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## **Between Nature Conservation and Land Rights: The Case of the Maasai and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area**

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### **Citation**

Dietrich, M. (2024). *Between Nature Conservation and Land Rights: The Case of the Maasai and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3731779>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

**Between Nature Conservation and Land Rights:  
The Case of the Maasai and the Ngorongoro  
Conservation Area**



**Universiteit Leiden**

Master Thesis

International Relations: Global Political Economy (MA)

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08.12.2023

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Word Count: 14,988

## **Acknowledgements**

Dr Henderson thanks for supporting me as my supervisor in my choice of topic, throughout the writing process and inspiring me with your classes to dive deeper into the subject of political ecology.

I would like to thank in specifics Megan for our support calls and library sessions making this thesis writing process unforgettable. And thanks to my proofreaders for taking your time to read through my work, I really appreciate your support.

Lastly, I also want to thank my friends, my mother and father and my brother and sister for their constant support and belief in me.

## **Abstract**

This paper examines the intrinsic relationship between the Western model of nature conservation and the forced removal of pastoralists, the Maasai, in Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The historical background contextualises the origins of so-called fortress conservation in the colonial period and the establishment of protected areas. The research takes a political ecology approach to establish a connection between nature conservation activities of international actors, national policymaking in conservation areas and the impact on the Maasai's livelihood.

The case of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area illustrates the enhancement of securitised nature conservation concerning biodiversity protection of ecosystems. However, this approach excludes indigenous peoples from the discourse of ecosystem protection and is inherently neo-colonial. For a better understanding, it argues for the equal inclusion of indigenous peoples in nature conservation efforts.

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## List of Abbreviations

BMF	German Federal Ministry of Finance
BMZ	German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
BMVU	German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
GCA	Game Controlled Area
GIZ	German Initiative for International Cooperation
FZS	Frankfurt Zoological Society
KfW	German Credit Institute for Reconstruction
MNRT	Tanzanian Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism
NCA	Ngorongoro Conservation Area
NCAA	Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN	United Nations
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

## Introduction

Human Rights Group Amnesty International reports that local pastoralists have been evicted by the government in several areas of the Arusha Region in Northern Tanzania over the last few years (Amnesty International 2023). Especially, the Maasai are getting expelled from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site. The NCA has been subjected to a land dispute between the national government and the Maasai since the end of the colonial period. This has been complicated by the government's recent statement of disregarding claims of an indigenous population in Tanzania and the Maasai's claims to the right of land in conservation areas such as the NCA. Furthermore, international actors like UNESCO, foreign donor states and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are involved.

From a global perspective, it is crucial to consider the role of international actors in nature conservation in the country and their influence on the government's policymaking and its relation to the Maasai. The local situation is highly polarised, and authorities are repressing opposition through threats and arrests of activists in the area (Gbadamosi 2022).

The case of the NCA is crucial to depict since it is a UNESCO World Heritage site and draws many tourists each year (Lee 2023). Forced evictions have increasingly occurred since the summer of 2022 (Gbadamosi 2022). Next, choosing this African case study intends not only to highlight the origin of nature conservation in colonialism but also the subject of top-down power asymmetry considering the limited agency of the Maasai as a pastoralist community in the area. In addition, the UNESCO World Heritage status of the site increases the country's continuous dependence on foreign actors and their investment in for example safari tourism (Olenasha 2014, 190). Therefore, nature conservation and the role of indigenous people must be analysed in an international context.<sup>1</sup> This discourse includes NGOs as stakeholders, specifically international conservation organisations and human rights organisations.

The idea of protecting and preserving ecosystems and "pristine nature" is rising again with the environmental crisis the planet faces and depicts a reemergence of fortress conservation (Fletcher et al. 2021, 1).<sup>2</sup> Global leaders and Western conservation NGOs support

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<sup>1</sup> Def. indigenous population: "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system" (UN 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Def. Fortress conservation: ideally strives to enclose parts of land from human activity (Büscher and Fletcher 2020, 19).

this shift with their plan to commit to protecting 30 per cent of the planet's surface by 2030 (The Nature Conservancy 2023). This move towards enhancing stricter conservation methods is supported by international financial institutions and financial markets. The World Bank in 2021 reported that investment in protected areas produces a rate of return of “at least six times the original investment” (World Bank 2021). In many cases, this intersects with ideas of development and capitalisation of the protection of nature, and at the same time projects an inherently Western framework on conservation while excluding indigenous populations in conserved areas. Especially, with the increase of carbon credits this will further rise the demand for creating protected areas.

Thus, this research considers the following research question: *Why does nature protection, so far, lack a sufficient representation and protection of the indigenous peoples' rights in the preservation of ecosystems considering international organisations (IOs) and NGOs' predominant role in nature conservation in the case of the Maasai in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area?*

This thesis identifies that the Western model of nature conservation fails to recognise indigenous peoples' role as stakeholders in the preservation of ecosystems in the case of the Maasai in the NCA.

The subject of nature conservation has a high relevance in political ecology literature considering the aspects of a shift towards more critical approaches. Furthermore, this is also connected to the general societal relevance of nature conservation and the pressing subject of climate change affecting biodiversity on the planet. Since the Western approach of nature conservation in the African context is inherently connected to colonialism it is crucial to shift the focus towards the marginalised perspective of indigenous and local people.

The thesis is organised into four chapters. For a better understanding of the background of conservationism, the literature review will first discuss the mainstream concepts of conservationism and its links to neoliberalism and development prioritising economic interests. Second, the critical political economy approach depicts power relations between local and global actors in nature conservation alongside concepts of power and space. However, both mainstream conservationism and political economy are falling short of centring indigenous perspectives. The last part of this review will consider the idea of indigenous political ecology as essential for a more plural understanding of nature conservation in the African context.

Chapter two will give a brief historical overview of the establishment of protected areas and the emergence of fortress conservation during the colonial period in East Africa. Moreover, the role of the Maasai as stakeholders of the area over the last centuries will be emphasised.



Chapter three will critically examine the role of international actors in the last decades and their involvement in the forced evictions of the Maasai from the NCA. In subsections, the participation of IOs, the Federal Republic of Germany and NGOs in nature conservation activities in the NCA will be closely analysed.

Finally, chapter four will take a close look into the dynamics between the Maasai and the Tanzanian government. Here, especially, the role of power asymmetry between the actors will be considered. This will be connected to the Maasai's inability to continue their role as stakeholders in nature conservation. Overall, this is related to a critical approach which considers indigenous peoples as necessary for nature preservation and points to the need of changing mainstream frameworks of Western ideas of nature conservation.

This paper uses a qualitative research approach. First, secondary sources are analysed to establish the theoretical framework and to reflect on academic research on nature conservation. Second, for the empirical chapter next to secondary sources, primary sources are critically examined to provide a first-hand approach. The following sources will be used for the analysis: government documents (in German and English), reports from IOs and NGOs, newspaper articles, letters from IOs and a video from a roundtable discussion. The primary focus is on highlighting the motives of actors who continuously support the Tanzanian government in its mission of fortress conservation. Furthermore, the discussion of both international and national levels shows the interconnectedness of the two due to economic, political and social factors.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

The analysis of literature on nature conservation will commence with examining mainstream discourses of nature conservation which will subsequently be critically regarded from perspectives of critical political economy and indigenous political ecology.

### *1.1 Mainstream Nature Conservation*

The connection between nature conservation and mainstream economic narratives is based on the idea of private property and productivity. Locke as a theorist of the labour theory of property regards “unimproved land” as “waste” (Wood 1999, 111). By this definition, land only becomes productive if it is put into efficient use, removed from the commons, and privatised (Wood 1999, 111).

The following section will connect the idea of conservationism theory with development theory, linking it to the global rise of neoliberal policymaking in the 1980s. An important development of mainstream conservationism is, on the one hand, the so-called fortress conservation, which implies the fencing off, protection, and preservation of species (Ramutsindela and Noe 2015). Crucial to the narrative of mainstream conservationists is the “extinction crisis” during the last decades and the increasing drive towards a growing “network of protected areas”, which aims to create spaces for rare species and separate areas from human existence (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008, 63).

Another significant development since the 1990s has been the attempt to create “community-based conservation”, which Büscher and Fletcher (2020) distinguish as part of “new conservation” practices (71). It aims to include more local actors in conservationism (Horowitz 2015, 241). So, an “integrated conservation and development” as part of community-based conservation campaigning (Fletcher, Dressler and Büscher 2015, 363).

Around the same time, the notion of private actors as better caretakers of spaces through efficient use has been spreading with the rise of neoliberal policymaking since the 1980s (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008, 192). This includes linking “biodiversity conservation to economic growth,” for example, through tourism (Noe et al. 2022, 37). However, this contradicts the notion of retaining biodiversity and protected spaces. Overall, to critically assess this literature it has to be pointed out that mainstream conservation is ultimately interested in combining “neoliberal economic development with environmental conservation” (Büscher and Fletcher 2020, 22). This leads to an inherent and unsustainable interlinking of conservation and capital accumulation.

This theory will be contextualised with literature on the case of Tanzania and the creation of a two-zone area, on the one hand, Serengeti National Park which became a protected area, and the other, the NCA, where the Maasai's pastoral activities are still permitted (Charnley 2005, 78). Western-centric ideas from conservationists like McCabe (1997) consider here the "incompatibility of agriculture with conservation goals" and view the creation of a protected zone as inevitable for the securing of ecosystems (199). This radical form of neo-protectionism has an inherent human-nature dichotomy, meaning the division of the world into a human living space and reserve for "self-willed nature" (Büscher and Fletcher 2020, 32). Despite this prevailing dichotomy, conservationists in the 1990s also considered the view of developmentalism regarding food security and economic growth, whereby they argued for turning pastoralists like the Maasai into market-incentivised producers (McCabe 1997, 62).

