities, and

decision-making between the state and local resource users, aiming to balance conservation goals with community needs (Kideghesho & Mtoni, 2008). Depending on the level of authority granted to local stakeholders, co-management can be consultative, where the state retains strategic control, collaborative, where decisions are shared between state and communities, or delegated, where organized local users hold primary decision-making power (Kideghesho & Mtoni, 2008). The author also argues that co-management can only work if communities are well-informed about conservation and its legal framework, and are able to consider different ownership options and justify their positions. In other words, successful co-management depends on informed, organized, and actively engaged local communities

Co-management projects came with a lot of promises and suggested a shift from colonial conservation attempts. In the post-independence period, the aim was to create a form of cooperative and inclusive conservation, which looked especially at national interests (Adams & MacShane, 1996). However, despite the rhetoric of change and the promise of more participatory models, a growing body of literature suggests that postcolonial conservation often reproduced, and in some cases intensified, the exclusionary dynamics established during colonial rule. According to Adams & Mulligan (2012), the legacy of colonial conservation policies in many cases persisted into the postcolonial period, shaping how natural resources and land are governed today (Brokington, 2004). Moreover, they identify a limited success of co-management initiatives and community-based conservation projects, which often functioned more as extensions of state control than as genuinely participatory frameworks (Adams & Mulligan, 2012).

As Murombedzi (2003) observes, post-independence governments in southern Africa often maintained, and in some cases even reinforced, the exclusionary models inherited from colonial regimes. Protected areas continued to be established or expanded without meaningful involvement of local communities, replicating the same top-down, preservationist logic that separated people from nature and restricted access to essential resources during the colonial era (Murombedzi, 2003).

Neumann (1998) critically analyses the creation of Arusha National Park and shows how the Tanzanian postcolonial state reproduced colonial conservation ideologies by continuing to promote a vision of nature as pristine wilderness. His work demonstrates that the newly independent state displaced local populations and excluded them from decision-making, echoing colonial logics under the guise of national development and environmental protection.

Brockington (2002), in his study of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, similarly reveals how donor-funded conservation initiatives in post-independence Tanzania led to the eviction of pastoralist communities, despite claims of participatory development. He argues that such projects were often justified by ecological concerns but in practice reinforced fortress conservation models that prioritized biodiversity over the livelihoods of rural communities.

Moreover, as Garland (2008) highlights, while conservation is often critiqued as a colonial imposition, it has also been appropriated by African nationalists and local communities as a tool for empowerment. In the postcolonial period, conservation projects were sometimes reframed as symbols of national pride, sovereignty, and economic development. However, Garland (2008) argues that this form of empowerment often remains purely symbolic. Despite the language of participation and ownership, systemic inequalities in land ownership and resource control persist, meaning that the benefits of conservation are rarely equitably distributed (Garland, 2008). By and large, local communities have been included rhetorically or through “apparent” consultation, but their actual influence over decision-making processes remains limited, and the structural legacies of exclusion and environmental dispossession continue to shape conservation outcomes.

Scholars examining Tanzania’s conservation and wildlife management areas (WMAs) have highlighted persistent issues of power imbalance and limited community agency within these initiatives. While WMAs are officially intended to decentralize wildlife conservation and allow communities to benefit from wildlife tourism and resource use, critics argue that participation often remains superficial. Ndolanga (1996), for example, notes that despite the appearance of community involvement, the state retains in control over the management and ownership of wildlife, even within WMAs. Communities are granted quotas for hunting and access to certain resources, but they do not possess legal ownership of the wildlife on their land. This dynamic may contribute to a sense of alienation and disillusionment among local populations, ultimately undermining the intended goals of participatory conservation (Ndolanga, 1996).

Furthermore, Brockington and Igoe (2006) provide a critique of post-colonial conservation, arguing that conservation in the post-independence era has frequently operated under the guise of development and environmental protection, while continuing to marginalize and displace local communities. Their work reveals that conservation NGOs, often seen as benevolent actors promoting ecological sustainability, have played a significant role in facilitating or legitimizing evictions in protected areas. Rather than dismantling colonial legacies, many of these projects

reinforced them, especially through the establishment or proclamation of national parks or the implementation of biodiversity corridors that restricted traditional land use. In fact, Brockington and Igoe (2006) show that some of the most significant waves of displacement in Africa occurred not during colonialism, but during the 1990s and early 2000s, under donor-funded conservation initiatives that were framed as participatory or community-based.

According to Brockington and Igoe (2006), organisations such as the African Wildlife Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Society, can actively shape conservation practices. While critics argue that only states can legally carry out evictions, the authors claim that governments frequently act with the backing of elites and community factions, and the role of NGOs, though indirect, remains influential. As a result, evictions are rarely framed as the outcome of international NGO agendas; instead, they are typically presented by states as necessary actions for national development or environmental protection. Yet, as Brockington and Igoe (2006) argue, these narratives mask the complex power dynamics and external pressures behind such decisions.

3 Methodology and Justification of the Document Review Approach

3.1 Study Site

Before engaging with the primary documents relevant to this research, it is essential to provide a geographical and historical contextualization of the Maasai Steppe, as this background is crucial for understanding the dynamics between conservation efforts, land use, and IK in northern Tanzania. Northern Tanzania is home to some of the most ecologically diverse landscapes in East Africa. The region includes savannahs, bushlands, wetlands, and woodlands shaped by seasonal rainfall patterns and long-term human land use (Kiffner et al., 2024). One of the most significant ecological zones is the Maasai Steppe, which covers parts of the Arusha and Manyara regions and is essential for wildlife migration and pastoralist livelihoods (African People & Wildlife Fund, n.d.). The Maasai Steppe is named after the Maasai, a semi-nomadic pastoralist community whose presence in the area predates colonial rule. This region includes the two national parks of Tarangire and Lake Manyara, which together form an ecologically connected landscape (Kiffner et al., 2024) (Fig. 1.).

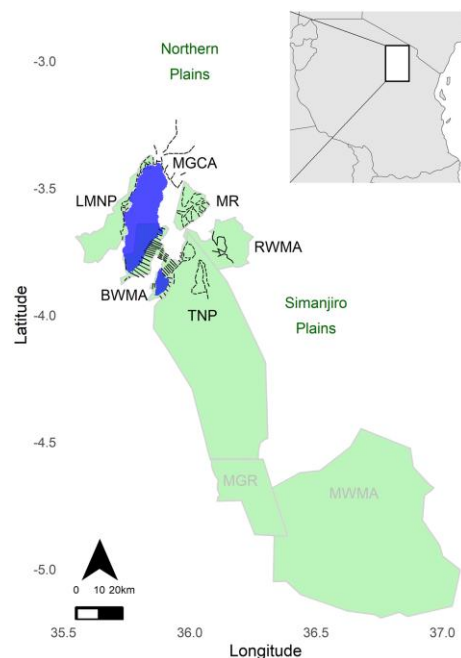


Figure 1: Map of Tarangire National Park (TNP) and Lake Manyara National Park (LMNP) (Kiffner et al., 2024).

Wildlife in Lake Manyara and Tarangire National Parks frequently migrates between the two parks, particularly during seasonal changes (African People & Wildlife Fund, n.d.). Tarangire River constitutes a highly important water source during the dry season, that supports both

wildlife and human populations (Borner, 1985; Kiffner et al., 2022). Established as a game reserve in 1957 and designated a national park in 1970, Tarangire is an important case for understanding the relationship between conservation and local communities and provides a relevant case study for examining how conservation policies have affected Maasai livelihoods. Lake Manyara, located within the Great Rift Valley, is also an example of balancing conservation with sustainable human use. Kiffner et al. (2024) note that it has successfully maintained high populations of giraffe, zebra, and wildebeest over time, likely due to strong anti-poaching measures and controlled grazing.

Despite their ecological importance, several zones of the Tarangire ecosystem remain vulnerable to human activity, largely because they lack formal legal protection (McDowell, 2012). For instance, the Kwakuchinja Corridor, which is a crucial migration route connecting Lake Manyara and Tarangire National Parks, as well as other areas of the Tarangire-Manyara ecosystem, illustrates this problem well (McDowell, 2012). In earlier decades, up to 25 species of large mammals relied on this corridor for seasonal movement. However, as farmland expansion and environmental degradation increased, the corridor's capacity to support wildlife sharply declined (Boshe 1989, as cited in Kideghesho, 2009). By the late 1990s, only 17 species continued to use it (Kideghesho, 2009), reflecting the growing impact of land conversion on essential wildlife pathways.

Tanzania's conservation history will of course be viewed in the context of broader political transformations. The region was part of German East Africa from the 1880s until the end of World War I, when control passed to the British authorities, who administered it as Tanganyika under a League of Nations mandate (Iliffe, 1979). Both colonial administrations introduced protected areas and game laws that regulated human activity and wildlife use. After gaining independence in 1961, Tanganyika merged with Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964 (Iliffe, 1979).

The country's first president, Julius Nyerere, promoted an ideology of African socialism known as Ujamaa, which emphasized national unity, rural development, and self-reliance. In a speech delivered in Arusha in 1961, he highlighted the value of wildlife and declared conservation a national duty (Schauer, 2018). His government supported the creation and expansion of national parks and viewed wildlife protection as part of Tanzania's modern identity and international image. Today, Tanzania remains one of the most conservation-oriented countries in Africa,

with over a quarter of its land under some form of protection. At the same time, it faces ongoing debates about how to balance conservation, tourism, and the needs of local communities.

3.2 Analysis and Documents Used

This research adopts a document analysis methodology to trace how conservation policies in the Tarangire region evolved from the colonial era to the present. The method is particularly suited for studying policy change, as it allows for the comparison of legal texts, government acts, NGO reports, and planning documents across time. This approach helps identify continuities, ruptures, and the effects of conservation on Maasai communities. The use of historical and contemporary documents enables an analysis across different levels, capturing both institutional narratives and local impacts.

The analysis includes colonial-era game ordinances, post-independence wildlife and village acts, contemporary NGO reports, and international frameworks, all selected for their relevance to conservation and land use in the Maasai Steppe and their influence on policy or practice. Key examples include excerpts from the Game Ordinance of 1940, the National Parks Ordinance of 1959, the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974, and more recent NGO reports.

3.3 Interviews

Selection of Participants

To capture both the institutional and local perspectives on conservation in the Tarangire–Manyara ecosystem, two qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The first participant is the Executive Assistant of Chem Chem Association, chosen for her organisational role and direct involvement in conservation projects. The second participant is a Maasai representative working with the association, whose perspective reflects the lived experiences and cultural knowledge of local communities. His participation was facilitated with translation and clarification support from Esther, ensuring that his views could be expressed accurately and respectfully.

This combination of participants was selected to provide complementary insights: one from the institutional and organisational side of conservation, and the other from the community directly engaged with conservation practices. By pairing these perspectives, the study aimed to examine both the strategic and grassroots dimensions of conservation initiatives.

Materials

The interviews were carried out using Google Meet, which allowed for video interaction despite the geographical distance between the researcher and the participants. The sessions were recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accuracy in later transcription and analysis. Notes were also taken during the interviews to supplement the recordings and capture contextual details. AI transcription tools were used to help transcribe the interviews and support the researcher's notes. Additionally, AI was also used to merge and organize all collected information, facilitating the analysis of the interview results.

Interview Process

The interviews followed a semi-structured format, guided by a set of prepared questions but with the flexibility to follow new directions that arose during the conversations. This approach made it possible to cover the central themes of the thesis, conservation history and activities, community involvement, challenges, and impacts, while allowing the participants to also highlight the issues they found most important. A convenience sampling method was used, as it represented the most accessible way to obtain a testimony from a Maasai representative directly involved in conservation in northern Tanzania. Although this non-probability sampling technique has limitations in terms of generalizability (Golzar et al., 2022), it was particularly useful for the aims of this research, as it allowed for the inclusion of Maasai voices and experiences, providing valuable insight into the work of an NGO and local perspectives on conservation practices and challenges.

Each interview lasted between 50 and 60 minutes and took place online, in an informal, conversational setting. Both began with introductory exchanges to make participants comfortable and to outline the aims and structure of the study. One interview was conducted entirely in English, while the other used both Kiswahili and English, with a translator ensuring accurate interpretation between the two languages.

Rather than presenting the interviews in chronological order, the analysis is structured thematically. The responses are grouped under four main categories: (1) the history and implementation of Chem Chem's activities, (2) community involvement and collaboration in conservation, (3) challenges faced by both the organisation and the Maasai, and (4) the impacts of conservation on local livelihoods and shifts in community perspectives. This structure allows

for a comparison between the institutional and community viewpoints, highlighting both tensions and areas of cooperation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were followed throughout the research process. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Consent was obtained prior to recording, and assurances of confidentiality were given. Care has been taken to present their views respectfully and in context; for privacy reasons, only their roles and perspectives are mentioned, without including personal names.

Particular attention was given to issues of translation and representation. The support provided by Esther in translating parts of the Maasai's interview was acknowledged, and care was taken to ensure that his words were accurately represented without distortion. The interviews were conducted with sensitivity to cultural differences, with the aim of creating an open space where both participants felt comfortable to share their perspectives.

3.4 Challenges and Limitations of the Methods Used

I acknowledge the limitations inherent in the sources used for this research. One limitation lies in the fact that colonial sources can be incomplete or selectively preserved, which may introduce biases or reinforce dominant narratives while marginalizing alternative perspectives. Similarly, documents and accounts produced by government agencies or NGOs may project idealized versions of community participation or sustainability, which do not always reflect ground realities. This is however all taken into consideration and supported by secondary literature.

Another limitation concerns the absence of direct Maasai voices for the colonial and immediate post-colonial period. This reflects a broader historical tendency to exclude indigenous perspectives from formal policy-making processes. To address this, the study incorporates critical readings of silences and omissions, alongside insights from ethnographic and anthropological literature that centre Maasai experiences and responses to conservation. Where possible, NGO reports and participatory conservation project documents are used to balance official narratives with more localized accounts.

This challenge is also addressed in the final interviews section, where the analysis will use testimonies from an NGO representative and a Maasai representative working in conservation in the same organisation in the Tarangire/Manyara region. This strategy proved to be effective to reach some of the main outcomes of this research: balancing representation of the several groups involved in conservation (Maasai communities, government, NGOs and environmental organisation); understanding historical tensions between these groups; analysing examples of cooperation and community-based conservation and their degree of effectiveness. However, the limitations of convenience sampling and the potential biases that may arise from the interview context are also acknowledged. In particular, the Maasai interview was conducted with a representative of the NGO he works for and involved translation, which could have influenced the responses and introduced emotional or situational constraints during the conversation.

