



Governing Landscapes Through Partnerships: Lessons From Amboseli, Kenya

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Thesis

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SUMMARY

This study focuses on the Kenyan Amboseli landscape, which comprises the Amboseli National Park and six neighbouring Maasai community Group Ranches, namely Mbirikani, Kuku, Kimana, Eselengei, Ologulului-Ololorashi Ologulului, and Rombo. Over the past five decades, Amboseli has been facing persistent conservation and development challenges. These include changing land tenure and land-use; human-wildlife conflicts (HWCs); poaching of wildlife; unplanned and uncoordinated development; loss and fragmentation of wildlife habitats; inadequate and unequal benefits for local communities; high levels of poverty; and a conservation-development nexus policy void. To mitigate these challenges, various policy interventions, mostly in the form of varied partnership arrangements between actors drawn from communities, governments, market, and conservation organizations, have been initiated – with mixed outcomes.

This thesis specifically explores two landscape-wide partnerships, the Amboseli Ecosystem Trust (AET) and the Big Life Foundation (BLF). The Amboseli Ecosystem Trust is a landscape-based partnership that seeks to bring together governmental agencies, communities, private investors, and civil society with the aim of simultaneously achieving conservation and development goals. The Big Life Foundation (BLF), a partner and member of the AET's Board of Trustees and the successor of the Maasailand Preservation Trust (MPT), is a partnership between the Mbirikani Group Ranch community members and a tourism investor-based conservation NGO. BLF's projects cover a large part of the Amboseli landscape in Kenya and adjacent areas in northern Tanzania.

The overall aim of this study was to understand the contribution of the two partnerships to landscape governance at Amboseli. To achieve this aim, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

- (i) How are the landscape governance roles fulfilled by the analysed partnerships in the Amboseli landscape?*
- (ii) In what ways and to what extent have the partnerships (through the landscape governance roles) addressed conservation-development challenges facing the Amboseli landscape?*

The study amalgamated literature on partnerships, governance, and landscapes into a landscape governance approach, which was integrated with a multi-dimensional power perspective that was used to analyse the two partnerships. The study combined primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using 75 in-depth interviews with 55 key informants; the findings of which were triangulated with 4 focus group discussions (FGDs), 4 non-participant observations, and 30 informal conversations.

In chapter 1, I introduced my research by providing an overview of conservation and development challenges and related global debates. The chapter presents the main concepts used in this research, the Amboseli landscape, research aims and research questions, significance of the study and its research methodology.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed historical account of the Amboseli landscape. Over the last five decades, Amboseli has been facing persistent conservation and development challenges. To mitigate these challenges and contribute to simultaneously achieving conservation and development goals, various policy interventions have been put in place, such as the creation of community wildlife conservancies, wildlife security programs, compensation for losses caused by wildlife, livelihood enhancement and benefit sharing programs. Many of these interventions have not (yet) been able to solve the long-lasting conservation-development challenges.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this study. The PhD project integrates literature on landscapes, governance, power, and partnerships to develop a landscape governance perspective that is used to analyse the two partnerships. I used the landscape governance approach to study the various societal and ecological dimensions in an integral manner. Landscapes are socially and culturally constructed entities that are continuously shaped by their actors, who represent multiple interests, such as biodiversity conservation, agriculture, and tourism. Landscapes are therefore complex entities, supporting complex processes that necessitate governance.

Focusing on governance makes it possible to analyse the process through which multiple actors make and implement decisions with the aim of solving societal problems. The landscape governance approach is particularly useful as it stresses that societal and 'natural' factors are intrinsically linked to one another in landscapes such as Amboseli. Moreover, landscape governance engages multiple actors in decision-making through negotiation and trade-offs, aimed at accommodating diverse values and

aspirations, dealing with competing claims (such as land use at the landscape level) and solving societal problems. This study therefore defines landscape governance as modes of steering whereby actors drawn from the government, communities, markets, and civil society are involved in making and implementing decisions for purposes of solving conservation and development problems in the Amboseli landscape. Within the landscape governance debate, I focus on partnerships. I define partnerships as collaborative arrangements between multiple actors drawn from the public, private, and/or civil society societal sectors, who work towards solving specific problems and/or issues of mutual concern for sustainable development. As forms of governance, partnerships are said to contribute to sustainable development by addressing complex problems, such as those presented by the conservation-development nexus, and by fulfilling diverse governance roles, such as agenda setting, policy development, capacity building, information sharing, policy implementation, and meta-governance.