To conclude this section, it has to be remarked that the mainstream perspective is lacking many aspects and presents a limited Western view of nature conservation and development. This will be critically examined in the following section.

### ***1.2 Critiques of Conservationism: Critical Political Economy and Political Ecology***

The concept of wilderness, the foundation of modern conservation ideas, and the creation of separate spaces for "pristine wilderness" is based on an inherent decoupling of humans from nature (Neumann 1998, 9). Cronon (1996) criticised modern environmentalism which creates a narrative of a "dream of unworked nature" (16). To provide a more critical overview of conservationism, it is necessary to draw historical links between the idea of wilderness and nature conservation specifically to the period of (settler) colonialism.

The spread of the "American conservation movement" ties in with the increasing creation of separate spaces for retreat and game hunting in the case of African colonies but also the idea of wilderness as opposed to urban and industrialised spaces in settler colonies like North America or South Africa (Jones 2022, 34). This imperial picture of nature justified colonisation and land claims and has to be regarded as a part of the European project of "civilising nature" and people (Jones 2022, 47). Especially the Yellowstone Model, which describes "a pristine American landscape untouched by humanity," has been applied in settler colonial contexts, whereby Jones (2022) relates it to "land assimilation, cultural legitimisation and identity formation" by creating natural and national parks and simultaneously excluding indigenous peoples from this vision of nature (34-42). Furthermore, in the African context, it has to be remarked that the myth of "the African Eden" has remained part of Western conservation on the continent since its beginnings during colonialism (Blanc 2023, 16). Next to that, nature conservation is tightly connected to the racialisation of game hunting in the

African colonial context. Here, colonial policies racially distinguished between “white hunters” and “black poachers” (Somerville 2016, 62).

Additionally, increasing privatisation and dependence on foreign actors in conservation projects is connected to the neo-liberalisation of global markets. Here, Kelly (2011) critically remarks on the practices of neoliberal conservation, meaning the increasing development of creating capital from nature conservation through tourism. Alcorn (2005) also addresses the involvement of two actors in conservation movements. On the one hand, Big Conservation acts more globally since it mainly “operates with big money”, whereby she regards World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-US or The Nature Conservancy as examples (Alcorn 2005, 39). This also includes funding from “multilateral development banks,” like the World Bank (Alcorn 2005, 39). Therefore, this makes funding more dependent on foreign interests (Alcorn 2005, 39). On the other hand, Alcorn (2005) defines Little Conservation which entails the locals and their “ecological knowledge and [...] skills” conserving “traditional resources-management systems” (39). The author emphasizes their global invisibility since Little Conservation mainly encompasses politically weak actors (Alcorn 2005, 39). Thus, the narrative of mainstream conservation, which views conservation areas as guarded and protected in the hands of governments or other private actors for “maintaining biological diversity,” disregards local actors because the main interest lies in the upkeep of the pristine nature and its economic benefits (Alcorn 2005, 38-40). Hereby, it is important to highlight Alcorn’s (2005) remarks on the threats that Little Conservation faces from Big Conservation. This includes ignorance of “local institutions’ conservation traditions and local knowledge”, the exclusion of the former from protected areas, and the danger of Big Conservation allying with “national elites” who are primarily interested in economic growth (Alcorn 2005, 41).

Thus, political ecology approaches highlight that NGOs increasingly have “filled the vacuum left by retreating states” (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008, 157). So, more decision-making power is in the hands of Big Conservation actors due to their role as donors. Overall, international NGOs and IOs must be understood in the wider context of capitalism and conservation, and their impact on sovereignty, including the intrinsic relation that exists between states and the private sector.

Another important concept associated with this power asymmetry is that political ecology critically examines top-down territorialisation which relates to the construction of nature as a space to exercise “power and control” (Neumann 2015, 393). This space, as Bluwstein and Lund (2016) analyse it, is produced through a “conservation frontier” that in a

later stage is turned into a territorialised entity that is legally established through “boundary making” (454).

Furthermore, protected areas are exposed from a political ecology perspective to green militarisation of nature conservation. Duffy (2014) describes that nature conservation has shifted from community-based conservation back to fortress conservation including embedding militarisation in the latter in the time span of the last three decades (819). This has to be understood in the context of the “environmental crisis narrative” and leads to an increasing discourse of securing conservation areas through military means (Marijnen 2017, 1568). Here, NGOs and other foreign donors are part of the process. This development is increased through the narrative that there is an actual war going on of nature conservationists fighting illegal wildlife poachers (Duffy 2014). Additionally, poachers are, according to the former, “well-equipped and well-organised” and have to be combatted in a coordinated way (Duffy 2014, 822).

From a critical perspective, the creation of the NCA as a conservation area is important to analyse when considering the connection to the Yellowstone Model, the crucial aspect of colonialism, and the role of foreign actors (Olenasha 2014, 189). In this case, the literature for example examines the role of Big Conservationists like the WWF in the post-colonial period (Neumann 1998, 140). Moreover, the role of foreign state-funded donors has to be critically regarded in the case of Tanzania and nature conservation activities in the NCA (Schlindwein 2023). Also, the heightened level of securitisation of conservation areas leads to an increasing infringement of marginalised residents of protected areas.

### ***1.3 Indigenous Political Ecology Perspectives on Conservationism***

The previously discussed literature on mainstream conservationism and political ecology proves that both perspectives are still inherently characterised by a Western narrative of nature conservation. Thus, the last part of this review will challenge the dichotomy approach of humans and nature and examine a more localised approach which includes the agency, knowledge and capabilities of local and indigenous communities regarding nature and the protection of biodiversity.

Particularly Yeh and Bryan (2015) challenge mainstream ideas of conservationism from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century transmitting a stereotyped Western assumption of conflating “the preservation of cultural diversity with biodiversity, rendering indigenous people part of non-human nature as opposed to fully human” (536). Furthermore, with the concept of indigeneity, both authors argue it is important to bring a more postcolonial approach into political ecology,

whereby the latter is often regarded as still limiting indigeneity as mainly impacted through “external structures” and lacking agency (Yeh and Bryan 2015, 538). Thus, the field of mainstream political ecology needs to focus more on “how colonialism has worked over social, cultural and political institutions and identities vis-à-vis nature” (Yeh and Bryan 2015, 538). Middleton (2015) builds upon this notion of coloniality by regarding the limit of political ecology and its reliance on “Euro-derived concepts of power, political economy and human-environmental relations,” thus, risking the reproduction of colonial concepts (561). Therefore, an indigenous political ecology draws not only on a historical understanding of colonial systems but also de-centres perspectives and regards “site-specific frameworks” (Middleton 2015, 564). Additionally, considering conservation and land claim, it “re-centres indigenous ways of knowing the land” by focusing on viewing climate change as “a political-economic-environmental problem and an epistemic-spiritual problem” (Middleton 2015, 573-374). Thus, indigenous political ecology encompasses more location-based rather than universal perspectives on knowledge production by embracing “social and ecological justice” (Middleton 2015, 566).

On a whole Middleton’s research is mainly focused on the case of Native Americans. Here, Densu (2018) emphasizes an African indigenous political ecology when considering nature conservation, which highlights the idea of the common land and subsistence farming as opposing the Western narrative that is tied to colonialism (38-41). African indigenous activists seek recognition of post-colonial states who have been treating them discriminately through resource exploitation and denial of indigenous cultures and identities (Hodgson 2011, 6). This has to be connected with the emergence of transnational indigenous rights networks and their support of indigenous rights for self-determination (Hodgson 2011, 7).

The approach of indigenous political ecology is crucial when taking the case of the Maasai as the pastoralist population of the NCA and their knowledge and cultural heritage that connects them to the area. Additionally, linking this with their vulnerable position in the conservation process of the space. Specifically, the NCA as a UNESCO heritage site and the Maasai as its so-called “resident population” were “not consulted” in the process of “inscription” of the status (Olenasha 2014, 197).

Overall, this review has situated itself within the literature on conservationism and has simultaneously emphasized the need for more critical and indigenous-oriented political ecology to examine the aspect of conservationism in the NCA. This research will include a focus on indigenous peoples’ exclusion from nature protection and the role of IOs, foreign states and

NGOs in this process. Furthermore, it is linked to the aspect of land rights and the state's undermining of the Maasai's right to reside in the area.

## Chapter 2: Historical Perspective of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area

This chapter will present the historical origins of protected areas in the case of the NCA in Tanzania. Furthermore, this will be connected to the shift from colonial game hunting to nature conservation. Overall, this will show the increasing marginalisation of the Maasai, their pastoralist activities and land rights.

### 2.1 *The Maasai as the Indigenous Stakeholders of the Area*

The history of the NCA begins before its official establishment during colonialism when considering the role of its indigenous population. Especially from an indigenous political ecology perspective, it is crucial to highlight the existence and symbiotic relationship of pastoralists and hunter-and-gatherers in the pre-colonial ecosystem of the Ngorongoro and Serengeti area. Middleton (2015) highlights that from an indigenous political ecology approach it is crucial to acknowledge and prioritise “indigenous self-determination”; to highlight the colonial legacy of displacement; reframe the analysis of approaching indigenous knowledge systems and overall attempt to “dismantle systems of internalised and externalised colonial praxis” (562). The paper centres on the Maasai as indigenous inhabitants since they constitute the majority of the current NCA’s population.