Treating Silences as Data

Although many of the chosen conservation and land policies from the colonial and postcolonial times do not explicitly mention the Maasai, this absence is not interpreted as a limitation of the source base but rather as a reflection of how indigenous presence was systematically marginalized or rendered invisible in official discourses. These silences themselves are treated as data, revealing the historical and institutional mechanisms through which conservation efforts have ignored or displaced local communities. By reading these documents critically and comparing them with secondary sources, the study highlights how these policies have affected Maasai livelihoods and land-use practices.

3.5 Theoretical Framework

3.5.1 Postcolonialism

This study is based on postcolonial theory, which helps explain how colonial legacies affected and continue to shape conservation thinking, land governance, and rural developments in Tanzania. As underlined by Wainwright's (2011), studying environmental conservation in postcolonial contexts stresses the need to address the history of colonialism. We can't fully understand these places without recognizing how colonial experiences have shaped them, and then look at the ongoing practices and structures that still reflect those colonial histories.

Postcolonialism enables a critical reading of conservation as a form of governmentality, embedded in power asymmetries that originated during colonial rule and persist into the present. It challenges the assumption that conservation is a neutral or purely technical enterprise, instead highlighting its role in the reproduction of social hierarchies, territorial control, and epistemic violence, particularly through the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems (R'boul, 2022).

In the context of the Maasai Steppe, postcolonialism helps to understand how historical patterns of land dispossession, legal exclusion, and epistemological domination continue to shape the relationship between conservation institutions and local communities. Adopting a postcolonial approach proves to be an effective method to acknowledge how colonial legacies continue to shape present-day conservation institutions. Furthermore, it encourages a rethinking of authority and representation of indigenous voices within environmental governance.

3.5.2 Political Ecology

Together with postcolonial theory, this research adopts a political ecology framework to analyse the intersections of environmental governance, social dynamics, and political economy. Political ecology situates conservation within broader socio-political and economic processes (Zanotti et al., 2020). The analysis draws attention to how access to land and natural resources is regulated through policies that are deeply influenced by power relations, both within national contexts and in relation to global actors such as NGOs, international donors, and conservation organisations. Furthermore, modern political ecology has evolved to encompass not only how power shapes human–environment relations but also examines how knowledge systems (scientific, local, and indigenous) interact in shaping environmental governance (Zanotti et al., 2020).

This analysis pays particular attention to the gap between official policy discourse and its material effects on the ground. A political ecology lens also bases the relational character of human-environment interactions, recognizing that ecological landscapes are co-produced through cultural, political, and economic practices. In this sense, it helps to see how indigenous practices are introduced into conservation efforts but also expose how conservation efforts that claim to be “community-oriented” can also mask deeper structures of exclusion and contribute to power imbalances (Bluwstein, 2022).

4 Findings: Environmental Conservation in the Maasai Steppe

4.1 The Maasai: a Pastoralist Community

This chapter explores traditional Maasai livelihoods prior to colonial rule, focusing on seasonal mobility and livestock management, fire use, and hunting. These practices, deeply rooted in communal land governance and IK, constitute the starting point for understanding how colonial and postcolonial conservation laws impacted their established systems.

The Maasai are a semi-nomadic pastoralist community. They are believed to have originated in the Nile Valley, likely in what is now South Sudan, and began migrating southward into the Great Rift Valley region of East Africa around the 15th century (Galaty, 1993). By the 17th and 18th centuries, they had established themselves in what are now Kenya and Tanzania (Koponen, 1988; Galaty, 1993). Specifically, they inhabited the vast savannas of the Maasai Steppe (which spans parts of northern Tanzania and southern Kenya) and surrounding areas for centuries before colonial times, including the regions of Tarangire, Simanjiro, Randilan and Lake Manyara National Parks (Koponen, 1988). These areas are all ecologically connected, with communities and wildlife frequently migrating between them in response to seasonal changes (African People & Wildlife Fund, n.d.).

As Koponen (1988) notes, they became a symbol of pastoral life, being well-known for their large cattle herds, and for moving across wide areas from central Kenya to central Tanzania in search of pasture. Unlike some neighbouring groups, the Maasai depend almost entirely on cattle herding and did very little farming. Their strong focus on cattle herding activities shaped much of their culture and economy long before colonial times (Koponen, 1988). Pastoral expansion among the Maasai was shaped by both environmental pressures and opportunities. Pastoralists move mainly to secure better access to pasture and water, and some scholars see pastoralism as an expansionist activity (Anderson, 1974, as cited in Galaty, 1993). However, expansion was not only caused by scarcity. It was argued that Maasai expansion was also driven by abundance: as livestock populations grew in fertile areas like the central Rift Valley, pastoralists were pushed to seek new grazing lands to support their expanding herds (Galaty, 1993).

The Maasai are often seen as a single, unified group, but historically they were not a homogenous society. Instead, they evolved over time through processes of migration, conflict, and the unification of different communities. As they expanded across East Africa, the Maasai absorbed smaller groups, incorporated outsiders, and reorganized themselves into sections or sub-groups, also known as *Iloshon* (Galaty, 1993; Barron, 2023). Over time, alliances formed between the strongest Maasai sections, shaping the political and social organisation of Maasai society as it is known today (Koponen, 1988).

The Maa language is the native tongue of the Maasai people living in Kenya and Tanzania. It is part of the Eastern Nilotic group within the Nilo-Saharan language family (Galaty, 1993). As Barron (2023) notes, the term Maa designates the language spoken by the Maasai, whose name literally means “those who speak Maa”. In Swahili and other Bantu languages, this language is often called *kiMaasai*, while *Ol-Maa* encompasses both the language and the broader Maasai cultural identity (Barron, 2023). Each *olosho*¹ (Maasai subgroup) has its own distinct traits and a specific form of the Maa language, though the differences between these dialects are often unclear and tend to overlap (Galaty, 1993; Barron, 2023). Over time, different groups moved to new regions, which caused their dialects to change and develop in different ways. The largest Maasai group is the Purko, who speak the Purko dialect; they share mutual intelligibility, meaning speakers can generally understand each other, with other Maa-speaking groups, although the degree of understanding varies (Barron, 2023).

As shown by Galaty (1993), the expansion of the Maasai followed three main trends. First, the Maasai became more politically divided into different sections, which formed in the Rift Valley, and then spread into nearby areas. Second, as they moved onto the Rift Valley highlands, these sections created alliances, strengthening or changing their political relationships. Third, the Maasai often absorbed people from other groups they displaced, either peacefully or through war, and captured people joined Maasai communities and herded livestock (Galaty, 1993; Hughes, 2006). After conflicts, for instance, during the nineteenth century, different Maasai sections settled in various regions of northern Tanzania, and the Kisongo Maasai came to dominate key grazing areas, such as Lake Manyara and the Ngorongoro Crater, after displacing

¹ *Olosho* is the singular term referring to a single Maasai territorial group or section, while *Iloshon* is the plural form used to denote multiple such groups. See Barron (2023).

other groups like the Loogolala and Parakuyo² (Galaty, 1993). These movements illustrate how Maasai territorial control was not static but the result of long-term interactions, competition, and shifting power dynamics.

In Maasai culture, responsibilities and daily tasks were carefully organized by both age and gender. Boys were generally expected to look after livestock and guard crops, while girls typically assisted their mothers with household activities (Koponen 1988). Maasai men were divided into age groups, with each group moving together through different life stages and taking on specific responsibilities: young men, known as *murran*, served as warriors and hunters; men in their middle years concentrated on managing family affairs and economic matters; and elderly men assumed the role of community leaders and performed rituals (Koponen 1988). This structured division of work ensured that every member contributed according to their age and status, helping to maintain social order.

Being pastoralists, in 19th century precolonial times, the Maasai often interacted with nearby farmers and hunter-gatherers through both trade and conflict. Hunter-gatherers communities relied primarily on wild plants and hunting of animals for survival. Whether their relationships were peaceful or not depended a lot on cattle: if neighbours had few cattle, the Maasai were more likely to trade with them instead of raiding them (Koponen, 1988). Trade was also common and included items like salt, iron, and cotton, which different groups produced in specific regions (Koponen, 1988). Even though many sources talk about these exchanges mostly during famines or times of trouble, they likely had older roots and were part of long-standing cooperation between neighbouring communities (Koponen, 1988).

In other words, although the Maasai sometimes hunted or practiced small-scale farming, these activities were always secondary to their main livelihood: pastoralism. As Koponen (1988) notes, their economy, culture, and daily life were centred around herding cattle, and their use of hunting or farming supported their pastoral way of life. This is why the introduction of conservation policies that restricted access to land and wildlife had such a severe impact on pastoralist communities like the Maasai, whose entire way of life depended on mobility and grazing access.

² The Loogolala were a Tatog-speaking people (Tatog is a Southern Cushitic language spoken by agro-pastoralist groups in northern Tanzania), while the Parakuyo were Maa-speaking pastoralists (Maa is a Nilotic language spoken by Maasai-related pastoral groups) See Galaty (1993).

Maasai Fire Practices

Before colonial conservation policies were introduced, the Maasai already had their own ways of managing the environment. They practiced controlled burning to renew grazing areas, moved seasonally with their herds to avoid overgrazing, and followed customary rules that regulated the use of water and pasture (Koponen, 1988). These practices can be considered early forms of sustainable livelihoods. According to Scoones (1998), a livelihood includes the skills, resources, and activities people use to make a living. It becomes sustainable when it can withstand shocks or stress, protect or improve people's abilities and assets, and avoid damaging the natural environment (Scoones, 1998). As the concept has gained popularity, "sustainable livelihoods" is now often used instead of terms like "sustainability" or "sustainable development".

For instance, the Maasai also have a long history of using fire as a tool for land management, an essential aspect of their pastoral way of life. Indigenous Maasai practices of using controlled burns for prevention have been largely overlooked in both academic research and policy discussions (Laris, 2002). They have historically used a well-organized system of fire management, led by their warrior class ("Ilmuran" in the Maasai language), to maintain their grazing lands (Butz, 2009). Before the short rainy season, particularly in September and October, they would start small, controlled fires to prevent larger, more destructive fires later on. Butz (2009) also notes that these fires were carefully managed, often using natural firebreaks like dry riverbeds or specially dug trenches, and were controlled with tools such as green branches and sand to prevent them from spreading to unwanted areas.

Moreover, the decision to burn a particular area was a communal process, usually made by village elders with input from the warriors (Butz, 2009). They considered factors like vegetation type, recent rainfall, and pest presence. The Maasai used fire for several key reasons, including promoting fresh, nutritious grass for their livestock, preventing the spread of shrubs, opening up landscapes for easier movement of animals, controlling pests, and reducing the risk of dangerous wildfires. Fires were typically started in the evening or early morning when conditions were calm, and their size and frequency were carefully managed to protect both the environment and their livestock (Butz, 2009).

Maasai Hunting Practices

As previously mentioned, the Maasai are not hunters in the strict sense, but they mostly engage in hunting to support and sustain their pastoral lifestyle, especially in times of need or to protect their herds (Conroy, 2001). Of course, hunting also became a cultural marker, symbolizing bravery and skill among young warriors (Hazzah, 2006). Differently from other tribes, the Maasai do not eat the meat of wild animals, but just that of their livestock and the products derived from it. Eating wild meat was not considered appropriate, with a few exceptions during famines, drought or diseases outbreaks, as this type of activity was more associated with hunter-gatherers (Skidmore-Hess, 1998; Hazzah, 2006).

However, traditionally the Maasai are sometimes known for being lion hunters. This practice served as both a means of survival and to protect their livestock, and a rite of passage for young warriors, or morans³, symbolizing courage and reinforcing social status within the community (Hodgson, 2001). The Maasai distinguish between two forms of lion hunting: Olamayio and Olkiyioi. Olamayio is a rite of passage for warriors, which brings them prestige, especially for the one who first spears the lion (Ikanda and Packer, 2008). On the other hand, Olkiyioi refers to the killing of lions by any community member in retaliation for an attack on livestock, particularly cattle. However, the clear distinction between these types of lion killings has become less defined over time (Hazzah, 2006; Hazzah et al., 2009).

Goldman et al., (2013) also notices that the Maasai have, at times, killed lions and other well-known wild animals not just for survival, but as a form of protest against conservation policies they saw as unfair. As a consequence, it is noticeable that even though these symbolic killings may be less common, the hunting of lions in certain areas reflects local tensions with conservation authorities and uses hunting as a form self-determination and identity claiming.

In addition, during the years, factors such as access to markets, increased education, and the influence of religious movements started to affect local motivations for killing lions (Hazzah, 2006). The widespread availability of carbofuran, an agricultural insecticide, has provided a cheap and effective means to eliminate lions and other carnivores from the ecosystem; anyway, animal poisoning was often done secretly (Hazzah, 2006). Hazzah et al., (2009) also underline

³ The term “Moran” originates from the Maasai language and refers to young warriors who have undergone specific rites of passage, marking their transition into adulthood. See Butz (2009).

how Maasai's lion hunting practices have always been governed by traditional rules and cultural norms designed to make sure that hunting was done in a way that did not harm the environment or deplete lion populations. In this way, we can deduce that traditional Maasai hunting practices were aligned with the principles of sustainable livelihoods (Scoones, 1998), as they aimed to meet community needs without depleting natural resources or disrupting ecological balance.

4.2 Environmental Impact of Colonialism and Maasai Lifestyle Changes

After the overview of Maasai livelihoods and practices, this section analyses how the colonial arrival and implementation of environmental regulations impacted the Maasai way of life, either drastically by disrupting practices, or by introducing legal regulations that required community adaptation and lifestyle changes from the Maasai's side.

Colonial conservation policies mostly ignored traditional African ways of caring for the environment, focusing instead on Western ideas of conservation (Kideghesho, 2009). While the environmental impacts of colonial conservation policies are fairly well documented in literature, far less attention has been given to the profound social consequences these policies had on local communities and their ways of life. This section tries to prove why it is crucial to understand that landscapes were not empty spaces but home to people with deep ecological knowledge and cultural ties to the land.

German Colonial Rule and the Spread of Trypanosomiasis

The most evident and impactful effect of colonial arrival on the environment was the spread of diseases, in particular trypanosomiasis (Munro, 2021). Tanzania, at the time known as Tanganyika, was under German colonial rule from 1885 to 1919, forming part of German East Africa (Iliffe, 1979; Kideghesho, 2009). Germany began its colonial efforts in East Africa in a moment of rising global competition over trade. As Iliffe (1979) pointed out Germany officially decided to establish a colony in East Africa in February 1885, led by Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. This move was influenced mostly by the fact that after Germany became a unified country in 1871, it went through fast industrial growth, which created both the resources and the motivation to expand overseas. At the same time, Germany, like other European powers, wanted to challenge Britain's long-standing control over global trade (Iliffe, 1979).