Finally, to answer the research questions, this study blended the landscape governance approach with the multi-dimensional perspective on power introduced by Kuindersma et al. (2012), based on the fourfold taxonomy of power by Barnett and Duvall (2005). They both offer an integrated framework in which different power perspectives are viewed as complementary rather than conflicting, and discern four faces of power: *compulsory*, *institutional*, *structural* and *productive* power.

Chapter 4 is an empirical chapter examining the two partnerships, the Amboseli Ecosystem Trust (AET) and the Big Life Foundation (BLF), to understand how they contribute to the governance of the Amboseli landscape. The research findings reveal that the partnerships have performed complementing landscape governance roles. Whereas AET focused on policy development, agenda-setting and meta-governance, BLF concentrated on policy implementation and meta-governance in relation to wildlife security. The way the partnerships performed these governance roles can be explained through the four faces of power, revealing BLF's compulsory power and AET's institutional power. Nevertheless, the partnerships have only partially managed to bridge conflicting conservation and development discourses, illustrating that the concept of sustainable development appears to hold little productive power in practice.

This chapter discusses issues relating to the divergent and complementary landscape governance roles of partnerships, 'governance with government', relations of power,

breadth and depth of change, different meanings of landscape, and donor dependency. Overall, the chapter not only provides important insights into the contributions that partnerships can make to the SDGs, but also their limitations.

Chapter 5 is also an empirical chapter that uses the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) and a set of indicators to assess the contributions to conservation, with the aim of understanding the extent to which the two partnerships contribute to addressing conservation and development challenges. Findings show that both AET and BLF have been able to address direct drivers of biodiversity loss (such as human wildlife conflicts, poaching, unplanned infrastructural developments) and – to a much lesser extent – the indirect drivers, such as poverty and land subdivision. Through the workings of both partnerships, more community members have gained access to specific community capital assets, through employment opportunities and other monetary incentives and education. Moreover, the activities of the analysed partnerships have created a transboundary national landscape covering Kenya and Tanzania. However, it is not clear if and how the livelihood benefits translate into real and long-term support for wildlife conservation. The chapter also discusses the importance of matters of scale and power and politics in landscape governance.

Chapter 6 brings all the other chapters together. This research reveals that both partnerships performed, and still perform, prominent landscape governance roles that are key in addressing some of the persistent and long-lasting conservation and livelihood challenges facing the Amboseli landscape.

This chapter also contributes to broader discussions on the role of partnerships in landscape governance. In particular, it discusses issues on trade-offs between conservation and development goals, green militarization, the landscape governance era, attribution challenges, and emerging issues concerning landscape governance.

Finally, this PhD thesis includes some recommendations. There is need for: (i) concerted efforts by government and other stakeholders to expand and improve compensation for wildlife inflicted losses so as to cover more areas, all wildlife species and properties; (ii) ensuring that landscape governance engages all stakeholders in the governance of their landscape; (iii) finding ways of ensuring that biodiversity conservation land use pays enough to be able to compete with other land uses and to avoid over-dependence on donor funds, which are unpredictable and time-bound; (iv)

governments of Kenya and Tanzania, as well as AET, BLF and other actors, to look into ways of enhancing the landscape governance across the Amboseli-Kilimanjaro cross-jurisdictional area, by bridging conservation-development related policy-incoherence.

Finally, this study only analysed the 10-year period between 2008-2018, therefore, it would be insightful to continue monitoring the landscape governance roles of AET and BLF and compare these to other examples. This would show to what extent AET and BLF can sustain over time and are able to resolve some of the challenges Amboseli has been facing over the last 50 years.