First, the Maasai are nomadic livestock keepers, who have lived in the area for about 2500 years (Dowie 2011, 29). Thus, “the ecology of the area is bound up with the Maasai and their land use” (Homewood and Rodgers 1991, 35). They move with their livestock on a seasonal calendar, so dry and wet seasons, depending on pasture availability and resources (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 2). For efficient resource use they organise themselves in small communities called *ngutot/irkung* (neighbourhoods) (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 2). There are seasonal camps (*ronjo*) and permanent homesteads whereby the latter own pasture reserves that are meant for young and weak animals during droughts (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 2). In the lowlands and highlands, which experience regular periods of drought and water scarcity, the Maasai developed practices of keeping their herds by alternating water and pasture use (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 2). The pastoral community managed the land by allowing regeneration through alternating zonal grazing and co-existed peacefully with wildlife (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 3). Their life in the savannah ecosystem is characterised by cultural taboos like “tree pruning is [the] norm as opposed to whole tree cutting” and the discouragement of game meat (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 4).



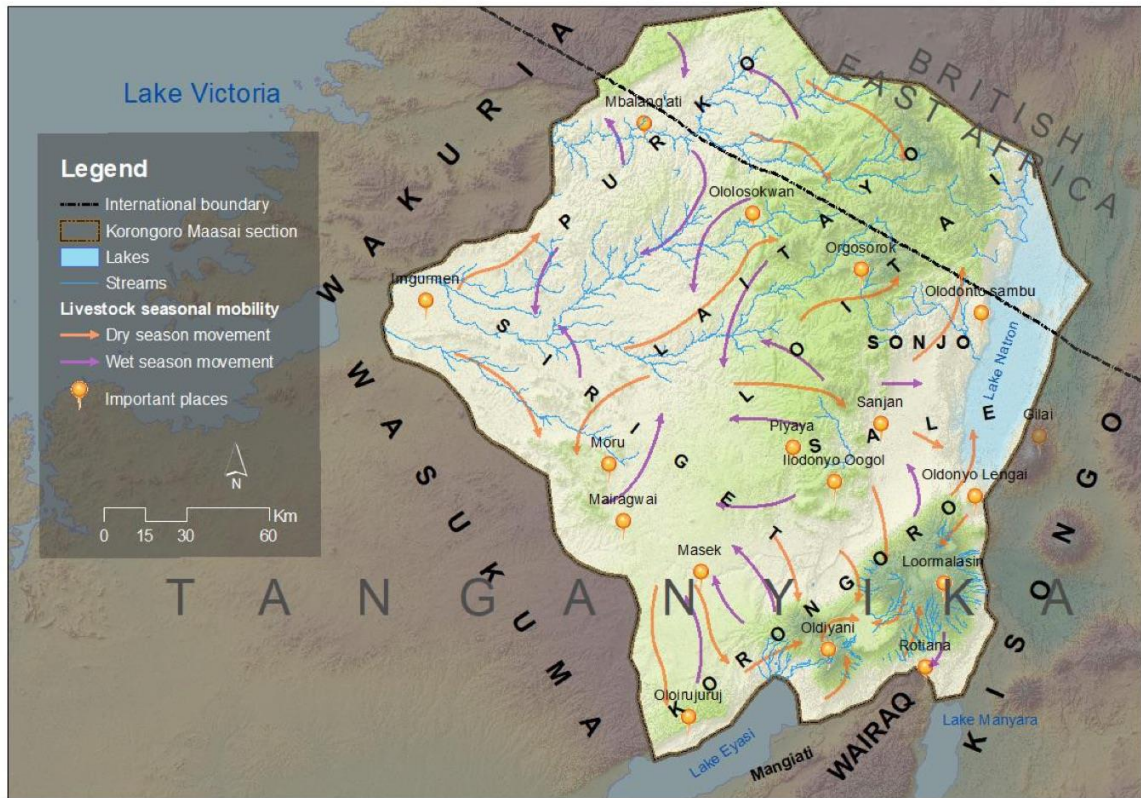


Figure 1: Map of the Ngorongoro area during the colonial era and the Maasai's seasonal movements (PINGO's Forum 2022, 3)

Figure 1 showcases the movement of the Maasai as nomadic pastoralists within the region. Here, the proximity of water and pastureland is crucial for the people's livelihood and their livestock (the Figure depicts the time before the restriction of the Maasai into the NCA).

## 2.2 Colonial Era and the Creation of a National Park and Conservation Area

The imposition of colonial rule in East Africa was institutionalised through the scramble for Africa with the 1884 Berlin Conference whereby Germany established its rule over German East Africa in 1891 (Kimambo, Nyanto and Maddox 2017).

Before the creation of protected areas colonisers primarily used the later conservation areas as hunting grounds. Indeed, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonists, especially the British, linked the exploration of "unknown" lands with the "spirit of the chase" (MacKenzie 1988, 37). So, the connection between empire building and hunting led towards a romanticised narrative of civilised versus wild nature, in that the latter would provide adventures and "settlement of unknown and pagan land" (MacKenzie 1988, 37). This kind of wildlife hunting in the colonies also included the increasing collection of species and the advancement of zoological collections whereby the latter turned into "symbols of successful dominance" (MacKenzie 1988, 39). The rise of racial scientific classification also included racial classification of humans by

Westerners. In the case of hunting, colonists separated between the hunting methods of the “white hunter” versus the “black poacher” (Somerville 2016, 59). This manifested itself in gun laws in the African colonies and demarcated the Western hunter as humane due to their clean killing rifles in contrast to the “cruel” indigenous methods (MacKenzie 1988, 209). The German colonial administration in Tanganyika (nowadays Tanzania) introduced ordinances on game hunting from 1896 onwards and differentiated like the British between African and European hunting practices with the 1898 hunting ordinance (MacKenzie 1988, 250).

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century meant the rise of conservation and protected areas. In 1900, the European colonial powers convened for a conference on coordinating nature conservation in their colonies propagating the need to save nature from Africans (Somerville 2016, 61). Here, it is important to mention that conservationists condoned European hunting and problematised African hunting as dangerous for nature conservation. From 1907 onwards the German colonial administration declared the Serengeti and Ngorongoro as protected areas which mainly translated into a restriction on hunting (Mbogoni 2012, 35).

After World War I the British succeeded the Germans as colonial administrators of Tanganyika. In 1921, the British introduced the Game Preservation Ordinance in Tanganyika to control hunting but also gave incentive to “visiting hunters” (Somerville 2016, 75). At the same time, it further excluded local communities and declared the Serengeti and Ngorongoro as reserves. Here, it is important to consider that a reserve distinguished itself from a national park in that it was merely proclaimed or decided by ministerial decree and was mainly designed to recuperate game stock (MacKenzie 1988, 264). During the 1920s and 1930s, both reserves were expanded, leading to the expulsion of the Maasai from Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti (MacKenzie 1988, 251). The ivory poaching in the areas continued and the colonial administration used ivory to support its revenues during the depression period (MacKenzie 1988, 152). By 1940 the Game Ordinance replaced the Game Preservation Ordinance paving the way for the establishment of national parks (Homewood and Rodgers 1991, 70). Thus, Serengeti National Park was created on paper and “restricted entry to and residence in the park area but excepted those born there or with traditional rights from such restrictions” (Homewood and Rodgers 1991, 70). These restrictions were further tightened with the 1958 Anglo-Maasai Agreement whereby the Maasai formally renounced their claims to live in Serengeti National Park (Shivji and Kapinga 1998, 74). Here, the Maasai had to vacate Western Serengeti and move permanently to the NCA. However, this settlement was not reached on an equal basis, rather this showcases the powerful position of the British administration whereas the Maasai had everything to lose and had to agree to this deal (Olenasha 2014, 193).

With the 1959 Ngorongoro Conservation Area Ordinance the British colonial administration officially separated the Serengeti National Park from the NCA and thus created the latter (Homewood and Rodgers 1991, 71). This meant that the Maasai officially were not allowed to reside in the Serengeti National Park and at the same time this colonial Ordinance guaranteed the Maasai customary rights in the NCA (PINGO's Forum 2022, xii). The division of the two areas is depicted in Figure 2. A more detailed depiction of the division of the Arusha Region is shown in Figure 3. The ordinance declared it a Multiple Land Use Area for “conserving natural resources, protecting the interests of Indigenous groups, and promoting tourism” (The Oakland Institute 2021, 6).