During this time, most environmental management practices already in use by communities, such as controlled burning, land cultivation, and livestock grazing, were disregarded by colonial officials, and in some cases disrupted, due to the implementation of colonial regulations on the environment (Kideghesho, 2009, Munro, 2021).

In the 1890s, the area surrounding Tarangire and Manyara was significantly impacted by the Great Rinderpest epidemic, a highly contagious viral disease affecting cattle and other ungulates. Originating in Asia, the Great Rinderpest epidemic spread rapidly across Africa in the late 19th century, particularly during the 1890s, decimating livestock and wildlife populations, and leading to the widespread abandonment of grazing lands by pastoralist communities (Koponen, 1988; Morens et al., 2011). This ecological shift encouraged bush encroachment, creating suitable habitats for tsetse flies, the insect vectors responsible for spreading trypanosomiasis, a dangerous parasitic disease affecting both humans and livestock (Headrick, 2014).

This ecological unrest also coincided with the onset of German colonial rule. Scholars point out one of the main reasons why trypanosomiasis started to spread even more, was caused by colonial restrictions on controlled burning, which local communities had long used to manage vegetation and maintain open landscapes (Iliffe, 1979; Jackson, 2022). Fires, considered environmentally dangerous by German colonials, actually helped prevent the spread of dense bush, which otherwise created ideal habitats for tsetse flies (Bluwstein, 2022). As a result of the ban on controlled burning, bush and woodland areas began to grow unchecked, increasing the risk of tsetse infestation. While colonial regulations may have reduced deforestation in some areas, they also inadvertently contributed to significant ecological imbalances.

Trypanosomiasis exists in two forms: animal trypanosomiasis (Nagana) and Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT), also known as sleeping sickness (WHO, 2023). Nagana affects both wild and domestic animals, especially livestock like cattle. It is spread by tsetse fly bites and causes symptoms such as fever, weakness, and weight loss, often leading to death if untreated (WHO, 2023). This greatly impacts pastoralist communities that depend on healthy animals (Koponen, 1988). HAT is a parasitic disease in humans, also spread by tsetse flies. In its early stage, symptoms include fever, headaches, and joint pain. In the later stage, the parasite attacks the nervous system, causing confusion, sleep problems, and eventually death if not treated (Koponen, 1988; Giblin, 2005).

As pointed out by Koponen (1988), although HAT had likely existed in the region in a mild endemic form for ages, it gained prominence during the colonial period. The Maasai as a community understood how to live and cope with the threat of trypanosomiasis, they knew that where there were flies, where cattle couldn't survive, and this knowledge was passed down for generations. This understanding helped communities avoid areas with high disease risk (Iliffe, 1979; Koponen, 1988; Kiffner et al., 2022). However, German colonial rule marked the beginning of major changes in how humans, wildlife, and landscapes interacted in the Tarangire region. As Haedrick (2014) noted, colonial healthcare mostly focused on keeping Europeans healthy and having enough local workers for important jobs. Diseases like trypanosomiasis were ignored unless they threatened colonial business. However, sometimes interventions were justified by the European wave of humanitarianism that characterised the time, but these were usually mixed with racist attitudes and the idea that Africans needed to be rescued (Haedrick, 2014).

British Colonial Rule (1919–1961)

Following Germany's defeat in World War I, the League of Nations granted Britain a mandate over Tanganyika in 1919 (Iliffe, 1979). Under British colonial rule, attempts were made to address the tsetse fly problem, which had been exacerbated during the German period. For colonial administrations, sleeping sickness was seen as a serious obstacle to their goals (Jackson, 2022). It endangered not only the health of African populations and their livestock, but also limited access to and use of fertile land, and was considered a threat to colonial economic interests and occupation (Hoppe, 2003; Jackson, 2022).

British efforts included clearing large areas of bush and relocating local communities (Kiffner et al., 2022). These measures were grounded in Western ideas that nature should be kept separate from human activities and that human progress was incompatible with the natural environment (Bluwstein, 2022). This perspective overlooked the fact that the spread of the pandemic was in actual fact, facilitated by colonial environmental policies that German rule had implemented, and starkly contrasted with traditional African practices, which emphasized coexistence with the environment.

In addition to bush clearing, the British imposed restrictions on local hunting practices, which had historically helped control tsetse populations by reducing the numbers of large game

animals (such as buffalo and other ungulates), primary hosts for tsetse flies (Kiffner et al., 2022). These regulations, along with deforestation and hunting restrictions, were frequently opposed by native authorities, who did not support British approaches to disease control or conservation (Kiffner et al., 2022).

Traditional Leadership, Land Ownership and Establishment of PAs

Another key impact of colonial rule was the introduction of centralized leadership among the Maasai, who had not traditionally followed a system with one chief or leader. Instead, as explained previously, decision-making was rooted in the community and based on the age-set system, where respected elders were chosen for their abilities, and prophets offered spiritual guidance (Hughes, 2006). This structure supported values such as equality, cooperation, and mutual respect. Although women were not part of the age-sets, they underwent similar rites of passage and gradually gained more political influence over time (Hodgson, 2001; Hughes, 2006). Young men, particularly morans (young warriors), also held considerable power within the community. The role of chiefs and headmen was introduced under colonial administration and continued even after independence in Tanzania (Hughes, 2006). Maasai chiefs are nowadays still considered crucial figures in the community, hold political or spiritual roles, and often act as intermediaries between the state authorities and the local population (Hughes, 2006).

The concept of individual land ownership among the Maasai was also introduced largely as a result of colonial interventions, though its full impact varied between regions and periods. Traditionally, Maasai territory functioned as a communal resource, with land collectively used and managed by the community (Iliffe, 1979; Kideghesho, 2009). This communal approach was fundamentally disrupted during the colonial era, in both Tanzania and Kenya, where the British began restricting Maasai access to their grazing lands and placing them into reserves; these actions laid the basis for future privatization of land (Hughes, 2006).

In Tanzania, the concept of land ownership started to spread already with the arrival of the British, when they established the first form of protected areas (PAs), known as game reserves. As Munro (2021) notes, the term “game reserve” itself reflects the language of the colonial hunting elite, who used to name wildlife as “game” and viewed animals as “objects” for the sport of hunting. The idea was adapted from the earlier concept of forest reserves, first

established in British India and later introduced across Africa, which were spaces created to safeguard timber resources for the needs of the empire (Munro, 2021). In a similar way, game reserves aimed to conserve animal populations, not for ecological preservation in a modern sense, but to ensure there were always enough animals available to be hunted without guilt (Munro, 2021).

In Tanzania, most game reserves then evolved to National Parks in the post-independence period; an exception was Serengeti National Park, formally established in 1948 (MacKenzie, 1988; Munro, 2021): But major changes in land ownership took place especially after independence, when state-driven policies, such as villagization policies of Tanzania's first president and subsequent land reforms, began to encourage individualized or state-controlled land tenure, further changing the Maasai view of land from a shared asset to one subject to individual ownership and regulation (Hughes, 2006). These transformations will be explored more thoroughly in the upcoming chapter on postcolonial Tanzania.

Hunting, Overhunting and Debates

During colonial rule, hunting regulations were often enforced on African communities but rarely applied to European settlers, who continued to hunt for sport, science, or tourism. In addition to banning traditional fire practices, the British imposed restrictions on local hunting, which had played a role in controlling tsetse fly populations by reducing large game animals like buffalo, key hosts of the disease-carrying flies (Jackson, 2022). These rules, together with deforestation and conservation measures, were often resisted by local leaders who disagreed with British strategies for disease control and wildlife protection. In addition, hunting limitations mostly served European interests, helping to preserve iconic wildlife for game hunting, tourism, and colonial prestige (MacKenzie, 1988).

Since the beginning of colonial rule, white hunters were seen as "sportsmen" while Africans were labelled as "poachers", and therefore as practicing illegal hunting (MacKenzie, 1988; Majamba, 2001). This image of the African poacher helped justify the imposition of strict rules and the use of violence against people accused of hunting illegally, who were eventually evicted from national parks (Munro, 2021). As a result, wildlife preservation policies were mainly aimed at stopping African communities from hunting and limiting their access to land. In addition, big-game hunting was protected and promoted as a special privilege for the colonial

elite, portrayed as being more sustainable and controlled, specific to only some areas, and more careful towards overhunting (Munro, 2021).

Maasai hunting in particular, was usually seen as being guided by local knowledge and only aiming to get the most meat with the least effort (Du Toit, 2002). According to colonial hunters, this worked well in the past when there were fewer people, less advanced weapons, and healthy ecosystems. But, also a consequence of colonial arrival, guns became more common, bushmeat was sold for profit, and traditional rules weakened. The idea was that African hunting, in a way, put more pressure on animals than before, especially outside the first protected areas created by colonials (Du Toit, 2002).

Du Toit (2002) offers a perspective on traditional hunting, suggesting that some practices may have been unsustainable under the new environmental pressures brought by colonial changes. The point that Du Toit (2002) makes is that colonial hunting regulations tried to respond to these changes by trying to limit overhunting to specific controlled game reserves. While this may be true from an environmental perspective, it is surely impossible to deny that colonial hunting laws were unfair and benefiting colonials over locals; as subsequent documents prove (See 4.2.3), hunting regulations were made mostly without involving local communities and ignored indigenous communities' rights on land and resources. This proves that colonial hunting could not be sustainable for the environment, since it did not consider previous existing hunting traditions. In addition, the language and poaching rhetoric used by the first colonials proved that these regulations did not come from a pure interest on environmental protection, but also from a perspective of superiority of knowledge (Mkumbukwa, 2008). Nelson's (2003) idea of "saving Africa from Africans" highlights how colonial powers often framed their interventions as benevolent missions. From a political ecology perspective, colonial conservation shows how authorities claimed they were protecting Africa's wildlife from illegal hunting, but in practice, this meant displacing indigenous communities and favouring colonial trophy hunting in smaller, controlled areas.

Livelihood Diversification and Agriculture

For the Maasai, livestock have long served as a vital source of economic sustenance and as a means of coping with natural challenges, such as recurring droughts and disease. The reason why pastoralism was a better option for these communities, is that unlike crops, which are fixed

in place and vulnerable to changing conditions, herds can be moved to areas with better rainfall, richer grazing, and less exposure to diseases, providing quicker solutions in difficult times (Conroy, 2001). As land available for grazing decreased and mobility became increasingly restricted, especially after the creation of national parks and game reserves, many Maasai began to adapt their livelihoods (McCabe et al., 2010).

Increasing land pressures, reduced access to traditional grazing routes led many Maasai households to begin farming as a supplementary activity. They started cultivating crops like maize and beans, not only to diversify their diets but also to generate additional income (McCabe et al., 2010). However, the move from livestock herding to mixed farming also brought new challenges. As farmland expanded into former grazing zones, it reduced the space available for cattle and wildlife alike. This change affected the Maasai's long-standing coexistence with wildlife: animals that were once tolerated or respected increasingly came to be seen as threats to crops and livelihoods (Kiffner et al., 2022). In this way, diversification has improved short-term food security and income for some families, but it has also deepened tensions between conservation and local livelihoods.

Land Dispossession

In the Maasai Steppe, restrictions on land use and mobility began under colonial rule. As Makulilo (2019) explains, although the colonial administration initially claimed to recognize customary land rights, it soon redefined ownership according to Western legal concepts, declaring all unregistered land to be state property. This shift excluded pastoralist practices such as grazing from being considered legitimate forms of land occupation, and large tracts of Maasai grazing territory were taken and used for settler agriculture, ranching, and to establish the first game reserves (Conroy, 2001; Makulilo, 2019).

As noted by Munro (2021), the creation of the Serengeti National Park in 1948 marked the beginning of large-scale evictions in northern Tanzania, all tied to conservation policy. Displacement began in the early 1950s, with most communities removed and only Maasai pastoralists permitted to remain under strict land-use restrictions. These measures reflected broader regional trends in East Africa, where human settlement was increasingly banned from all national parks by the late 1950s (Munro, 2021). These measures laid the groundwork for profound livelihood changes but did not immediately displace pastoralism as the primary mode

of subsistence (Homewood et al., 2009). It was in the postcolonial period, however, that the Maasai's transition toward agriculture accelerated.

A final note must be added regarding forms of cooperation between African communities and colonials. From the sources and documents examined, there is little to no evidence of meaningful cooperation between authorities and Maasai communities. Overall, these colonial transformations, ranging from land alienation and restricted hunting to imposed conservation policies, not only reshaped ecological systems but also laid the foundations for the exclusionary conservation models that persisted into the postcolonial era.

4.3 Colonial Conservation Laws and the Game Ordinances

As previously shown, colonial efforts had a huge and lasting impact on environmental management in Tanzania. However, an analysis of the process of institutionalization of conservation enacted after the arrival of colonialism is also necessary to understand the legislations that impacted communities residing in or near PAs, game reserves and national parks. This section focuses on the influence of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (SPWFE), founded in 1903 (Gissibl, 2006), the Game Ordinance of 1940, and the National Parks Ordinance of 1959. These bodies and legislations collectively illustrate the progression from ideological foundations to legal frameworks and, ultimately, to the physical displacement of communities. These policies implemented by British colonial authorities serve as examples of how a colonial vision of conservation was transformed into binding legislation that institutionalised exclusionary access to land and wildlife.

Of course, earlier measures during the German colonial period also shaped Maasai livelihoods, such as the 1896 Wildlife Decree, later ammended several times up to 1911 to address specific species and industry needs, the 1903 Jagdschutz-Verordnung (Hunting Protection Ordinance) and the 1904 Waldschutz-Verordnung (Forest Protection Ordinance), which restricted local communities' use of land and resources (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998; Majamba, 2001). However, these measures were fragmented, colonials could not effectively control lands and throughout the 35 years of German control no unified wildlife law was introduced (Majamba, 2001). For this reason, it is difficult to gain a clear understanding of the actual impact of these early conservation policies.