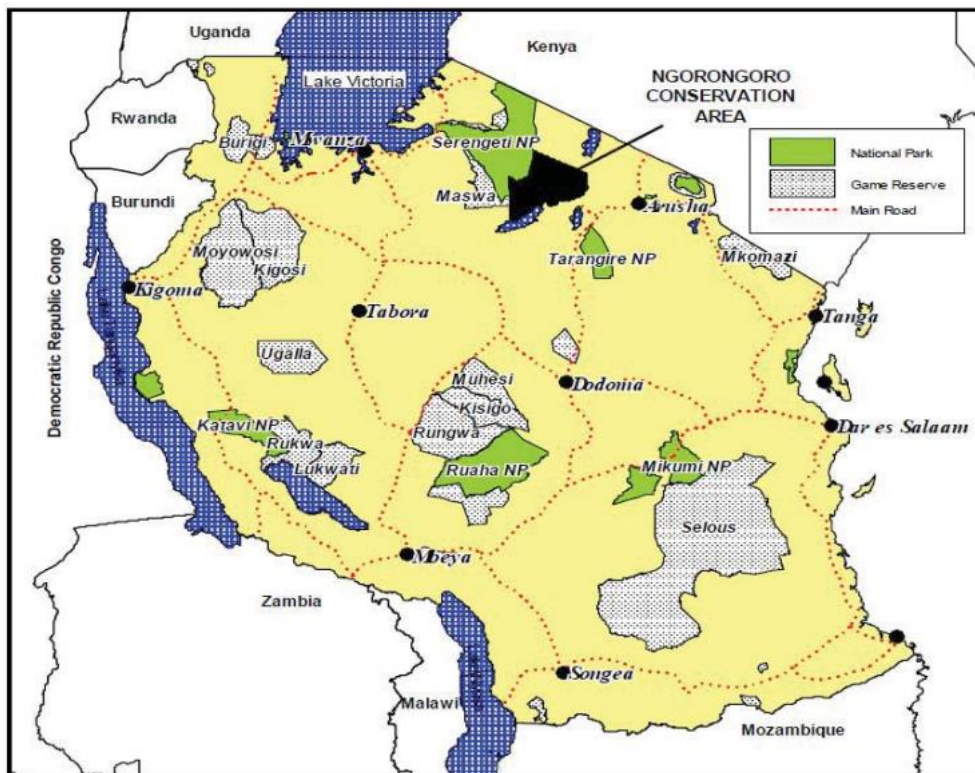


Figure 2: Map of Protected Areas in Tanzania (UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOS 2019, 14)

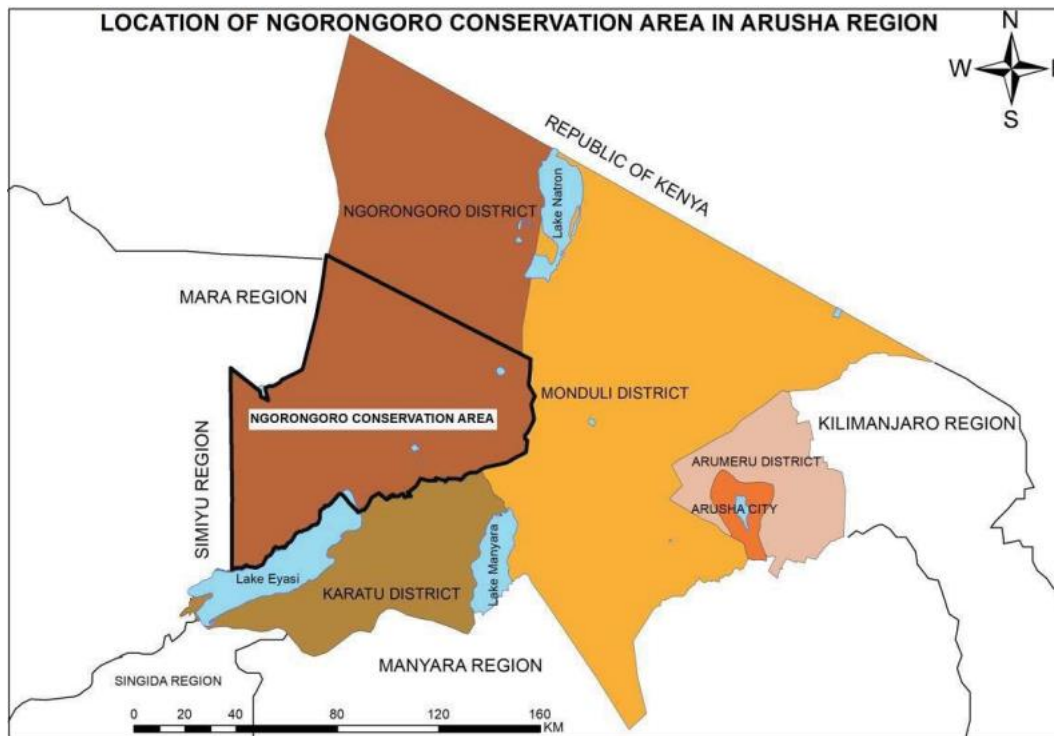


Figure 3: Map of the NCA in the Arusha Region (UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOS 2019, 15)

The decolonial process brought independence to Tanzania but also uncertainty for the Maasai and their rights to stay in the NCA. Specifically, a feud between the agricultural and the conservation sectors about the use of the NCA shows the varying plans for further use of the area. Ultimately, the area was put under the authority of the newly established Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), which resulted in increasing emphasis on conservation practices in the NCA (Homewood and Rodgers 1991, 75). In the Arusha Manifesto 1961 the role of international conservation groups was fixed so that they continued to play a role in providing expertise in the creation and managing of conservation areas in Tanzania, which later had an impact on restricting the rights of the Maasai in the NCA (The Oakland Institute 2021, 8). Furthermore, in 1975 the NCA Authority (NCAA) was installed, which included a board of directors and a conservator (Homewood and Rodgers 1991, 75). The Maasai continued to be portrayed as poaching perpetrators and viewed as a danger to conservation under the post-colonial government. Especially, a deteriorating relationship early onwards between the Maasai and the NCAA can be exemplified through the latter's destruction of cultivated Maasai land in the NCA in 1986-1987 and 1988-1989 (Homewood and Rodgers 1991, 74). Here, the NCAA justified their actions by calling it a land use problem, whereby "666 people were arrested for the cultivation of 528 ha" (Homewood and Rodgers 1991, 74).

Finally, in 1979 the NCA was granted UNESCO World Heritage Status to which an additional cultural status was added in 2010. Nevertheless, this inscription happened without prior consultation of the Maasai. This is important to mention since the UNESCO status bears several discriminating policies for the indigenous population of that area which will be discussed in the next chapter. Overall, there is a continuation of colonial conservation policies through national parks and conservation areas, like in the Tanzanian case. From a critical political economy perspective these have to be viewed as an economic instrument since conservation tourism constitutes a major source of income for the country.

## Chapter 3: International Actors in the NCA

When looking into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and nature conservation in the NCA, it is crucial to regard the role of international actors that are indirectly and directly contributing to the increasing forced removal of the Maasai from their lands. These are Big Conservation actors, as depicted by Alcorn (2005). First, the role of UNESCO will be analysed, followed by a critical regard of Germany's involvement in Tanzania's conservation sector and the role of foreign nature conservation NGOs.

### 3.1 The Role of UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOS

For the analysis of the role of IOs in the NCA, UNESCO, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) will be regarded, whereby the latter two are part of UNESCO's three advisory bodies of non-governmental/intergovernmental organisations (UNESCO 2023a). This section will consider the role of awarding the UNESCO World Heritage title to the NCA and primary documents of monitoring missions of the NCA of the three organisations. Overall, this section will argue that the IO and its advisory bodies are complicit in the removal of the Maasai through their consultancy on modes of nature conservation.

First, the UNESCO World Heritage status of the NCA includes five criteria whereby Criterion iv was added in 2010, which inscribes the cultural value of the area due to the NCA's significance "to human evolution and human-environment dynamics" (UNESCO and ICOMOS 2011, 11). Other Criteria vii, viii, ix, and x relate to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Ngorongoro Crater, the wildlife and the ecosystem of the area (UNESCO and ICOMOS 2011, 11).<sup>3</sup>

The 1979 inscription regarded the number of 20,000 Maasai and their 275,000 livestock "within the capacity of the reserve" (UNESCO and ICOMOS 2011, 12). The organisation remarks further that overall, this capacity should not be exceeded since this would threaten "both the natural and cultural value of the property" (UNESCO and ICOMOS 2011, 12). Not only does this evaluation and assignment lack to include the Maasai and their role in the conservation of the area but it also portrays them as an external and threatening factor to the status of the area. Indeed, this perspective of nature conservation alludes to the idea that indigenous inhabitants are not equally consorted with and not evenly included in the assignment

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<sup>3</sup> Def: "Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity" (UNESCO 2023b).

of their area in the first place. Thus, perpetuating a Western narrative of nature conservation where the indigenous population is regarded as an external, even destructive factor. This exclusion of the Maasai indicates a narrative of fortress conservation to preserve the so-called wilderness (Büscher and Fletcher 2020).

From 2007 to 2008, a combined monitoring mission of UNESCO and IUCN of the NCA mentioned the aspect of the Maasai and in particular their cultivation methods as threatening to the NCA's UNESCO World Heritage status. The report supports the NCAA's ban on cultivation and recommends and encourages "voluntary relocation of immigrant population" outside the NCA boundaries (UNESCO 2007, 5). This had repercussions on a national level, whereby the deputy minister for Tourism and Natural Resources highlighted in a speech the important financial role of NCA's World Heritage status for Tanzania's tourism sector and the secondary role of the Maasai's food securing in the area (Olenasha 2014, 204).

Furthermore, it has to be remarked that in 2010, when the cultural criterion was added, the Maasai were not included as an "integral part of the NCA's universal value" thus, disregarding their role in preserving the area over the last centuries (Olenasha 2014, 198). The IUCN (2010) stated that the Maasai can be seen as merely a "secondary consideration, relative to the paleontological sites related to human evolution" (189). Once again, this depicts a narrative that relativises the role of the Maasai and (indirectly) minimises their centuries-long involvement as inhabitants and guardians of the area. Therefore, this perpetuates a Western image of a space absent of human activity and furthers a "pristine wilderness" imagination (Neumann 1998, 9).

The 2011 monitoring mission report by UNESCO and ICOMOS was again raising concerns about the growing size of the Maasai population which could not only threaten "the natural resources of the NCA" but also the "visual integrity of the landscape" (UNESCO 2011, 28). Specifically, the need to remove agriculture was highlighted. The report encouraged the continued enforcement of prohibiting farming to "limit possible human population densities and encourages the expanding resident population to move outside the conservation area boundaries" (UNESCO and ICOMOS 2011, 28). Furthermore, the report approved the NCAA's ban on agricultural practices that have been undertaken since the 2009 ICOMOS/IUCN monitoring mission. It regarded it as "a positive progress" that "areas/plots previously farmed by the Maasai communities are no longer under active cultivation and are actually going through a natural rehabilitation process" (UNESCO and ICOMOS 2011, 28). Even though UNESCO had denied already before the 2011 monitoring mission its involvement in actively removing the Maasai from the NCA, it continues to recommend a restriction on the cultivation





and subsistence practices of the latter (Olenasha 2014, 204). Thus, the 2011 report once again recommended the continuation of enforcing bans on agriculture within the NCA by the NCAA (UNESCO and ICOMOS 2011, 28). They added that this should happen through the inclusion of the Maasai in the process and should not violate human rights. Nevertheless, primarily there is a focus on the removal of the Maasai and not on the protection of their rights since their livelihood is according to UNESCO a concern for the “integrity of the property” as a World Heritage site (Olenasha 2014, 204)

In 2019, UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOS released a joint mission report on the NCA. This is an important example to analyse since it shows that since the 2011 report, there has been a continuing move towards suggesting a more fortress conservation approach for the NCA conservation practices for the sake of upkeeping the OUV of the area. This report specifically highlights that the government through the NCAA should complete the Multiple Land Use Model review exercise. In a letter from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (OHCHR) special rapporteurs to the IUCN Director General Bruno Oberle, the former voiced the concerns that the 2019 UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOS report demanded more “stringent measures” to “control population growth in the NCA and its impact on the area” (Rajagopal et al. 2022, 3). Indeed, even though the report states that the “property still retains OUV”, it highlights again the aspect of the Maasai’s “rampant migratory patterns” that can threaten the status (UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN 2019, 6). This language is highly problematic. It uses a neoliberal economic narrative describing the area as a property that can lose value primarily because of the indigenous community since they are not able to preserve it according to UNESCO standards. UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOs recommend the government to finish the Multiple Land Use Model review. Moreover, they advise sharing this process with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Body “to [get] advi[c]e on the most appropriate land use model, including in the matter of settling local communities in protected areas” (UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN 2019, 9).

Additionally, the 2019 report focuses on the livelihood of the Maasai. Here, it criticises their construction of “modern style” houses and recommends a more explicit policy on the house-type development that can take place within the NCA (UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN 2019, 21). The report specifically suggests that the shift away from “traditional houses” is from a UNESCO perspective only “acceptable [...] in a manner that retains the integrity and authenticity of the landscape, and its people and their cultural practice” (UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN 2019, 21). This recommendation suggests less collaboration with the Maasai and

pushes for more concrete guidelines and a vision of how UNESCO envisions traditional livelihoods in the area that supposedly are in line with the Western imagination of livelihoods in East Africa.

Furthermore, it views the Maasai as problematic for the “naturalness” of wild animals and nature in the NCA in the long term due to the pastoralists’ ownership of domesticated animals (UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN 2019, 27). It includes the narrative of climate change and overpopulation as contributing to the spread of settlements in the “property” (UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN 2019, 27). This highlights a continuation of international actors’ efforts to blame Africans, the indigenous population in this case, for the increasing tensions that are arising in protected areas between wildlife, locals and national actors and the deterioration of nature conservation efforts (Alexander 2023, 128). Not only does this implicate a dominant Western conservation policy-recommendation but also disregards the agency of the Maasai and the problems they are facing in light of continuous evictions.

Lastly, the 2020 IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment categorised the increasing human settlement and population as a high threat. The report includes various forms of threat assessment and differentiates between various levels of threats. It categorises the human population living in NCA as the “major threat [s]” and tourism in contrast is merely considered a low threat to the World Heritage status of the area (IUCN 2020, 7). Furthermore, it remarks again on the World Heritage Committee’s encouragement of the government to work with the local communities to explore “alternative livelihood solutions” next to the “current voluntary resettlement scheme” (IUCN 2020, 8).

Overall, this section has analysed the role of UNESCO and its advisory bodies in the continuous eviction of the Maasai from the NCA. This depicts the power asymmetry between the IO and its advisory bodies and the Tanzanian government. The former can revoke the World Heritage status when their conditions are not met. It shows their active participation and their influence in government policymaking. UNESCO and its advisory organisations cannot be regarded as neutral actors in the process of depriving the Maasai of their land rights and as stakeholders in the conservation process of the NCA. This furthers the polarisation between the Maasai and the state. Next to that, it paints a Western picture of nature conservation disregarding the role of the Maasai.

### ***3.2 The Role of Germany as an External State Actor***

Next to IOs, foreign states are also actively involved in Tanzania’s conservation sector as donors of nature conservation and biodiversity efforts. Specifically, Western countries with their

history of colonialism in Africa continue to be increasingly engaged in the conservation sector. This research will take a closer look at the role of Germany as a donor and economic partner of Tanzania, its involvement in increasing fortress conservation and its effects on the removal of the Maasai from the NCA.

Before regarding the bilateral relationship between Tanzania and Germany on the subject of nature conservation in the country in general and the NCA, it is crucial to briefly consider the position of the current German government on nature conservation and biodiversity. Important to analyse is its role and impact on global conservation to get a better understanding of what effect its positioning has on current and future conservation practices in Tanzania and in the NCA.

First, in 2022, during the UN Biodiversity Conference, Germany, with other countries pledged itself and its policymaking to the 30 by 30 plan (BMZ 2023b). This plans to achieve conservation of 30 per cent of the planet's surface (land and sea) by 2030 (The Nature Conservancy 2023). There have been various critical voices raising concerns about this plan because it seems so far unclear how to achieve this without violating human rights, land claims and fuelling contested discourses on nature conservation (Domínguez 2023, 64).

Germany is one of the world's biggest donors of biodiversity-related development assistance, as can be seen in Figure 4.

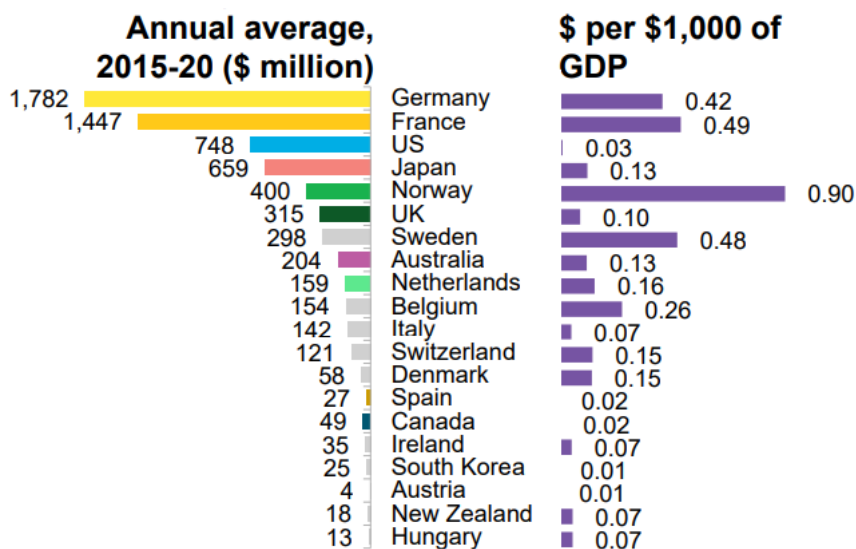


Figure 4 Average amount of biodiversity assistance by donor country (Cuming and Bromley 2023, 18)

Furthermore, Chancellor Scholz has pledged that Germany would increase financing global biodiversity efforts to 1.5 billion EUR annually until 2025 (BMZ and BMVU 2022, 6). Figure 5 indicates that increased funding already occurred in 2021. The funding works primarily through the BMZ (German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development). The

BMZ is funding conservation projects and development through its two main implementation organisations, the GIZ (German Initiative for International Cooperation) and the KfW (German Credit Institute for Reconstruction) (BMZ 2023a). Additionally, it supports German nature conservation NGOs like the animal conservation NGO Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) through funds. In its 2023 budget plan, the BMZ prescribes around 835 million EUR for funding biodiversity and climate protection globally, and to achieve the 30 by 30 goal (BMF 2023, 26).

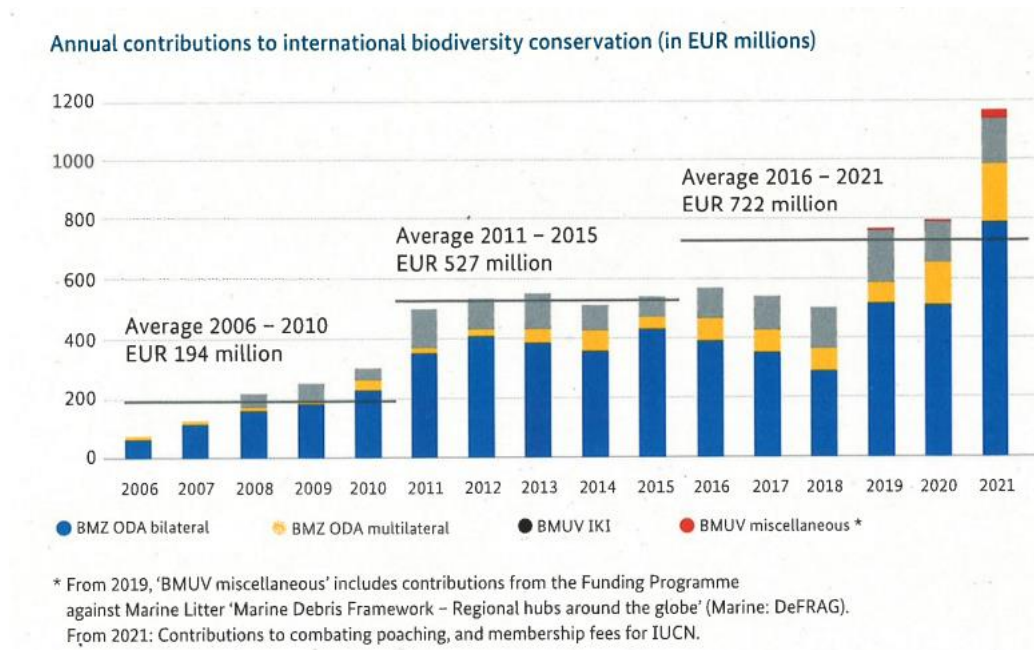


Figure 5 BMZ Annual financial contributions to international biodiversity conservation (BMZ and BMVU 2022)

In 2020, Africa is after Latin America the largest receiver of German funding for biodiversity and conservation projects, as depicted in Figure 6.