The origins of national park creation in colonial Tanganyika were more rooted in international conservation agendas rather than local initiatives. The Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (SPWFE) founded in 1903, played a major role in shaping early conservation discourse in British colonies, including in East Africa (Gissibl, 2006). The SPWFE was set up in 1903, mainly because colonial hunters were worried that popular game animals, especially in the Cape, were being hunted to the point of extinction (MacKenzie, 1988). Hunting was a big part of elite British culture at the time and was closely tied to showing off imperial status (MacKenzie, 1988; Prendergast & Adams, 2003). Over the years, the Society changed its name several times, becoming the Fauna Preservation Society in 1950, the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society in 1980, and finally Fauna and Flora International in 1995, while slowly broadening its focus beyond just protecting wildlife for sport and science (Prendergast & Adams, 2003).

As Prendergast and Adams (2003) show, the SPWFE basically acted as a lobby group, trying to influence colonial policy in Africa through its expertise on wildlife. The journal of the SPWFE highlights how, from the very beginning, the focus was on issues like the ivory trade, hunting, tsetse fly, and conservation (SPWFE, 1905a). SPWFE had strong connections in the British colonial government, reaching the top levels of power, such as administrators, game managers, and hunters who could provide practical experience. The Society wasn't just about sport hunting; it focused on creating organized conservation strategies across Africa (Prendergast & Adams, 2003). Their approach mainly involved setting up game reserves and creating hunting regulations to protect wildlife. These early efforts helped establish the protected area systems and rules that later became standard in the 20th century.

In addition, the 1933 Convention relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State, commonly called the London Convention, also introduced these ideas of setting aside large areas of land as protected spaces for wildlife, calling for stricter restrictions on local populations' hunting rights and urging signatory states to consider establishing national parks (Mkumbukwa, 2008). For instance, Lake Manyara National Park and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) were established as part of efforts to comply with the 1933 London Convention (Mkumbukwa, 2008). Some of the key parts of the Convention are summarized below.

“Article 2

For the purposes of the present Convention:

1. *The expression “national park” shall denote an area (a) placed under public control, the boundaries of which shall not be altered or any portion be capable of alienation except by the competent legislative authority, (b) set aside for the propagation, protection and preservation of wild animal life and wild vegetation, and for the preservation of objects of aesthetic, geological prehistoric, historical, archaeological, or other scientific interest for the benefit, advantage, and enjoyment of the general public, (c) in which the hunting, killing or capturing of fauna and the destruction or collection of flora is prohibited except by or under the direction or control of the park authorities” (Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in Their Natural State, 1933).*

According to Article 2 of the convention, a national park was area under public control, with boundaries that could only be altered by the legislative authority, set aside for the protection of wildlife and plant life, and preserving objects of scientific, historical, or aesthetic value for public benefit. Hunting, capturing animals, or collecting plants was to be prohibited except under the supervision of park authorities (Mkumbukwa, 2008). What can be noticed is surely a shift from a pure colonial interest in game to a broader interest towards conservation which put the protection of the environment as the main focus, as also noted by As we will see, however, these crescent interests will need a long time to also become practice. Article 8 of the 1933 London Convention outlines specific exceptions to wildlife protection measures, stating that:

“5. Nothing in the present Article shall (i) prejudice any right which may exist under the local law of any territory to kill animals without a licence in defence of life or property, or (ii) affect the right of the authorities of the territory to permit the hunting, killing, or capturing of any species (a) in time of famine, (b) for the protection of human life, public health, or domestic stock, (c) for any requirement relating to public order” (Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in Their Natural State, 1933).

In short, the convention also ensured that conservation rules don't override urgent human needs or local legal rights. As we can see, the London Convention was indeed promising, as it reflected an evolving conservation philosophy that sought to balance environmental protection with human and local interests. However, as following results will show, the implementation

of these ideas was slow, and the ideals expressed often didn't fully translate into effective policies or protections on the ground.

Game Ordinance 1940

British settlers hunted wildlife extensively, including endangered species, to feed the international trophy trade (Majaba, 2001). Nevertheless, growing international concern over this destruction pushed colonial governments to introduce conservation laws after ratifying global wildlife agreements (Majamba, 2001). As a response to these international pressures, the Game Ordinance was introduced in 1921 and later revised in 1940, and was thought to regulate hunting and protect endangered species. The 1921 Game Preservation Ordinance established areas like the Ngorongoro Crater, the Sealous and the Serengeti as game reserves (Senyagwa & Noel, 2014).

Wanitzek and Sippel (1998) quote the preamble to the Game Ordinance of 1940, which explicitly stated that the Ordinance's purpose was *"to make better provision for the preservation of game and wild animal life and to give effect to the provisions of the International Convention signed in London on the eighth day of November, 1933..."*.

From this preamble, it is clear that the ordinance was primarily concerned with meeting international standards and demonstrating compliance, rather than reflecting a genuine commitment to protecting nature or considering the needs of local communities. In addition, under the Game Ordinance, the Governor of Tanganyika was granted the authority to designate any area as a national park, as long as the Legislative Council approved it, and entry and settlement in national parks were generally restricted (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998).

In their discussion of colonial land laws, Wanitzek and Sippel (1998, p. 116) also cite Section 5 (1) of the Game Ordinance of 1940, which stated that:

"The Governor may, either by purchase or otherwise, acquire any private land situated within a national park if he considers it necessary or desirable in the interests thereof, paying therefore such compensation as may be agreed upon. Failing agreement, the Governor may expropriate such land and in such a case the provisions of the Land Acquisition Ordinance shall apply and any such expropriation shall be deemed to be an expropriation for 'public purposes' within the meaning of that Ordinance".

On a positive note, the ordinance did also include provisions on land ownership and residence: while the Governor had the authority to acquire or expropriate land for national parks with compensation, Section 6 ensured that people born or ordinarily residing within the park, as well as those holding rights over immovable property, could continue to live there, meaning that the residential rights of African communities were formally safeguarded (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998). In practice, this meant that the residential rights of African communities living inside these areas were not ignored by the ordinance.

In relation to hunting, Section 9 of the Game Ordinance of 1940 banned the activity in national parks. Although the exact section is not cited, Majamba (2001) also notes that the Game Ordinance of 1940 prohibited the use of firearms for hunting within national parks. Conversely, hunting in game reserves was permitted solely with a special permit from the Governor, and mostly for research purposes and the collection of specimens for scientific study (Majamba, 2001). Wanitzek & Sippel (1988) also add that in section 15 of the Game ordinance was stated that since residents could hold their rights to live in game reserves, according to law they could also kill animals for food or for self-defence.

By limiting hunting in game reserves to specimen collection or under a Governor-issued permit, this provision suggests that the interests of local populations were largely secondary to the colonial government's conservation and scientific goals. As Mkumbukwa (2008) explains that the idea behind these ordinances was that parks and reserves functioned as “buffer zones”, providing controlled spaces where activities such as hunting could be regulated to limit their impact on animal populations. Anyway, these measures faced serious opposition from local communities whose practices were restricted by the new regulations (Mkumbukwa, 2008).

Subsequent to the 1940 Game Ordinance, two more laws were introduced to regulate national parks in Tanganyika. The first was the National Parks Ordinance of 1948, which focused on the management and administration of parks but, unlike the 1940 Game Ordinance, did not include rules for acquiring or expropriating land (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998). The second was the National Parks Ordinance of 1959, which, as we can see, had a stronger approach and impact. The 1959 Ordinance was important for several reasons. First of all, it created the body that would later become Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), the authority governing and managing all national parks (Mkumbukwa, 2008).

Moreover, it strictly regulated hunting, making it illegal for anyone to hunt, capture, or harm animals in national parks without a permit from an authorized officer. Wanitzek and Sippel, (1998) clearly point out that these rules prevented local communities from hunting for subsistence or continuing their traditional practices within the national parks, and the laws made no provisions that would have allowed them to hunt for food.

“No person shall, save under and in accordance with a permit in writing signed by an authorized officer, hunt, capture, kill, wound or molest any animal... within a national park” (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998, p. 118, citing Section 16 (1), National Parks Ordinance, 1959).

This completely prohibited Maasai traditional livelihoods and economic activities, and meant that these communities could no longer remain in those areas. This also led for instance to the relocation of the Maasai from Serengeti National Park to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. As a matter of fact, Ngorongoro was designed differently from other parks, allowing both wildlife protection and Maasai pastoralist activities to coexist (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998).

A crucial change introduced by the 1959 law regarded the right of people to enter or live in national parks. Unlike the 1940 and 1948 Ordinances, with the 1959 law those whose birthplace or ordinary residence was inside a park, or who held land rights there, could no longer live or enter the park freely. To address this, the law provided compensation in exchange for land rights. Individuals had ten weeks from the park’s official proclamation to claim payment, and unclaimed rights after ten weeks were permanently lost (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998).

Additionally, Section 14 (1) of the National Parks Ordinance of 1959 established a group of trustees responsible for managing and maintaining the national parks, and access was mainly limited to these trustees, game tourists, park staff, and officers on duty (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998).

In the following page, Table 1 provides a comparative analysis of the impacts of the Game Ordinance of 1940 and the National Parks Ordinance of 1959 on African communities.

Aspect	Game Ordinance 1940	National Parks Ordinance 1959
Hunting	Prohibited in national parks; allowed for residents in game reserves with Governor's permit.	Completely prohibited (except with a permit from an authorized officer).
Residing in Parks	Locals born or living in parks could stay.	Locals no longer had automatic residence rights; entry by permit only.
Land Acquisition	Governor could acquire land with compensation.	Land rights extinguished; compensation if claimed within 10 weeks.
Scope	Parks and reserves for wildlife protection; some local use allowed.	Strictly protected parks; human activities limited; managed by Trustees.

Table 1: A comparative analysis of Game Ordinance 1940 and National Parks Ordinance 1959

Finally, it is important to acknowledge a significant discrepancy between the previously mentioned colonial conservation laws and the lived realities of the communities they affected. While colonial ordinances make no explicit reference to groups such as the Maasai, their implementation often resulted in highly impactful consequences on land access, movement, and traditional livelihoods. A detail worth noting is that while the 1959 Ordinance provides for compensation when land rights are extinguished, it does not specify how fair or sufficient that compensation should be, nor how local communities could negotiate it. This silence suggests that the colonial government assumed authority over land, sidelining the agency of those most affected. In addition, the Ordinance makes little or no reference to practices such as controlled burning, spiritual ties to land, or other cultural traditions. By failing to formally acknowledge these dimensions, the law not only disregarded but actively ignored essential aspects of local life, thereby contributing to cultural erosion alongside the loss of material resources.

4.4 Postcolonial Shifts in Conservation Thinking

4.4.1 New Paradigms: Nyerere's *Ujamaa* and Socialist Environmental Thinking

Tanzania's early post-independence conservation was deeply affected by the policies implemented by Julius Nyerere (1922-1999), who served first as Prime Minister and later as President of Tanzania until 1985. His philosophy, and the policies derived from it, reframed ideas and reorganized people, land, resources and therefore, environmental conservation in the first years of independence. At the basis of Nyerere's ideology were the "Arusha Manifesto", a speech delivered by the president in 1961 and later developed into a national policy document, and the "Ujamaa" philosophy, considered the foundation of African Socialism in Tanzania (Majamba, 2001; Jennings, 2017; Boesl, 2023). Senyagwa and Noel (2014, p.3) report the words of J.K. Nyerere, who during his speech in 1961 stated:

"The survival of our wildlife is a matter of grave concern to all of us in Africa. These wild creatures amid the wild places they inhabit are not only important as a source of wonder and inspiration, but are an integral part of our natural resources and our future livelihood and well being. In accepting the trusteeship of our wildlife we solemnly declare that we will do everything in our power to make sure that our children's grand-children will be able to enjoy this rich and precious inheritance.

The conservation of wildlife and wild places calls for specialist knowledge, trained manpower and money, and we look to other nations to co-operate with us in this important task - the success or failure of which not only affects the continent of Africa but the rest of the world as well."

This statement was the starting point from which Tanzanian conservation developed up until the 90s (United Republic of Tanzania, 1998). As we can denote, Nyerere presented wildlife as a collective inheritance, something Tanzanians (and Africans more broadly) must safeguard not only for themselves but for future generations. In addition, he sought global support, cooperation, but also international knowledge and funding, underlining that the wellbeing of the natural environment in Tanzania is a global matter and responsibility.

Nyerere described wildlife as offering inspiration and awe, reflecting a perspective that sees nature as an unspoiled environment. This logic recalls fortress conservation and colonial approaches. Yet, he departed from a pure separation between humans and nature, but added a

nationalist spirit to this relationship, describing conservation as both an act of pride and a moral obligation to the international community.

In 1967 TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) issued the Arusha Declaration, an official policy document that outlined Tanzania's new political and economic path toward African socialism, national self-reliance, and the country's main goals for post-independence nation-building (United Republic of Tanzania, 1998). The focus was also on matters of poverty, suggesting that the president viewed resource conservation and poverty eradication as intertwined national agendas. This connection between social and environmental objectives is reflected in part three of the Arusha Declaration (TANU, 1967), which states:

“We are at war: TANU is involved in a war against poverty and oppression in our country; this struggle is aimed at moving people (and the people of Africa as a whole) from a state of poverty to a state of prosperity. We have been oppressed a great deal, we have been exploited a great deal and we have been disregarded a great deal... We now intend to bring about a revolution which will ensure that we are never again victims of these things”.

With the Arusha Declaration, the philosophy of Ujamaa (meaning “familyhood”) was officially adopted as state policy under the ruling party TANU (Boesl, 2023). Nyerere presented his vision of African Socialism in an essay in 1962, where he rooted it in values he associated with precolonial African societies. He emphasized that these societies were based on communal living and collective ownership of land, where people worked together and supported one another (Jennings, 2017). A central element for him was in fact egalitarianism: in traditional communities, wealth was shared and differences in status or property were less significant (Boesl, 2023). Equally important was the principle of participation, the idea that every man and woman should contribute their labour and abilities for the prosperity of the entire nation. Ujamaa therefore focused on the three pillars of communitarianism, equality, and participation, framing them as the basis of African societies and leading to the achievement of socialism (Jennings, 2017; Boesl, 2023).

Ujamaa was centred on the idea that the state should control the means of production. Land, industries, and even natural resources were taken from private hands and placed under government ownership, with the aim of guaranteeing equal access and preventing exploitation. The intention was to build a fair society where no one lived in luxury while others remained poor (Majamba, 2001; Jennings, 2017). In practice, however, the government lacked the skills

and capacity to manage such vast resources effectively, and equality was promised more than delivered. In addition, other crises such as the collapse of the East African Community and the war with Uganda, worsened the situation (Majamba, 2001). In short, by removing private initiative and concentrating power in the state, Ujamaa created dependency rather than self-reliance, and local communities often found themselves sidelined rather than empowered, for several reasons.

The biggest impact was caused by the Ujaama Villagization policy (Ujamaa vijijini⁴), often referred to as “rural socialism”, which emerged after the 1967 Arusha Declaration and marked the start of large-scale community resettlement (Schneider, 2004). In order to promote equality of all, people were resettled into communal villages. This process at first was voluntary and people could decide whether to join these villages, but it became more coercive and compulsory in 1973 after lacking success (Schneider, 2004). The idea was that people living together in planned villages could more easily share resources, farm collectively, and receive state services like schools and clean water. Villagization was strongly linked to the Arusha Declaration’s idea that work was the foundation of development. By moving people into villages, the government wanted to stop what it saw as laziness and make sure everyone was working (Boesl, 2023). Part three of the Declaration further emphasized the state’s intention to promote an ethic of hard work when discussing the concept of good policies:

“(c) Good Policies

The principles of our policy of self-reliance go hand in hand with our policy of socialism. In order to prevent exploitation it is necessary for everybody to work and to live on his own labour ... nobody should be allowed to loiter in towns or villages without doing work which would enable him to be self-reliant without exploiting his relatives” (TANU, 1967).

However, the coercive nature of the villagization policy faced resistance from people, and the government’s response was intimidation, and in some cases, old homes were burned to prevent return (Boesl, 2023).

The Declaration continued:

“Land is the basis of human life and all Tanzanians should use it as a valuable investment for future development. Because the land belongs to the nation, the Government has to see to it

⁴ Literally “Ujamaa in the villages”. See Boesl (2023).

that it is being used for the benefit of the whole nation and not for the benefit of one individual or just a few people” (TANU, 1967).

Nevertheless, the impact of Ujamaa policies on African communities such as the Maasai was dramatic, since villagization often meant that communities were forcibly relocated from their ancestral lands into new settlements planned by the state. Community resettlement, villagization, together with the previously mentioned expansion of national parks and game reserves greatly reduced their access to traditional grazing areas. As their mobility was increasingly restricted and pasturelands diminished, many were forced to take up cultivation (Conroy, 2001). However, this transition to agriculture was not taken out of preference, but as a strategy for survival and a process of adaptation to the changing policies and environment. The period after the Arusha Declaration in 1967 marked a significant transition for the Maasai, from a purely pastoral way of life to agro-pastoral systems (Conroy 2001).

In addition, the villagization process not only pushed pastoralists like the Maasai toward sedentary agriculture but also reshaped practices related to hunting. As communities were relocated into concentrated settlements, mobility across larger landscapes declined, and traditional hunting grounds became less accessible (Jennings, 2017). Furthermore, as evident in Nyerere’s framing of wildlife increasingly framed as a national resource under state control, hunting was further restricted or criminalized, eroding long-standing subsistence practices of indigenous communities (Nyerere, 1973).

What is noticeable is that pastoralists and hunters, such as the Maasai, are neither explicitly mentioned nor meaningfully considered in the new self-reliant model proposed by the Declaration. Their livelihoods, which depended on mobility, grazing rights, seasonal land use, and in some cases subsistence hunting, did not align with cultivation and communal living. This reveals a tension: the government’s universalist language about “the people” masked an exclusionary approach. By equating self-reliance almost exclusively with farming and cooperative village life, the Arusha Declaration effectively marginalized groups like the Maasai. This shows how policies of equality and unity still failed to acknowledge the full diversity of Tanzania’s population and ways of life. And if self-reliance is only defined through communal agriculture and villagization, then communities like the Maasai are denied the possibility to be “self-reliant” on their own terms. Their only option was resistance, by refusing villagization or continuing pastoralist practices informally, or adaptation, by adopting an agro-pastoralist lifestyle (Conroy, 2001).

4.4.2 Post-Colonial Legislations

Following independence, the Fauna Conservation Ordinance of 1959 was replaced by the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974 (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998; Majamba, 2001). The basic institutional framework largely remained the same, but some adjustments were also introduced. The same categories used for colonial game ordinances to trace the changes introduced by this act and its impacts, are used to understand the impact of postcolonial policies, namely entry or residence in the park, hunting restrictions, other restrictions such as grazing and livestock keeping. Section 5(1) of the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974 stated that “*The President may, by order in the Gazette, declare any area of Mainland Tanzania to be a game reserve*” (URT, 1974).

As noticed, the complete authority to turn land into a game reserve was given to the president. All wildlife in Tanzania was placed under government ownership, ignoring that some land was public and some private (Mkumbukwa 2008). Game reserves came with very strict rules. These included bans or heavy restrictions on entering or living in the area, carrying weapons, setting fires, cutting or removing plants, hunting or fishing, grazing livestock, or digging (Sections 5 of the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974, as mentioned by Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998). Furthermore, the Act empowers the Director of National Parks to declare partial game reserves and the wildlife minister to create game-controlled areas. However, this of course doesn't require them to consider local people's traditions, needs, or cultural ties to the land when setting these protected areas (Mkumbukwa 2008).

Referring to the entry and residence in game reserves, Section 7(10) of the Act proceeded:

“Restriction on entry into and residence in game reserves

(1) No person other than—

- (a) a person whose place of ordinary residence is within the reserve; or*
- (b) a person travelling through the reserve along a highway shall enter a game reserve except by and in accordance with the written authority of the Director previously sought and obtained” (URT, 1974).*

Unlike the National Parks Ordinance of 1959, which clearly ended customary land rights in national parks and required compensation for affected communities, no such rule exists for

game reserves according to the 1974 Act (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998). Individuals whose residence is already within a game reserve are generally permitted to remain, despite the fact that entry and residence are restricted. As a matter of fact, according to the act, people are not allowed to enter or live in a game reserve unless they have written permission from the Director (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998). The only exceptions are: people who already live inside the reserve or people who are just passing through the reserve on a public road. For the Maasai, this rule meant that even though they had lived on and used these lands for generations, they could no longer freely move into or use game reserves unless they already lived there. Since the Maasai are traditionally pastoralists who depend on seasonal movement with their cattle, these restrictions limited their grazing lands.

One notable change was that during the colonial period, administrative officers could grant hunting permits, but now it was the Director of Wildlife's authority's responsibility to grant them (Majamba, 2001). As a result, we can deduce that after 1974, the process of giving hunting licenses became more centralized and less responsive to local realities, being in the hands of a central authority. As declared in the Act:

"1) No person shall, except with the permission in writing from the Director previously sought and obtained and in the manner specified in the writing, hunt, capture, kill, wound or molest any animal, including fish, in any game reserve or a game controlled area" (URT, 1974, part III, section 10).

In other words, under the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974, hunting is generally forbidden unless a permit is obtained. It provides for two types of permits: one allowing the hunting of "specified animals" for food, and another for hunting "scheduled animals" for trophies (Section 21, as quoted in Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998). In case of violation of the law, different punishments were set depending on which animal had been hunted: the more protected the species, the harsher the penalty, which went from fines to imprisonment (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998).

The Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974 introduced a wide range of restrictions on human activities within game reserves, covering not only hunting but also the use of weapons, livestock grazing, and even vegetation use. These provisions made it clear that local practices, central to the livelihoods of communities such as the Maasai, were increasingly criminalized or heavily regulated. The impact on Maasai livelihoods is directly deducible. Further restrictions declared in the Act are the following:

“8. Restriction on carriage of weapons in game reserves

(1) No person shall be in possession of a firearm, bow and arrow in a game reserve without the written permission of the Director previously sought and obtained” (URT, 1974, part III, section 8).

“9. Protection of vegetation in game reserves

(1) No person shall wilfully or negligently cause any bush or grass fire, or fell, cut, burn, injure or remove any standing tree, shrub, bush, sapling, seedling or any part thereof in a game reserve except in accordance with the written permission previously sought and obtained from the Director” (URT, 1974, part III, section 9).

The Act restricts people in game reserves from carrying weapons intended for hunting, altering vegetation or starting fires, unless they have prior written permission from the authorities. In addition, individuals were prohibited from setting traps and grazing livestock in these areas without prior written permission from the Director of Wildlife. Violations of these provisions could result in substantial fines or imprisonment of up to two years. The restrictions on grazing forced the Maasai to either move their herds outside protected areas or risk criminalization, thereby threatening their economic security (Wanitzek & Sippel, 1998). Together, these restrictions illustrate how this policy sought to regulate almost every aspect of human interaction with the environment, leaving little space for Maasai practices.

Table 2 summarizes the impacts of the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974.

Aspect	Restrictions under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1974	Impact on Maasai
Hunting	Hunting prohibited without a permit from the Director; two types of permits exist (food or trophy).	Maasai lost traditional hunting rights; could no longer hunt for subsistence unless officially permitted.

Residing in Reserves	Entry and residence restricted; only residents or travellers on public roads are allowed without a permit.	Restricted Maasai seasonal movement and pastoral mobility; limited access to traditional grazing lands.
Land / Property Rights	All land within reserves owned by the government; no formal recognition of existing customary land or grazing rights.	Maasai land use marginalized; traditional territories and pastoral routes disrupted.
Grazing Livestock	Grazing prohibited without prior written permission from the Director.	Forced Maasai to move cattle outside reserves or risk legal consequences;
Vegetation & Fire Management	Cutting trees, burning grass, or altering vegetation prohibited without permission.	Prevented Maasai from practicing traditional land management, including controlled burns and use of plant resources.
Carriage of Weapons & Traps	No possession of firearms, bows, arrows, or traps without prior written approval.	Criminalized traditional hunting tools; restricted defence of livestock and continuation of subsistence practices.

Table 2: Impacts of the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974

4.5 Colonial Legacies

Even after independence, the Tanzanian government largely retained or slightly reframed colonial conservation and hunting laws (Mukumbwa, 2008). This had two main consequences: first of all, it continued to prioritize the international trophy hunting market, with the government acting as an intermediary; secondly, resistance from local communities continued (Mkumbukwa, 2008).

Postcolonial theory and political ecology jointly inform the theoretical analysis of post-independence conservation policies and their social consequences. A postcolonial lens is used to trace the continuities between colonial and postcolonial governance, revealing how the state's environmental and hunting regulations reproduced earlier structures of exclusion and control. By upholding or slightly reframing colonial environmental and hunting regulations up until 1989, the postcolonial state maintained the exclusion and marginalization of local people especially from the hunting sector (Majamba, 2001). The government continued expanding protected areas and converting some into national parks, but the restrictions fuelled tension between wildlife authorities, who tried to balance local and international conservation goals, and local populations. As a result, many communities became resentful of state conservation initiatives, and some resorted to illegal or unsustainable hunting, which contributed to environmental degradation (Mkumbukwa 2008). Some communities perceived little to no benefit from a government that was supposed to contribute to their development and not displace them. In this respect, a political ecology approach situates these developments within broader political and economic contexts, uncovering how conservation policies served both national and international agendas at the expense of local livelihoods.

In the 1990s, Tanzania introduced major land reforms: the Land Act of 1999 referring to general and protected land, and the Village Land Act of 1999, referring to village land (Kusiluka et al., 2011). The acts marked an important change from colonial-era laws by recognizing that land has economic value. While all land in Tanzania still belonged to the state, the laws gave people more formal ways to use and control land through Certificates of Granted Right of Occupancy (CGROs), allowing people to use land for up to 99 years. This seemed to give more security to local communities and acknowledged the value of land for their livelihoods (Kusiluka et al., 2011). However, in practice, the same patterns of land loss continued. Under the name of environmental protection, many indigenous and rural communities, including the Maasai, were still displaced from areas rich in forests, water, or grazing land. For the Maasai, this meant further restrictions on their traditional grazing areas and continued pressure to adapt their pastoral lifestyle, often forcing them into alternative livelihoods or relocation, despite the appearance of legal protection (Kusiluka et al., 2011).

Land acquisition, where the government or private buyers take land, also causes problems. The Land Acquisition Act of 1967 allowed the President to take land for public use and urban expansion in exchange of compensation. Indigenous property owners, who were in need, started

to sell their properties, but payments were often late or insufficient (Kusiluka et al., 2011). Additionally, being forced to leave their land, communities experienced psychological difficulties, and cultural and social losses, such as their ties to neighbourhoods, sacred places, or burial sites, which could not easily be compensated (Kusiluka et al., 2011).

In essence, while postcolonial interventions were framed as necessary for conservation, they have repeated the same exclusionary outcomes of earlier periods, displacing local populations and disrupting their livelihoods. The perspective of postcolonialism is again used in this case to understand continuities between colonial and post-independence land governance. It shows that historical logics of control over land and resources persist and shape the lives of local communities, including the Maasai, and patterns of land alienation re-emerged, now camouflaged by the language of ecological preservation and rural development.

During the 1990s, conflicts increased between the Tanzanian government and the Maasai communities over land especially in Tarangire and Manyara, which were among the highest income-generating national parks in the country (Jama & Mesfin, 2024). These parks were very valuable to the state because of income from tourism and conservation, but this often came at the cost of the Maasai's land rights. One key site of conflict was Manyara Ranch, a large cattle ranch owned by the government and located between the two parks. As Jama and Mesfin (2024) describe, from 1991 Tanzania intensified economic liberalization, and the government planned to privatize the ranch to increase profitability. Local Maasai communities demanded the land to be returned to them because it was historically theirs, but the government refused, saying the land was too important to be left entirely in their hands. Instead, the ranch was transferred to foreign investors (Jama & Mesfin, 2024).

Exclusion from the ranch was a serious loss for the Maasai, whose growing population increased the demand for grazing land. A fence was put up to block their access, but many Maasai herders continued to enter secretly, insisting on their ancestral rights to the land dating back to their youth as warriors called Ilmurran. Because of this, they faced several punitive measures such as fines and cattle confiscation by both government authorities and the foreign managers running the ranch (Jama & Mesfin, 2024).

From a political ecology perspective, the conflict over Manyara Ranch illustrates that the Maasai's exclusion is not simply a local dispute. Political ecology shows that this situation is part of a wider pattern in which policies, institutions, and market forces interact to reinforce

power imbalances, control resource access, and constrain the ability of communities to sustain traditional practices. The Maasai's continued attempts to graze their cattle despite fences also reveal the tensions between formal legal structures and customary land use, emphasizing how political, economic, and ecological factors are inseparable in shaping human-environment relations.