**Projects with primary/secondary goal biodiversity under implementation 2020**  
(in EUR million)

Budget and market funds<sup>1</sup>

	BMZ	BMU	Mandats	Total
Africa	884.9	0	1.9	886.8
Asia	511.7	45.1	9.3	566.0
Europe	230.8	9.5	3.2	243.6
Latin America	764.2	58.5	103.4	1,003.5
North Africa / Middle East	1.4	0	0	1.4
Supraregional <sup>II</sup>	258.8	0	0	258.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,651.7</b>	<b>113.1</b>	<b>117.8</b>	<b>2,960.0</b>

Source: own representation

<sup>1</sup> figures rounded

<sup>II</sup> Global Crop Diversity Trust Fund, Legacy Landscapes Fund & Blue Action Fund

Figure 6: Table indicating German international biodiversity funding in 2020 (Adam et al. 2021, 6)

The KfW, in lieu of the German Federal Government, is also cooperating with the Legacy Landscape Fund set up by various international actors promoting the 30 by 30 agenda, including both private and state organisations (Adam et al. 2021, 10). This project not only includes an ambitious plan for an international set of actors achieving conservation goals, but it also challenges the notion of the involvement of states and local actors as the primary stakeholders in managing conservation efforts, as it states:

“This approach is underpinned by the idea that no single country, trust or company can overcome this huge challenge alone. By 2030, the fund is aiming to accumulate trust capital of USD 1 billion and promote at least 30 areas in developing countries. These will then cover well over 60,000 square kilometres of land that is particularly rich in different species and that, taken as a whole, is at least as big as Belgium.” (Adam et al. 2021, 10)

One of the biggest receivers of German funding for conservation projects in Africa is Tanzania. A primary aspect of economic cooperation between Tanzania and Germany is the latter country’s engagement in nature conservation through for example extensive investment (Schlindwein 2023, 60-61).

The BMZ as aforementioned financially supports animal conservation NGOs. One NGO, the FZS, is important to mention considering its historical connections to the beginnings of the Serengeti National Park and the NCA. During the late 1950s and 1960s the famous German conservationist Professor Bernhard Grzimek, then director of the Frankfurt Zoological Society, and his son co-authored the book *Serengeti darf nicht sterben* (Serengeti Shall not Die) which warned of the danger of human destruction of the area and pledged for rigorous wildlife conservation (Kideghesho 2010, 230). The conservationist was invited by the British colonial administration for a research expedition to account for the animal populations in the Serengeti and their behaviour (Hofmann 2020). The book gives a one-sided version of the German colonial history in Tanzania and draws false conclusions about the dangers of plummeting wildlife numbers due to overpopulation and the segregation of the Serengeti National Park and the NCA (Boes 2013, 45).

Additionally, in 1959 the Grzimeks produced an eponymous documentary of their research, which included typical tropes of “safari films” and characterising the area as “pristine” that has to be rescued by white conservationists (Boes 2013, 46-47). The Maasai are depicted as “indigenous poachers” that endanger the survival of the wildlife (Boes 2013, 47). Boes (2013) interprets the dichotomy approach of Grzimek’s filming as an example of fortress conservation (48). On the one hand, the wild animals, and the indigenous population are surveyed and counted from above by white Europeans. On the other hand, detached from the political struggles of decolonisation, the documentary shows the human-devoid nature of Serengeti and Ngorongoro (Boes 2013, 48). The film received an Academy Award and attracted international attention. Grzimek is regarded as “one of the founders of modern nature tourism” and his film led to a high increase in nature tourists coming to Tanzania (Boes 2013, 45).

This intrinsic connection between “conservation discourse” and the tourism industry “perpetuat[es] the myth that blurs the line between the principles of conservation and the business interests of tourism” (Mbaria and Ogada 2016, 129). Moreover, it alienates indigenous Africans from nature conservation and misrepresents their role in it (Mbaria and Ogada 2016, 130). Additionally, through media and literature portrayal there is a continued persistence of the myth that white people are not involved in wildlife crimes (Mbaria and Ogada 2016, 139). This is reinforced through a continued portrayal of indigenous Africans as a nuisance and a danger to nature conservation through Western narratives of poaching.

In the 1990s, the FZS started a rhino conservation project for the protection of the endangered black rhino (FZS 2023). First, support for the rhino conservation efforts was set up in the Serengeti National Park “through the provision of food rations to the rhino protection

teams, aerial surveillance flights for monitoring and anti-poaching, the purchase and maintenance of a digital radio network, logistical and financial support for rhino monitoring, as well as the repair and maintenance of all of the rhino team's vehicles" (FZS 2023). Later, it expanded its project to black rhino protection around Ngorongoro Crater.

Today, Grzimek's legacy as nature conservationist is still widely celebrated in German conservation circles and beyond and his work continues to influence the FZS's work. This importance is, for example, reflected in the KfW's Bernhard Grzimek Award for outstanding commitment to biodiversity which is annually awarded (KfW Stiftung 2023).

In 2015, financial support for the FZS's conservation work in Tanzania went for example into the security investment against poaching, including three planes for air surveillance supported by the BMZ and the GIZ (FZS 2015). In 2022, the FZS spent most of its conservation funds in Tanzania, as can be seen in Figure 7. This amounts to around one-third of the NGO's overall global conservation funding of 35.54 million EUR (FZS 2022, 69).

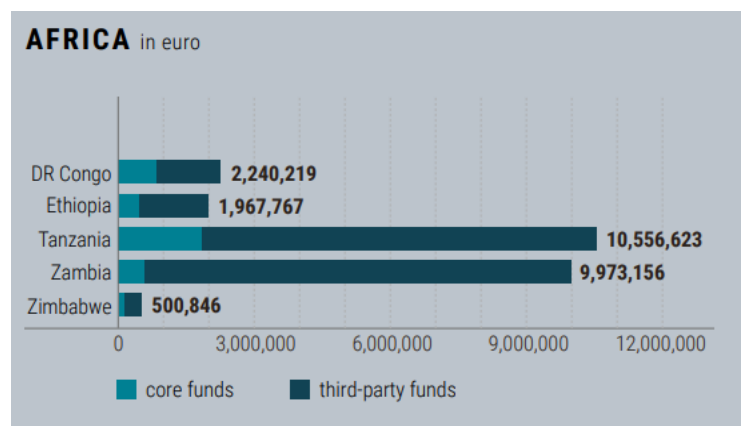


Figure 7 FZS's expenditure in Africa 2022 (FZS 2022, 70)

Here, the third-party funds to Tanzania indicate funding from private donors and organisations such as the KfW, the GIZ and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV). In 2022, the FZS received most of its funding from the KfW, as depicted in Figure 8.

INTERNATIONAL	PROJECT REGION	EURO	GERMANY	PROJECT REGION	EURO
Wildcat Foundation	DR Congo, Zambia	2,488,615	KfW Development Bank	Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania	8,497,007
The Wyss Foundation	Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania	2,214,291	Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, nukleare Sicherheit und Verbraucherschutz (BMUV)	Indonesia, Peru, Ukraine	923,011
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	Zambia	1,871,185	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)	DR Congo, Peru, Zambia	486,569
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Indonesia, DR Congo, Zambia	1,327,284	The Light Foundation	Zimbabwe	334,024
U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)	Zambia	1,003,345	Claus und Taslimawati Schmidt-Luprian Stiftung Vogelschutz in Feuchtgebieten	Peru, Polesia	129,975

Figure 8 FZS Institutional Donors 2022 (FZS 2022, 72)

Overall, the section has highlighted the interlinking of the German state and an NGO like the FZS whose primary goal is preserving wildlife conservation in Tanzania and alludes to the stereotypical depiction of nature conservation on the African continent. In this narrative, Africans are not regarded as capable of preserving wildlife and nature. Additionally, the Maasai are disregarded as stakeholders in nature conservation. This is reinforced through the dominance of accounts on nature conservation by Grzimek and others. Furthermore, as a Big Conservation actor, the German state has leverage through its powerful position as donor influencing decision-making in nature conservation matters in Tanzania.

### ***3.3 Militarisation and the Role of NGOs***

Militarisation of protected areas has increasingly become the norm in African nature conservation. This includes the use of military tactics, surveillance, and arms for the protection of areas through rangers with increasing support from foreign military agents (Schlindwein 2023, 103-104).

NGOs are actively involved in the militarisation of conservation in Africa (Duffy 2014, 822). In the NCA especially, WWF is supporting more rigorous action against poaching and claims that there occurs increasing violence against rangers in Tanzania's protected areas (Sitati 2023). Remarkably here that WWF has no active projects in the NCA, nevertheless, they emphasise the "importance and contribution of the NCA in ensuring the ecological integrity and biodiversity connectivity for the entire Northern Tanzania Landscape" (WWF 2021). This is enhanced by a use of language that portrays wildlife rangers as victims in the conservation dispute:

"The question is who will then defend the rights of the rangers and environmental rights individuals who are murdered globally while protecting the Mother nature?" (Sitati 2023)

Moreover, the previous section about the FZS highlighted the active security funding in the NCA and Serengeti National Park.

Overall, this furthers a fortress conservation approach and has to be related to colonial methods of fencing off game reserves. Additionally, this involvement of especially foreign NGOs has a real impact on national policymaking and further puts the Maasai in a precarious situation concerning the increasing denial of their rights to the land for their pastoralist activities. The vilification of indigenous peoples as poachers is a continuation of the colonial narrative of the good hunter versus the bad poacher.



## **Chapter 4: Localisation of Nature Conservation and Aspects of Land Rights for Maasai**

This final chapter will analyse the mechanisms and outcomes of continued land dispossession in the NCA. Here, the role of the government in expelling the Maasai from the NCA will be analysed. Furthermore, the subject of tourism as a reason for the displacement of the Maasai will be critically regarded. Lastly, this research wants to highlight what impacts this exclusionary policymaking has on the Maasai and how this is counteractive to nature conservation activities from an indigenous political ecology perspective.

### ***4.1 The Stakeholders and Decision-Making in the NCA***

For a better understanding of the hierarchical decision-making processes in the NCA, it is necessary to briefly outline the structure of the NCAA as the official authority of the area. The NCAA is under the authority of the Tanzanian state and is managing the area through its Board of Directors (Olenasha 2014, 211). Here, the conservator and the chairperson of the Board are directly appointed by the President of Tanzania and further members (six to eleven) are selected by the MNRT (Olenasha 2014, 211). Furthermore, there is so far no legal obligation to appoint residents of the NCA to the Board (Olenasha 2014, 211).

Next to that, a branch of the NCAA is the Ngorongoro Pastoral Council established to increase community participation. This was already recognised as a crucial part for the conservation of the area in the 1990s, but the Council only became legally recognised by the government in 2000 (Olenasha 2014, 213). The primary tasks of the Council include, for example, the further improvement of social services for the Maasai in the NCA and advising the NCAA Board in matters of community development (PINGO's Forum 2022, 32). Up until now, it succeeded in implementing an education program and enhancing food security for residents in the NCA (PINGO's Forum 2022, 32).

However, since the Ngorongoro Pastoral Council is not an independent actor and is reliant on the approval from the Board it cannot be regarded as a successful stakeholder for increasing the official managing power of residents in the NCA. Especially since the NCAA is supporting an increasing removal of the Maasai from the NCA. The NCAA argues that the Maasai and their increasingly sedentary lifestyle are a destructive factor for nature conservation. Here, the NCAA promotes on its website its contribution to delivering more food security for the Maasai (NCAA 2023). Indeed, the NCAA advocates as part of community development farming programs outside the NCA, like in the Karatu District, "to empower households and

help them achieve a year-round food security” (NCAA 2023).<sup>4</sup> Thus, this shows that the NCAA has an increasing interest in removing the Maasai from the NCA. This aspect of food dependency of the Maasai on the NCAA will be further analysed in the following subsections of this chapter.

Overall, the government, through the NCAA, has an asymmetrical power position compared to the Maasai in decision-making processes and pushes towards the complete removal of the Maasai from the NCA. Thus, the Maasai as custodians of the NCA and as land users are not equally regarded in their position by the Tanzanian government.

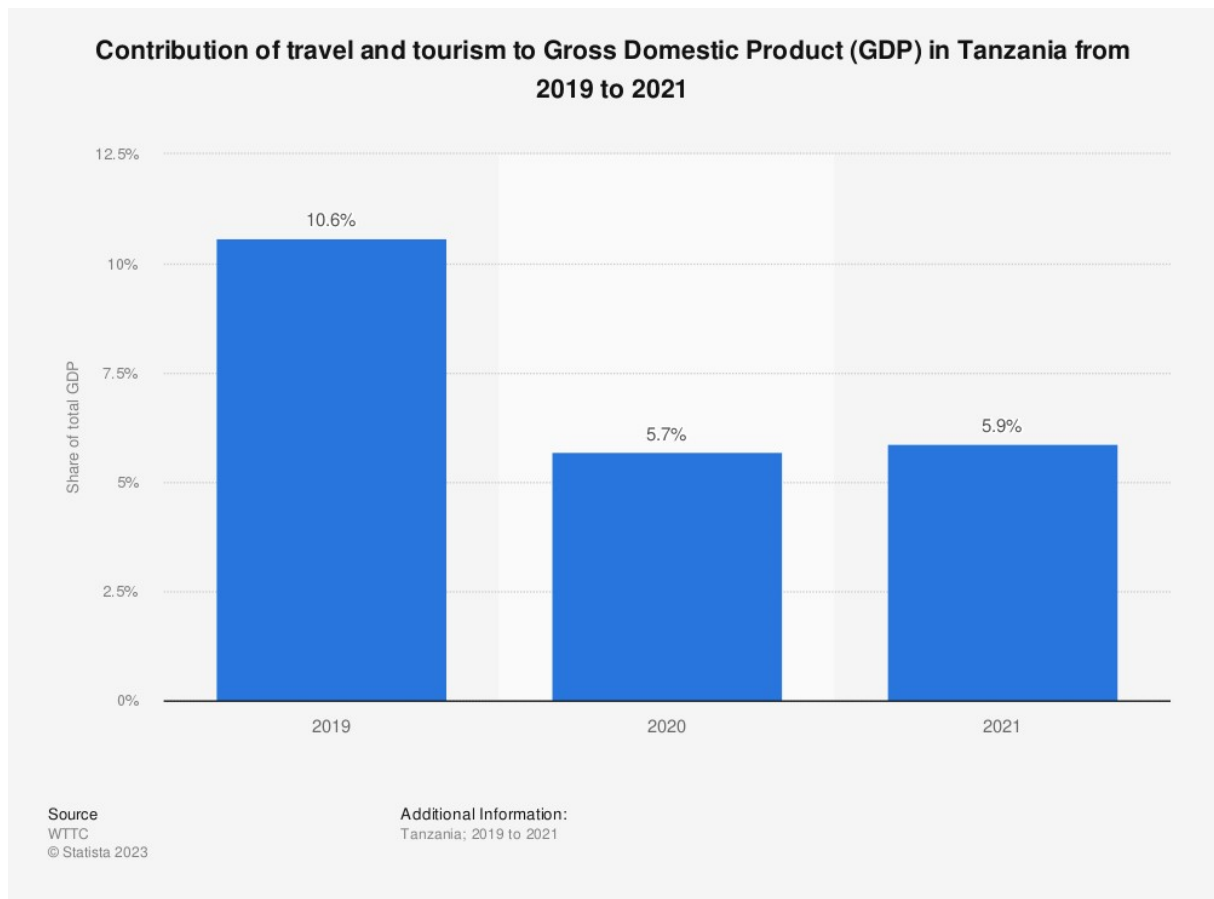
#### ***4.2 Land Rights Deprivation and Tourism***

There is an inherent connection between stricter measurements towards the Maasai and their livelihoods and the increasing importance of tourism in the NCA. Thus, the following section will take a closer look into the aspect of increasing land deprivation and the role of tourism as a driving factor.

The tourism sector is Tanzania’s major source of income. Pre-pandemic the sector contributed to up to ten per cent of Tanzania’s GDP, as Figure 9 shows.

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<sup>4</sup> Karatu District is bordering the NCA.



*Figure 9: Tourism in Tanzania to GDP, 2019-2021 (Statista 2023)*

Moreover, the NCA, as part of the tourism sector, is one of the country's most important sources of revenue. The conservation area is one of the most "intensively visited" ones in Africa (IUCN 2020). Indeed, the number of annual tourists rose from 20,000, in 1979, to 644,155 in 2017/18 (The Oakland Institute 2021, 21). In 2023, the NCAA expects a revenue of Sh163 billion (around 60 million EUR) and for 2025 up to Sh260 billion (around 95 million EUR) (Ubwani 2023). Having established the current situation and future outlooks on the NCA as a popular tourist attraction, especially for Western customers, this indicates the government's interest in extending the tourist sector in the area. This already has an impact on the Maasai as residents of the NCA.

As an immediate response to the 2019 UNESCO, IUCN and ICOMOS joint report, the Tanzanian government issued the Four Zone Management and Resettlement Plan as part of the Multiple Land Use Model review (The Oakland Institute 2019). Here, the government highlights its intention to extend the tourism sector through, for example, the construction of more lodges and other facilities for visitors:

“The available accommodation facilities located both in NCA and Karatu District are currently not sufficient to satisfy the growing number of tourists [...]” (MNRT 2019, xv).

However, these actions contradict the government’s plan to reach its Development Vision 2025, whereby the country wants to establish more sustainable conservation in the NCA by actively engaging and including NCA pastoralists (MNRT 2019, xxii). This plan is so far deteriorating in that the Maasai are actively excluded in the decision-making process and continuously forced to vacate the NCA permanently. Additionally, the MNRT establishes in this report the intention to augment the boundaries of the NCA from 8,100 km<sup>2</sup> to 12,404 km<sup>2</sup> for tourism purposes, see Figure 10.