5 Community-Based Conservation, NGOs and International Frameworks

5.1 Community-Based Conservation: WMAs and Legal Changes

Community-Based Conservation (CBC) as a formal approach started to take shape in the 1980s and 1990s, with the aim of combining wildlife protection with local development to integrate local communities into conservation management (Leader-Williams et al., 1996; Kiffner et al., 2024). It emerged as a response to the failures of “fortress conservation”, the model of strictly protected parks that excluded local communities, often leading to conflicts with indigenous communities (Kiffner et al., 2024). Rising poaching and the loss of habitats in many African countries made conservationists and international organisations realize that the American National Park model has not worked well to protect wildlife in Africa (Songorwa, 1999). For this reason, the objective became ensuring that communities could benefit directly from wildlife conservation and natural resources.

As a matter of fact, as underlined by Bergin (1995), community conservation involves a joint effort between local people and institutions that share both the rights and duties related to conservation. He emphasizes that effective conservation depends on coordination among all parties involved. In other words, this means that both local people and organisations need to work together, so that conservation is managed not only by authorities but also by the communities who live with and depend on natural resources.

Examples of CBC found throughout the African continent include Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE Program, which empowered communities to manage wildlife and benefit from tourism and hunting revenues; Tanzania's Selous Conservation Programme, which tested community involvement in wildlife management and benefit-sharing; and Kenya's Wildlife Associations, which enabled local groups to manage wildlife and earn income from tourism (Leader-Williams et al., 1996).

However, from an institutional perspective, the previously analysed Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974 made the development of community-based conservation in the early 1980s very difficult. This was mainly because all wildlife was legally owned by the state, leaving local people without real authority or responsibility over the resources they lived alongside. In practice, communities could only be given a quota by the Department of Wildlife, which allowed them to hunt a small number of animals legally (Leader-Williams et al., 1996). As a consequence, this still kept power in the hands of the state and maintained a top-down system

of management. In other words, villagers had little motivation to protect wildlife, since they did not directly benefit from it.

Reforms were necessary to address this problem, since villagers should have at least been given use rights over wildlife found on land they hold title deeds for, so that they could benefit from conservation in a tangible way (Ndolanga, 1996). However, while this proposal seemed progressive, it also had clear limitations. In practice, few rural communities in Tanzania actually hold title deeds, as most land is managed under customary tenure systems that were undermined and redefined through colonial and postcolonial laws (Leader-Williams et al., 1996). As a result, such a reform would have mainly benefited the small minority with formal titles, reinforcing rather than reducing inequality. From a political ecology perspective, this reflects how conservation and land reforms often privilege those integrated into state systems of ownership while continuing to marginalize pastoral and rural communities whose rights remain largely customary.

This debate was particularly relevant in the Tarangire–Manyara ecosystem, where the Maasai population grew significantly in the 1980s and 1990s. With more people and livestock depending on the same land, pressures on grazing pastures and water sources intensified. Yet, despite their long-standing presence and dependence on these lands, the Maasai were still excluded from decision-making and retained few rights over wildlife (Leader-Williams, 1996). These dynamics revealed the persistent imbalance between conservation priorities and the rights of local communities.

From TANAPA (Tanzania National Parks Authority)’s perspective, community conservation in the 1980s was an important tool that needed a clear national framework (Bergin, 1995). In the early 1990s, the institution began experimenting with this approach by launching pilot projects in three villages, with support from the African Wildlife Foundation, to demonstrate how local participation could work within national park structures. In 1990, TANAPA also appointed a Community Conservation Warden (CCW) in Tarangire and Manyara to monitor activities, share experiences, and contribute to policy development (Bergin, 1995). This process eventually produced a draft national policy in 1993, laying the groundwork for community-based activities around protected areas.

Although TANAPA’s initiatives brought some benefits, their success depended heavily on external donors, limited resources and global conservation preferences and knowledge. This

reliance emphasized the importance of developing a stronger national policy on community conservation (Moyo et al. 2016). Moreover, TANAPA's experience showed that even when communities were given land titles, they had little actual control.

As Rwegasira (2012) interestingly describes it, the history of land deeds in Tanzania reflects a long struggle between the "landed" and the "landless" over competing land rights. In the pre-colonial era, land was held communally, with ownership based on customs and traditions managed by local leaders such as chiefs and elders (Lawbay Advocates, 2017). This form of customary land tenure bases rights and responsibilities on community practices passed down through generations and is administered according to the social structures, traditions and heritage of the local people. This system was gradually undermined by the German and later British colonial administrations, which introduced new land tenure systems while allowing customary practices to continue in limited form (Lawbay Advocates, 2017). After independence, the Tanzanian government transformed previous tenures into government leases, later converting them into rights of occupancy under the Government Leasehold (Conversion to Right of Occupancy) Act of 1969, a reform that brought most valuable land under state control (Lawbay Advocates, 2017). Although inheritance remained the most common way of acquiring land (Dancer, 2014), the Land Act of 1999 sought to formalize land ownership through the issuance of Certificates of Granted Right of Occupancy, recognizing land as an economic asset while maintaining state ownership (Aikaeli & Markussen, 2017). However, the right of occupancy does not constitute full ownership but rather a long-term right to use the land, since all land legally remains in the hands of the state. This distinction underlines the complexity and limitations of land title deeds in Tanzania, where formalization has not necessarily translated into genuine control or security for local communities. Additionally, obtaining a land title was and still is a costly and bureaucratically complex process, so that many, especially in rural areas, remain outside the formal system and continue to rely on customary land tenure (Aikaeli & Markussen, 2017).

Consequently, CBC often faced problems, since limitations in land ownership and control directly shaped how local communities engaged with conservation initiatives, and insecure land rights often prevented them from meaningfully participating in or benefiting from CBC programmes. Government bureaucracy often limited real community control, and basic needs such as grazing land and water were often not addressed (Moyo, 2019). The issue was not only the shortage of these resources but also the lack of rights and participation in decisions

regarding their use. For pastoralist communities like the Maasai, restrictions on grazing and water access within or near conservation areas undermined their livelihoods and reduced their willingness to cooperate with conservation authorities (Moyo et al., 2016; Moyo, 2019).

In response to these challenges, in the 1990s and 2000s CBC started to become more institutionalized and the government passed the Wildlife Conservation Act of 2009, which replaced the 1974 legislation. This reform aimed to create a community-centred and inclusive framework for wildlife protection by giving local communities a clearer role in conservation (URT, 2009). The Act provided for the establishment and management of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), where communities could share in decision-making and benefit from tourism revenues (URT, 2009). It also emphasized the need to balance environmental protection with human development, acknowledging that conservation could only succeed if it contributed to local livelihoods.

Tanzania became an important site for experimenting with new conservation models. The government introduction of WMAs gave local communities ownership rights and responsibility to manage wildlife in their areas, allowing them to directly benefit from conservation efforts (Songorwa, 1999). In Tanzania this approach aimed to support both wildlife protection and enhance sustainable livelihoods for people living near these protected lands. As Songorwa (1999) explains, the idea was to give villages rights to manage wildlife and share the benefits. According to official thinking, this would motivate communities to conserve resources while improving local livelihoods. The Maasai were frequently at the centre of these initiatives because of their history of dispossession and visibility in conservation debates. While WMAs formally recognized their role, they often brought mixed results: they brought some opportunities for benefit-sharing and involvement, but at the same time, some restrictions continued (Moyo et al., 2016).

The analysis of CBC in Tanzania is guided by postcolonial theory and political ecology to make sense of the persistent challenges faced by local communities. Postcolonial theory helps explain why, despite the introduction of legal frameworks like WMAs and the Wildlife Conservation Act of 2009, the Maasai and other local communities often remain excluded from meaningful decision-making and control over wildlife and land. Most importantly, the control over resources continues to shape interactions between the state, conservation authorities, and communities.

At the same time, a political ecology lens highlights how policies, institutions, and market interests interact to shape who benefits from conservation and who bears the costs. The challenges facing CBC, including bureaucratic barriers, donor dependency, and conflicts over grazing and water, demonstrate that conservation is not just an ecological issue but a political and economic one, where power relations determine access, control, and incentives. By combining these frameworks, this chapter shows that certain CBC initiatives remain embedded in historical and structural inequalities, and that the success of community-based conservation depends not only on formal legal recognition but also on addressing enduring power imbalances and material needs.

Example from Tarangire-Manyara: Burunge WMA

Kicheleri et al., (2021) refers to several examples of Community-Based Wildlife Management (CWM) programmes in Tanzania and notes how they are all designed as buffer zone initiatives. This means they are set up in villages that border or lie close to existing protected areas such as national parks and game reserves. Because of this proximity, these programmes work with local communities living next to conservation zones like Tarangire, so that people share responsibility for managing wildlife in the areas most directly affected by conservation (Kicheleri et al., 2021).

Local communities around Tarangire National Park are closely involved in conservation efforts. Several initiatives aim to reduce conflicts between people and wildlife while providing economic opportunities through eco-tourism and several key land use practices, including economic, spiritual and cultural (Mariki, 2019). Two important examples are Burunge Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Tanzania People & Wildlife (TPW) program. Burunge WMA connects Tarangire and Lake Manyara National Parks and was designed as a community-based project where local communities would manage land together and share tourism income (Kicheleri et. al, 2021). TPW, on the other hand, focuses on more practical solutions like building walls to protect livestock from predators, environmental education, and promoting sustainable farming. Although these projects were introduced with the goal of benefiting communities, the results have not always matched the promises. The example of Burunge WMA shows how conservation initiatives can end up harming local people instead of helping them.

Burunge Wildlife Management Area (WMA)(fig.2) was created in 2003 after efforts by the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), and local officials, and it became official in 2006 (Moyo et al., 2016). At first, it included five villages with around 22,000 people. Between 2004 and 2009, these villages split into ten (URT, 2012).

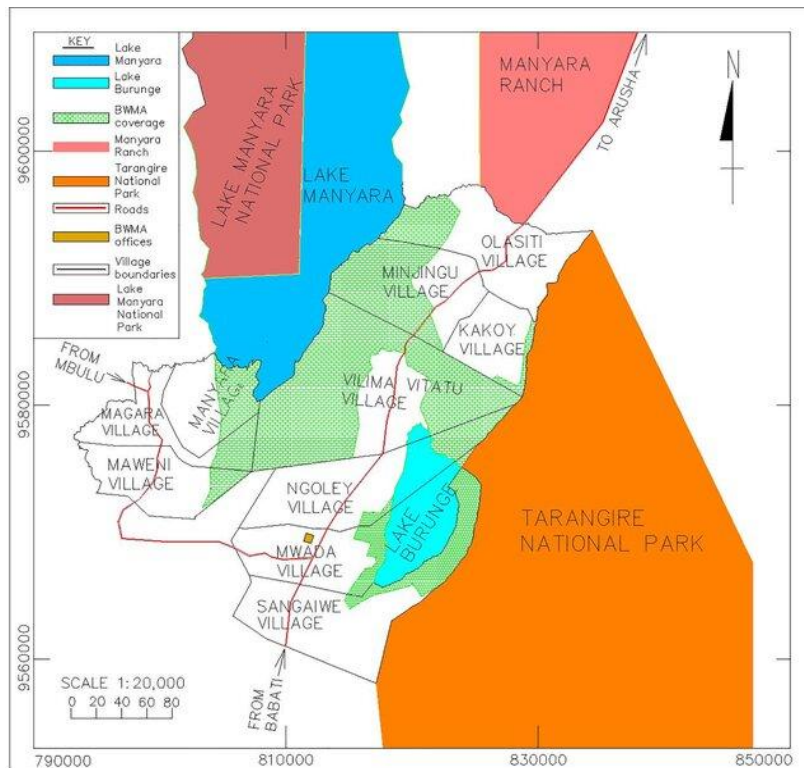


Figure 2: Burunge WMA in Tarangire-Manyara (Kicheleri et al., 2021)

Even though it is often described it as the “best example” of community conservation in Tanzania, the situation in the practice is different. As Moyo (2019) notices, the villages involved in Burunge WMA originally came from the Ujamaa villages system of the 1970s, when the Tanzanian government forced rural people to relocate into collective villages to provide schools, health services, and development. The idea was good in theory but in practice it led to coercion, corruption, and many problems. Still, the way villages are organized today is influenced by that Ujamaa legacy (Davis, 2011).

The roots of this problem lie in Tanzania’s legal framework. The Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974 declared that all wildlife belonged to the state, which excluded communities from ownership and decision-making (Kicheleri, 2021). During the 1980s, reforms aimed at decentralization began to shift this. In 1982, new laws gave more power to village

administrations, and residents could elect leaders, while Village Executive Officers (VEOs) were appointed to manage administrative tasks (Moyo, 2019). These changes aimed to make village administration more politically and economically responsible towards the communities. The 1999 Village Land Act strengthened village authority even further, allowing village leaders to negotiate agreements with private investors or organisations to use village land (Davis, 2011; Moyo, 2019).

Even with these reforms, the creation of WMAs in the early 2000s sometimes limited practical community control. A clear example is Minjingu, one of the villages included in Burunge WMA (Kicheleri et al., 2021). Many villagers were never consulted through a proper community decision and were unaware that joining the WMA meant they would permanently lose control over their land. Even if they later wanted to withdraw, regulations made it nearly impossible: updates in 2002, 2005, and 2012 confirmed that once land was included in a WMA, it remained under WMA control, and only the President could officially return it to the village (Moyo et al., 2016; Kicheleri et al., 2021). In practice, village land was treated almost like national park land, severely limiting community autonomy.

Moyo (2019) shows that, even though Burunge WMA is often presented as a model of community-based wildlife management, actual participation and benefit-sharing for local residents are limited. To understand the real impacts, he used a case study approach, counterfactual comparisons of villages with and without WMAs, and a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to capture both outcomes and local perceptions.

An interesting finding was that conservation actors and residents perceive costs and benefits very differently. Listening to participants' stories revealed sensitive issues like land disputes, conflicts over access rights, and community resistance. Similar aspects of conservation will be analysed in the interview section of this chapter.

As Kicheleri et al. (2021) point out, Burunge is not an isolated case, there are examples across Tanzania where WMAs have produced very different outcomes. Some have created real opportunities for income generation, improved infrastructure, and stronger community participation; others have caused conflicts and failed to bring the benefits promised. Overall, this record shows that CBC is not a uniform model but a framework that can succeed or fail depending on how it is implemented, the legal environment, and the balance of power between government, NGOs, and local communities. During the 2000s, despite the challenges, CBC

continued to expand in Tanzania, supported by the Wildlife Conservation Act of 2009 and increasing interest from international donors and conservation NGOs (Davis, 2011; Moyo, 2019).

5.2 International Frameworks and Global Pressure on Conservation

A further influence on conservation in Tanzania, alongside the rise of community-based approaches, came from global policy frameworks. Especially in the 1990s and 2000s, international framework and agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) began shaping how conservation was understood and implemented at the national and local level.

The CBD, first signed and adopted in 1992, played an important role in shaping how conservation is practiced worldwide. One of its most relevant articles for community-based approaches is Article 8, which calls on governments to respect, preserve, and promote the use of traditional knowledge (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2007). Crucially, it also requires that this knowledge can only be used with the approval and involvement of the communities who hold it. Many governments have since begun including traditional knowledge in their national biodiversity plans, often stressing the need for prior informed consent before using community knowledge (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2007).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were introduced in 2000 and ran until 2015. They focused on reducing poverty in developing countries, linking development mainly to economic growth and aid. Conservation entered this agenda indirectly, through projects that tied protecting biodiversity to improving rural livelihoods (De Jong & Vijge, 2020). For instance, conservation projects connected protecting the environment with improving people's livelihoods, such as using biodiversity to support rural communities (De Jong & Vijge, 2020).

In 2015, the MDGs were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will run until 2030. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs included clear goals for the environment, showing that conservation was not just a side effect of poverty reduction but a key development goal in itself (De Jong & Vijge, 2020). They also stress inclusiveness, human rights, and participation, which made global frameworks more open to community involvement and IK in conservation (De Jong & Vijge, 2020). For instance, SDG 15 ("Life on Land") makes the protection of forests, ecosystems, and biodiversity a global priority. In Africa, this shift gave conservation

more visibility, encouraging policies that combine environmental protection with community participation and indigenous knowledge (Goal 15: Life on Land - the Global Goals, 2024).

Particularly: Target 15.6 (fair sharing of benefits from genetic resources) and 15.c (supporting local communities against poaching) highlight that people living near protected areas, like the Maasai around Tarangire and Manyara, should not only protect wildlife but also share in the benefits (The Global Goals, 2024). This aligns with the idea of community-based conservation, where cooperation between the state, NGOs, and local groups is key.

Targets 15.7 and 15.c (eliminate poaching and trafficking) recognize that conservation cannot succeed without involving local communities. In Tanzania, this means offering the Maasai alternatives to harmful practices (like being excluded from land use) and supporting them with sustainable livelihoods (The Global Goals, 2024).

As noticed, global frameworks have linked conservation efforts to global livelihood targets, monitoring systems, and funding priorities. While this connection has increased awareness and provided more resources for conservation, it often leads to projects being designed mainly to fulfil international objectives rather than addressing the specific needs of local communities. From a political ecology perspective, the influence of international frameworks highlights how global conservation agendas are not neutral but shaped by power relations. For indigenous groups like the Maasai, this can mean that conservation and community participation is justified by global agendas, but their own context-specific and unique environmental concerns and associated livelihoods may still be overlooked or only partly considered if not totally brushed aside.

5.3 NGO, Conservation and Community Cooperation

This section analyses the activities led by the Chem Chem Association, an organisation working in conservation in northern Tanzania, and draws on qualitative interviews with representatives from Chem Chem to explore the association's work and its relationship and collaboration with Maasai communities. By focusing on Chem Chem Association's initiatives in the Tarangire–Manyara area, it attempts to examine how NGO cooperate with local Maasai communities and how this reflects broader debates on conservation and community participation.

Non-governmental organisations play an important role in shaping conservation in Tanzania. They often act as mediators between international donors, the government, and local

communities, and bring in financial resources and technical expertise. At the same time, their influence can go beyond practical projects, shaping discourses of conservation and development on the ground. This makes NGOs central actors in the analysis both the challenges and opportunities that confront the implementation of community-based involvement in conservation initiatives.

5.3.1 Contextualization of Chem Chem

The Chem Chem Association (CCA) is a registered Tanzanian non-profit organisation working in the Burunge Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in northern Tanzania. Established in 2008, its primary mission is to protect the Kwakuchinja Wildlife Corridor, a historically significant migratory route linking Tarangire and Lake Manyara National Parks. The corridor encompasses ten partner villages: Mwada, Sangaiwe, Ngoley, Vilima Vitatu, Kakoi, Olasit, Manyara, Magara, Maweni, and Minjingu. Chem Chem works closely with communities living in and around this villages, employing Maasai from the villages and neighbouring areas to support conservation activities (Chem Chem Association, 2024). This dual focus allows the organisation to safeguard biodiversity while simultaneously empowering local communities through education, economic opportunities, and capacity-building initiatives (Chem Chem Association, 2025⁵).

Chem Chem bases its work on five main pillars: protecting habitats, stopping poaching, managing human–wildlife conflicts, involving and supporting communities, and raising awareness through advocacy. Out of these, the most important for local people is the focus on community engagement and empowerment. This means investing in education, skills, and economic opportunities so that people can benefit from conservation instead of feeling excluded by it. For the Maasai, whose lives are closely connected to the land, this approach is especially relevant, as it gives them a role in conservation and shows how their traditions and livelihoods can fit into new ways of protecting nature (Chem Chem Association, 2024).

The organisation was selected because it operates within the Tarangire–Manyara area, offering valuable insights into how conservation initiatives intersect with indigenous livelihoods in a crucial ecological site in Northern Tanzania. This research draws on two qualitative interviews: the first with the Executive Assistant of Chem Chem (Interviewee 1), who provided an institutional perspective on organisational history, goals, strategies, and challenges; and the

⁵ This is an internal, unpublished document produced by the Chem Chem Association and not publicly available.

second with a Maasai representative (Interviewee 2), conducted with the assistance of the Executive Assistant who translated the conversation. The purpose of these interviews is to capture both perspectives, the organisational framework of an NGO working in the region and the lived experiences of a Maasai directly working in conservation, in order to assess how the situation in the area has evolved since the establishment of the organisation, and how communities have adapted to it.

5.3.2 Interviews

NGO and Participants' Background

Chem Chem Association was established with the goal of restoring the Kwakuchinja Corridor, a key wildlife passage between Tarangire and Lake Manyara National Parks. Interviewee 1 emphasized: *"You cannot talk about conservation without talking about the community. These things go together"*. This highlights the organisation's vision of linking environmental restoration with community involvement.

Before Chem Chem's arrival, the corridor was described as "dead", with no animals and severely degraded habitats. Interviewee 2 confirmed this perspective, recalling that wildlife had largely disappeared due to human overuse of the land. Livestock competed with wild animals for grazing pastures, forcing them to migrate elsewhere, while deforestation for building materials, charcoal, and firewood further destroyed wildlife habitats.

From its beginnings, Chem Chem's approach combined ecological restoration with strong community engagement. One of the main challenges, according to Interviewee 1, was local attitudes toward wildlife: *"Local residents did not see wildlife as something to be restored or something that needed to be conserved"*.

To address this, Chem Chem developed programmes centred on education and economic empowerment, creating tangible incentives for conservation. The organisation now works with around ten villages in the Burunge Wildlife Management Area, forming microfinance groups often led by women. These groups are supported through incubation funds and training in alternative livelihoods such as horticulture, beekeeping, and poultry farming. Interviewee 1 explained that this model aims to reduce dependence on poaching or unsustainable resource use and instead create opportunities for agriculture and other income-generating activities. To

strengthen these initiatives, Chem Chem also collaborates with banks and partner organisations, which provide training in financial management and facilitate access to loans.

Partnerships with government authorities are equally central to Chem Chem's operations. According to Interviewee 1: *"We work closely with TANAPA, TAWA, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, and the Babati District Council"*. These collaborations ensure that Chem Chem's projects are aligned with national conservation strategies and that activities comply with legal frameworks.

Interviewee 2, who identifies as Maasai, highlighted cultural markers such as his ear piercings as signs of his heritage. He currently works at Chem Chem as a guide. While he occasionally supports driver-guides, for example by dropping off guests, his main role is leading walking safaris. During these tours, he shares knowledge of the land and traditions: teaching guests to recognize animal tracks, explaining the use of medicinal plants, and demonstrating how Maasai culture is deeply connected to the surrounding environment. In this way, he acts as both cultural and ecological interpreter, linking conservation with traditional knowledge.

His personal trajectory into conservation began when he was first employed as a security guard. Shortly afterward, Chem Chem gave him the opportunity to train as a guide, offering internal training and practical mentoring. He also attended an English course supported by the NGO, enabling him to interact more effectively with international guests.

Unlike many community members involved with Chem Chem, he is not originally from the Kwakuchinja area but comes from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, one of the core Maasai homelands. He explained that Ngorongoro is largely inhabited by Maasai communities, although human activities are not permitted everywhere. The Ngorongoro Crater itself is reserved exclusively for wildlife, while certain surrounding zones allow a mix of conservation and limited human use. This account underscores how state regulation shapes Maasai livelihoods in conservation areas. Governmental policies determine where human activity is permitted and where wildlife takes precedence, while communities adapt their practices to evolving conservation frameworks.

Community Involvement in Conservation Practices

A central element of Chem Chem's approach is the active involvement of local communities, particularly the Maasai, in both decision-making and conservation practices.

Interviewee 1 explained: *“They (referring to the Maasai communities) are the ones who are mostly familiar with the environment than we are. So we must work with them to understand better how the environment works”*.

This statement illustrates that Chem Chem positions itself not as an external authority but as a mediator seeking legitimacy through community leaders. Their approach is dialogical rather than top-down, combining explanations of conservation goals with efforts to respect traditional structures of authority. Community participation is further reinforced through direct benefits for local people, especially employment opportunities.

Youth education has also become a key focus of Chem Chem’s activities. Initially targeting adults, the program expanded to schools, recognizing the importance of empowering the younger generations.

Interviewee 1 reflected: *“We realized the importance of teaching the kids since childhood, knowing that they should see wildlife like an asset, something that we should all take care of”*. Four secondary schools were involved at first, but the initiative now extends to primary schools, reaching children as young as seven. Beyond formal education, the organisation also engages out-of-school youth through an entrepreneurship program, offering IT (Information Technology) and business skills to foster alternative livelihoods. At the same time, Chem Chem integrates community events into its awareness campaigns, noting that their purpose is not just to entertain but to create awareness about wildlife and how to conserve the corridor. By embedding conservation messages into widely attended social events, Chem Chem tries to normalize environmental awareness within everyday life.

Across ten villages, women’s groups are supported through training and incubation funds, diversifying income sources through agriculture, beekeeping, poultry, and horticulture. In addition, by targeting women, Chem Chem addresses both economic vulnerability and gender inclusion, ensuring that conservation benefits extend to broader segments of society.

Taken together, the initiatives mentioned by the interviewees demonstrate that, rather than imposing external rules, the organisation seeks to build partnerships with local chiefs, create opportunities for youth and women, and integrate conservation into social, cultural, and economic life.

From Interviewee 2's perspective, Chem Chem's presence in the Kwakuchinja Corridor goes far beyond conservation, delivering tangible benefits to surrounding villages. He emphasised that support includes improvements to education and health infrastructure, with schools and dispensaries being directly assisted by the foundation. This infrastructural involvement positions Chem Chem as an institution that not only protects wildlife but also addresses key community needs, thereby strengthening local buy-in and cooperation.

One of Interviewee 2's strongest points concerned the sensitive issue of community displacement. He underlined the importance of providing alternatives whenever evictions or restrictions occur: *"If you are just evicting them (the Maasai) when you don't give them alternative, it's a bad thing. But the fact that Chem Chem is supporting, if that eviction happens, there'll be a support ... they will make sure that we get an environment for replacement"*.

This illustrates how conservation-led displacement, often highly contested in East Africa, can be mitigated when communities are supported materially and socially during the transition.

Another dimension of community involvement highlighted by Interviewee 2 is employment. He explained: *"People now have somewhere to work. People are busy making money and helping so many families back at home"*. What he relates is that employment not only provides income but also strengthens the social fabric of Maasai communities, where extended family responsibilities mean that one person's earnings support many dependents.

Finally, Interviewee 2 stressed that successful conservation also requires alignment between community practices and government regulation. For instance, he tells that seasonal permits are given to communities to carry horticulture activities in difficult times, and then, the government takes back the land once the permit expires. These permits are not certificates of ownership rights but temporary arrangements allowing communities to cope with environmental stress without permanently encroaching on protected land. This system reflects both a balancing act between conservation and subsistence needs and the way Maasai communities navigate state authority within conservation landscapes.

Tensions, Challenges, and Negotiation

The establishment of Chem Chem in the Kwakuchinja Corridor was not welcomed by all, and both interviewees acknowledged that the NGO's early years were marked by severe conflict.

Interviewee 2 recalled: *“The pastoralists were coming with arrows to shoot the people around the camp”*. This testimony illustrates the extent to which conservation was initially perceived as a threat to livelihoods and territorial rights. For many, Chem Chem’s arrival represented not an opportunity but an intrusion into their way of life. Interviewee 1 confirmed that even today the relationship between Chem Chem and the surrounding communities is not always easy and requires constant mediation. She reflected: *“Imagine you built your house here, and I come and tell you that this is not a proper place for you to live”*.

What for conservationists is the restoration of an ecological corridor can for local people be experienced as displacement and dispossession. Human–wildlife conflict further compounds these tensions. Since Maasai livelihoods rely primarily on livestock rather than farming, they are especially vulnerable to wildlife incursions. Interviewee 1 explained that elephants sometimes attack or kill cows or goats, leading to situations in which Maasai herders retaliate against elephants in anger. These incidents reveal the perception that wildlife survival often comes at the expense of pastoralist security.

Chem Chem’s strategy in response has been to avoid heavy-handed imposition and instead prioritize mediation. As Interviewee 1 repeatedly emphasized, the main challenge is mitigation. This involves patient work to raise awareness, encourage coexistence, and create mechanisms for conflict resolution. In practice, mitigation requires time and dialogue: staff must sit down with communities to explain the ecological importance of the corridor while also acknowledging pastoralist traditions that have structured land use for centuries. The aim is not to erase those practices but to find ways to make them compatible with conservation.

Policies and Regulations

Chem Chem’s work in the Kwakuchinja Corridor operates within a broader regulatory framework set by the Tanzanian state. Both interviewees highlighted that conservation is not only a matter of ecological or community negotiations but also shaped by formal policies, contracts, and fiscal obligations.

At Chem Chem, formal agreements are established through contracts with Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). These contracts regulate operations and require the NGO to adhere to government policies, including the Wildlife Conservation Act and subsequent reforms. Interviewee 1 emphasized that such agreements are not only regulatory but also financial in nature: revenues must be shared, with a percentage directed to both the government

and surrounding villages. These contributions take multiple forms, from taxes to specific payments that are earmarked for community benefits.

According to Interviewee 1, these funds have tangible impacts on local development. Revenue-sharing has helped build schools within villages, reducing the distances children must walk to attend classes, as well as supporting small dispensaries and the provision of school furniture.

Even if not referring directly to the Kwakuchinja area, Interviewee 2 drew on his experience from his homeland in Ngorongoro to illustrate how government negotiations with Maasai communities typically take place. He explained that the state sometimes grants temporary permits for agriculture or grazing during the dry season. These permits are strictly limited and expire once environmental conditions improve, demonstrating how the government manages access to land through conditional permits rather than permanent rights, balancing livelihood needs with conservation priorities. Similar patterns of conditional access and negotiated land use are also observable in nearby conservation areas, such as Tarangire and Manyara, situating Chem Chem's experience within a wider national context.

Impacts and Changing Perspectives

According to both interviewees, the most visible impact of Chem Chem's work has been environmental. The restoration of the Kwakuchinja Corridor has led to the return of wildlife in significant numbers. Interviewee 2 described this with enthusiasm, recalling how the founders themselves celebrated the change. He said: *"We are so happy ...seeing the improvement ...we have more than 100 elephants now. The animals are coming back"*.

This testimony reflects the organisation's achievements of ecological recovery. The second major impact lies in community participation. Through Chem Chem's programmes, local people, including Maasai groups, have become more involved in income-generating activities. Interviewee 1 emphasized that their monitoring processes reveal some steady improvements: economic groups have expanded, and members are increasingly diversifying their livelihoods. Initiatives range from building shaded market stalls to producing cultural crafts such as animal statues made from braids, which are then sold to visitors. These activities provide an alternative source of income while reinforcing cultural expression.

Equally important, the interviewee underlined that Maasai community members continue to maintain their traditions even as they engage with tourism. Rather than adopting NGO

uniforms, they present themselves in their own attire, express their culture with confidence, and actively share it with guests.

While Chem Chem's arrival in the Kwakuchinja Corridor was initially met with hostility, Interviewee 2 emphasized that attitudes within the community have shifted over time. He explained that some Maasai, who once opposed the NGO, gradually began to recognize tangible benefits from cooperation. This transformation, however, has not been universal: resistance remains, but many now actively seek to join Chem Chem as employees or collaborators. As he noted, the NGO "*helped the community understand*", and former critics changed their minds after meaningful dialogue, realizing that restoring the corridor served not only the organisation's interests but also the broader well-being of the community through the return of wildlife.

According to Interviewee 2, this gradual change has led to a more balanced relationship. Benefit-sharing mechanisms are now perceived as more equal. While challenges remain, he described the situation as much smoother than in the early years of confrontation.

Importantly, Interviewee 2 also reflected on the role of the state versus private actors in conservation. From his perspective, community benefits are more tangible when investors such as Chem Chem manage land as a concession than when the government transforms areas into national parks. He argued that, in the latter case, communities are often relocated with minimal compensation, losing both ownership of land and access rights. By contrast, under the concession model, villages may retain their bomas while still receiving investments in schools, dispensaries, and other infrastructure. For this reason, he stated a preference for investor-led models, which he views as more capable of providing direct and visible benefits to local populations.

The following table summarizes the interviews results:

Topic	Key Findings
Community reaction to conservation	Initial strong resistance (violence, arrows, displacement fears). Later, some Maasai recognized benefits and shifted attitudes.
Community's involvement	Dialogue with chiefs, youth education, women's microfinance, employment (guides, safari staff), cultural tourism, community events.
Policies and Government's involvement	Operates under Wildlife Conservation Act, WMA contracts, revenue-sharing, collaboration with TANAPA, TAWA, local councils. Permits for temporary land use.
Impact and Challenges	Main challenge: mutual understanding takes time. Language barriers noted by Maasai guide. Ongoing tensions over relocation and human–wildlife conflict.
Shared Benefits	Jobs and income diversification, women's empowerment, schools, dispensaries, skills training, improved trust. Wildlife restored to corridor.

Table 3: Interviews' Results Chart

Summary of the Results

The interviews reveal that Chem Chem Association's presence in the Kwakuchinja Corridor has generated profound changes for both communities and the environment. At the beginning, conservation was strongly resisted: pastoralist Maasai perceived it as a direct threat to their livelihoods and territorial rights, with conflicts escalating into violence and widespread fears of displacement. Yet over time, these perceptions began to shift. Dialogue with chiefs, the provision of alternative livelihoods, and the emergence of tangible benefits gradually built trust, and some community members started to see wildlife not as competition but as an asset that could contribute to local well-being.

Community participation has been central to this transformation. Rather than imposing rules from outside, Chem Chem engaged with Maasai leaders to gain legitimacy and worked to embed conservation within social and cultural life. Youth education programmes expanded from adults to schoolchildren, instilling the idea that wildlife should be valued and protected from an early age. Women's involvement has been strengthened through microfinance groups, which provide both skills training and incubation funds to diversify livelihoods. Employment opportunities, whether as guides, safari staff, or cultural interpreters, have further tied conservation to everyday subsistence, while events such as the annual soccer tournament created spaces where awareness could be fostered through widely attended community events.

These efforts operate within broader state frameworks. Chem Chem's work is grounded in the Wildlife Conservation Act and the Burunge Wildlife Management Area system, which includes revenue-sharing mechanisms designed to benefit local communities. Partnerships with TANAPA, TAWA, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, and local councils have ensured that activities remain aligned with national strategies. At the same time, the granting of temporary permits for horticulture or grazing during the dry season illustrates how government policy mediates between conservation priorities and subsistence needs, allowing local communities to continuously negotiate access to land.

Despite this progress, the interviews also underline ongoing challenges. Relocation remains one of the most sensitive issues, as restrictions on settlement and land use directly affect households. Yet both interviewees highlighted that the benefits today are significant and widely shared. Employment provides crucial income for households and extended families, women's groups gain economic independence through diversified livelihoods, and young people access

trainings. Schools and dispensaries supported by Chem Chem improve education and health infrastructure, while training in financial management connects communities with broader economic opportunities. Most importantly, wildlife has returned to the corridor, signalling ecological recovery alongside social development.

Overall, the picture that emerges is one of transformation. What began as confrontation and mistrust has gradually shifted towards collaboration. Though some tensions may remain, conservation in the Kwakuchinja Corridor is increasingly seen not only as a set of restrictions but also as new shared opportunities. Both people and wildlife are beginning to benefit, and the once degraded corridor is being revitalized into a space of coexistence and cooperation.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine how conservation policies in northern Tanzania have evolved from the colonial period to the present and to explore their impacts on Maasai livelihoods. Specifically, it sought to understand how different historical phases have shaped the relationship between state authorities, international actors, and local communities, and whether Maasai communities have been included or excluded from conservation management.

Analysing the history of conservation in northern Tanzania has successfully shown how deeply conservation policies have influenced Maasai practices from the colonial era to today. The research emphasized that during colonial times, conservation efforts were shaped not only by ecological concerns but also by political and economic interests. The establishment of game reserves and national parks often came at the expense of pastoralist communities, displacing the Maasai and limiting their access to traditional grazing lands. After independence, conservation discourse was reframed through nationalist ideas of progress and aimed at promoting development and equality for all. Yet, in practice, many policies of the 1960s and 1970s mirrored colonial frameworks, emphasizing state control and ecological protection while excluding community voices and perpetuating inequalities.

Subsequently, the thesis findings revealed that from the 1980s onward, the rise of community-based conservation started to recognise local participation as essential to sustainable resource management. However, in policy terms, these initiatives often fell short. Although participation was fostered in theory, specific reference to the Maasai and IK remained limited. Even so, local examples of collaboration suggest a shift in direction, towards more inclusive, dialogic approaches that blend conservation goals with community needs.

This trajectory also reflects the influence of global frameworks and international conservation discourses of the 1990s and 2000s. Yet, as shown by this research, these global commitments did not always translate into practice on the ground. It is at the local level, particularly through the involvement of NGOs, that more innovative and cooperative models started to take shape. The example of Chem Chem Association in the Kwakuchinja Corridor illustrates this shift. Although its arrival initially provoked resistance and conflict, over time it fostered dialogue, participation, and trust, producing mutual benefits for both conservation and communities. Recognizing the tangible improvements for both the environment and their own livelihoods,

some Maasai members gradually shifted from resistance to voluntary cooperation, contributing actively to conservation initiatives. Importantly, the NGO's case demonstrates that shared gains are possible when conservation is pursued not as an imposition but as a form of cooperation and partnership.

Using postcolonialism and political ecology together proved to be an effective analytical lens for this research. Political ecology exposed how policy decisions, power relations, and governance structures shape both ecosystems and livelihoods, highlighting the inequalities embedded in conservation practice. Postcolonialism, in turn, provided the historical lens necessary to contextualize and identify legacies of colonial rule, highlighting how conservation policies and dynamics were adapted, but sometimes resisted in the post-independence period. Using both frameworks together allowed the research to link past and present, global, national and local dynamics, and expose the continuity of power structures and how they continue to affect the Maasai. This approach proved to be more powerful than using either framework alone: while political ecology can reveal inequalities and conflicts, it risks ignoring historical continuities; postcolonialism emphasizes historical foundations but may underplay ongoing environmental power dynamics. Their combination allowed this analysis to understand conservation as both a historical and political process.

From a methodological point of view, the use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews strengthened the study's findings. Building on the work of Wanitzek and Sippel (1998) and Kusiluka et al. (2011), this study employs document analysis. This method has proven effective for tracing the evolution of colonial, postcolonial, and contemporary policies, as well as for identifying changes in legislation, international frameworks, and official discourses. Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, gave direct insight into local perspectives, revealing how conservation in the Kwakuchinja Corridor was introduced, interpreted and experienced by both Maasai communities and NGO operators. This combination of policy analysis and interview-based methods successfully depicted how policy really translates on the ground and what the local responses were.

The main conclusion obtained by merging the findings of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 is that sustainable and long-lasting conservation requires dialogue, communication, and mutual understanding among key actors, especially the local communities and conservation organisations. This way can ensure that benefits are equitably shared allow conservation to

move beyond its historical legacies of exclusion. In practice, the study shows that continuing to strengthen community participation and building trust through dialogue is an effective strategy for sustainable conservation.

The desire lying behind my research was also to contribute to a growing field of literature that challenges the tendency to portray African communities as passive recipients of external influence. Instead, it underlines their active role in shaping and redefining conservation practices. Future research in environmental history and postcolonial studies could build on this work by exploring similar dynamics in other regions of Africa or in different postcolonial contexts, comparing the legacies of colonial conservation policies and their contemporary adaptations.

A further suggestion could be giving greater attention to the integration of IK into policy frameworks, and how local voices are represented and included in conservation discourses. Finally, combining postcolonial and political ecology approaches in future studies can continue to uncover the historical roots of environmental inequalities, offering insights into how conservation can move toward more inclusive and long-lasting forms of environmental management.

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8 Appendix

The appendix contains the following content:

- Document Analysis Chart, listing the primary sources used for each section
- Interview Guidelines 1
- Interview Guidelines 2

Document Analysis Chart – Conservation in Tanzania

Topics	Historical Phase	Key Documents	Effects on Maasai Communities	Analytical Focus
1. Impact on Land-Based Livelihoods	Colonial (1920s–1950s)	Game Ordinance 1940; (excerpts from scholarly texts)	Criminalization of hunting, fire use, and transhumance	Conservation as ecological control and criminalization
2. Shifting Narratives and Continuities in Conservation Management	Post-Independence (1960s–1980s)	Wildlife Conservation Act (1974); Village Act (1975); Arusha Declaration, 1961; President Nyerere’s Arusha Manifesto, references to “Ujaama villagization program” in official documents	Shift in narratives, community involvement; Reinforcement of exclusion from “protected” land; focus on national interests and critique of Western science, contradictions of villagization policy	Ideological and Legal continuities or shifts in narratives and local impacts
3. Community Conservation Projects	(1990s–present)	Wildlife Conservation Act (Reform of 2009); SDG 15; Convention on Biological Diversity; NGO report from Chem Chem	Equal participation vs. environmental narratives, land restrictions, community involvement or tokenistic participation	Discourse vs. Practice towards the inclusion of Maasai communities

Interview Guidelines: NGO Executive Assistant

Section	Focus	Sample Questions
Opening Remarks	Purpose, consent, duration	Purpose: explore Chem Chem's role in conservation & community engagement. Confirm consent to participate/record.
1. Background and Origins	Role, foundation, early context	What is your role at Chem Chem? When and why was Chem Chem founded? What was the state of the corridor/community before Chem Chem?
2. Conservation Strategies	Approach, pillars, programmes	How are strategies designed/implemented? What are the main activities/goals?
3. Community Involvement	Collaboration with Maasai & others	How have relations with Maasai communities evolved? How are they involved in conservation? How do you balance traditional practices with conservation goals?
4. Governance and Partnerships	Institutional ties, compliance, challenges	What partnerships exist with government or WMAs? How does Chem Chem ensure compliance with conservation laws? What challenges arise in working with both state and communities?
5. Impacts and Future Outlook	Results, evaluation, prospects	What have been the main successes so far? Is cooperation/sustainable tourism the future of conservation?
Closing Remarks	Final input, thanks	Any additional thoughts? Thank participant for their time.

Interview Guidelines 2: Maasai Representative

Section	Focus	Sample Questions
Opening Remarks	Purpose, consent, duration	Purpose: learn about Maasai community experiences with Chem Chem and conservation. Confirm consent to participate/record.
1. Personal Role and Background	Individual role, family, identity	Where do you/your family come from? What is your role at Chem Chem? What training did you receive? Do you identify with a particular Maasai subgroup?
2. Historical Perspective	Past land use, changes over time	What was this area like before Chem Chem? How have the area, local activities, the overall situation changed since Chem Chem became active?
3. Cooperation with Chem Chem	Relationship, collaboration, conflicts	How do you see the relationship between Chem Chem and Maasai today? Examples of good cooperation? Challenges or disagreements?
4. Diversity of Opinions	Community perspectives	Do all Maasai agree on working with Chem Chem? Why do some feel differently?
5. Customs, Environmental Justice	Maasai representation, cultural practices, equity	Can wildlife be protected while keeping Maasai customs? Are Maasai voices well represented in conservation? Who has the lead in conservation: government, NGOs, or the community? Are conservation benefits fairly shared?
Closing Remarks	Final input, thanks	How do you see future developments of conservation and Maasai involvement? Thank participant for their time.