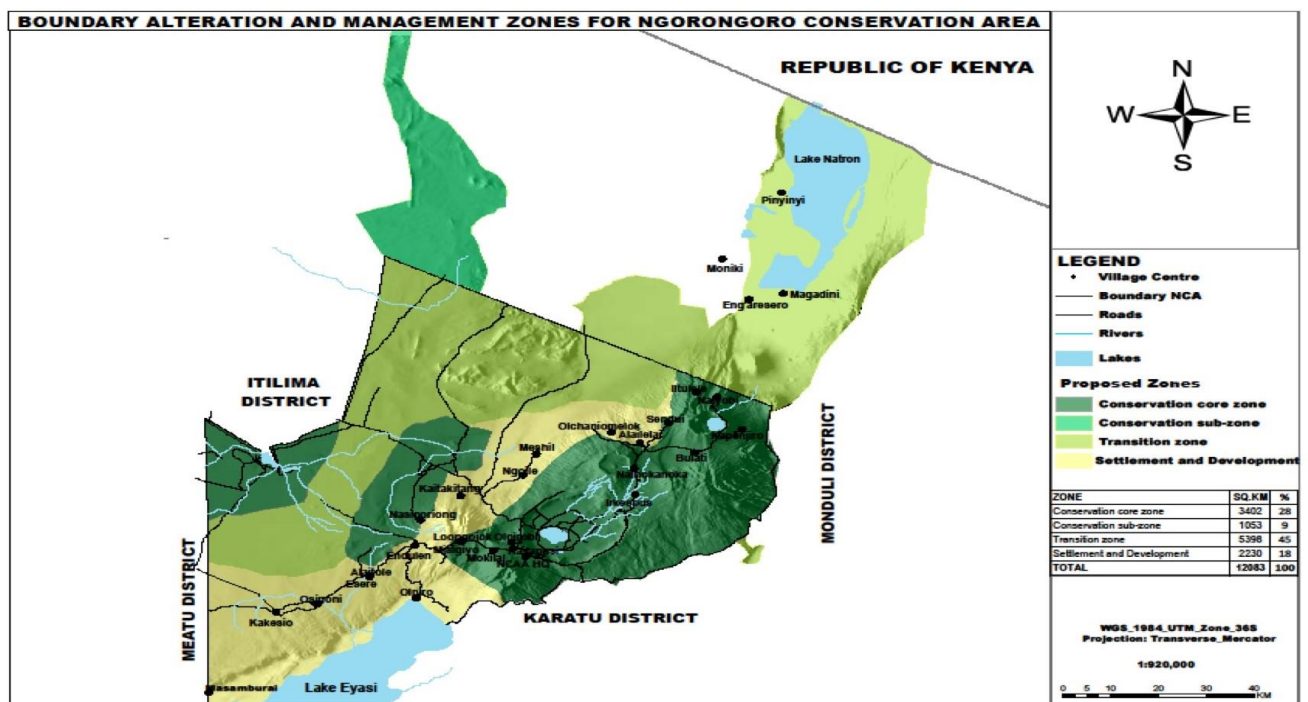


Figure 10 Map of planned enlargement of NCA (MNRT 2019, 97)

This will include the extension of the NCA towards the north including the Loliondo Game Controlled Area (GCA), parts of Lake Natron GCA, Engaruka Historical Sight and the Upper Kitete-Selala wildlife corridor (MNRT 2019, 104). This already proves to have real consequences for the Maasai in the Loliondo GCA, whereby a violent expulsion campaign took place there in the summer of 2022 (Lee 2023). This violent eviction by the state was occurring even after the 2018 East African Justice Court ruling an injunction to stop further violent eviction of villages in the Loliondo GCA by the government (The Oakland Institute 2022). Furthermore, the Multiple Land Use Model indicated a restriction of 18 per cent of human settlement in the expanded version of the NCA (Rajagopal et al. 2022, 4). The African Commission on Human and People’s Rights has called out the Tanzanian government’s

discriminative actions against the Maasai in 2022 (Ayele Dersso 2022). Additionally, it requests the government to stop the violent evictions, assure the safety of local residents and recognise their role in nature conservation in the area (Ayele Dersso 2022). In addition, OHCHR special rapporteurs sent letters to the Tanzanian government, the IUCN, ICOMOS and UNESCO in February 2022, expressing their concern about human rights violations in connection with nature conservation activities in the NCA through the NCAA (Rajagopal et al. 2022).

The Tanzanian government continued its strategy towards decreasing population numbers in the NCA. During a speech in April 2021, President Samia Suluhu Hassan propagated that the NCA can only be saved by limiting the human population in the area (Boniphace 2021). Thus, furthering a Western nature dichotomy narrative which depicts the pastoralist communities as endangerment for the pristine wilderness of the area. This further polarised the debate about the role of the Maasai in the conservation efforts.

The week following the speech, this resulted in the NCAA releasing eviction notices to 45 residents stating that their buildings lacked proper permits (Rajagopal et al. 2022, 5). This also included the threat to demolish “Maasai settlement social facilities” including government schools and other facilities (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 92). Ultimately, the authority revoked their notices due to protests by the affected Maasai communities. Nevertheless, in 2022 this was followed by a planned relocation of Maasai residents to Handeni, about 600km to the south-east of the NCA in the Tanga District (The East African 2022). Moreover, the government used COVID-19 relief funds it received from the IMF, originally assigned to the Ngorongoro District for health and education facilities, for the facilitation of the Maasai relocation to Handeni (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 98).

In addition, The Indigenous World Report (2023) indicates that so far 3,000 Maasai and Barabaig pastoralists from the NCA have been relocated to the Tanga District (126). This represents not only a violation of “human, land and resource rights” (IWGIA 2023, 126). It also leads to rising conflicts about land use in Msomera village, Tanga District, between resident Parakuyo pastoralists of Msomera and the pastoralists relocated there from the NCA (The Oakland Institute 2022b). Specifically, the lack of resources like water and pasture for both previous residents and newcomer pastoralists makes the situation one of high concern (The Oakland Institute 2022b).

Overall, the previous section has displayed the power imbalances between first the government and international organisations like UNESCO, and second, between the Tanzanian state and the Maasai as residents of the NCA. Especially, the impact of reports and recommendations about overpopulation generating problems for nature conservation from

international organisations are influencing policymaking on national and local levels. Additionally, the prime position of tourism for furthering economic growth further deteriorates the relationship between the Maasai and the NCAA. Here, the subject of creating more sustainable conservation, which must include the Maasai, is disregarded when considering recent events of eviction. This shift away from trying to incorporate the Maasai, into the decision-making and nature conservation, highlights the move towards fortress conservation schemes in the NCA.

#### ***4.3 The Maasai as Stakeholders of Nature Conservation in the NCA***

From an indigenous political ecology approach, considering the role of colonial heritage and centring the Maasai in nature conservation and preservation of biodiversity is important. Thus, the following section will show the relation between the current situation of the Maasai in the NCA and the need to actively include indigenous people in the nature conservation process.

First, the Tanzanian government signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in 2007 (UN 2007). At the same time, it denies the existence of indigenous people in its nation. In 2023, it stated:

“The legal system of Tanzania does not provide for indigenous people rather, it recognises only citizens of Tanzania, hence the firm stance by the Tanzanian government that there are no indigenous people in the country” (United Republic of Tanzania 2023, 1).

Furthermore, this statement continues by declaring the concept of indigenous as colonial and this is connected to terming pastoralist societies as “underdeveloped societies” (United Republic of Tanzania 2023, 2). However, this statement of the so-called anti-colonial sentiment of the government is overshadowed using colonial language and its discriminatory treatment of the Maasai as previous incidents of removal and violent eviction have demonstrated. In addition, this statement is from a postcolonial perspective highly problematic since it does not recognise the historical role of the Maasai as stakeholders in nature conservation in Tanzania. Here, the government states that “most societies have evolved over time, taking up new ventures in addition, to the customary one” (United Republic of Tanzania 2023, 2). The government’s position contrasts with for example the African Commission of Human and Peoples’ Rights which recognises the Maasai as part of the indigenous population (FIAN 2023, 1).

Taking an indigenous political ecology framework, it is crucial to recognise indigenous methods of symbiotic living with ecosystems (Middleton 2015). Taking into account that climate change is primarily exacerbated through the capitalist exploitation of ecosystems. 98

per cent of the inhabitants of NCA are the Maasai and 2 per cent are constituted of Barabaig, who are like the Maasai pastoral nomads, and Hadzabe, hunter-gatherers who inhabited parts of the greater Serengeti before pastoralists arrived there (KopeLion 2022). An important conservation method of the Maasai constitutes burning practices to support the growth of the savannah ecology in the NCA (Melubo 2020, 183). Indeed, the Maasai managed the ecosystem in this way over the last centuries, for example, to limit “bush encroachment” and remove old, dry grass to support the growth of new pastures, not only for Maasai livestock but also for the grazing wildlife in the NCA (Melubo 2020, 183). This happens in a certain way and individuals are punished in case of inappropriate setting of fires (Melubo 2020, 183). In addition, this practice also decreases the spread of diseases to wildlife and cattle since the “fire kills ticks and tsetse flies” (Melubo 2020, 184). However, due to the Maasai’s increasing removal and their restriction to certain areas in the NCA, their lack of controlled fire use has real impacts on the Ngorongoro caldera ecosystem.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the area becomes unsuitable for wildlife’s grazing and other activities since “grassland ecosystems have been taken over by scrub and woodland” (Melubo 2020, 184). This shows that the removal of the Maasai has consequences and is connected to the decline of the savannah ecosystem in Tanzania, but also overall in East Africa (Butz 2009, 442).

Not only represents the NCA land for subsistence but it also bears cultural and spiritual important spaces as can be seen in Figure 11.

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<sup>5</sup> Caldera refers here to the Ngorongoro crater.

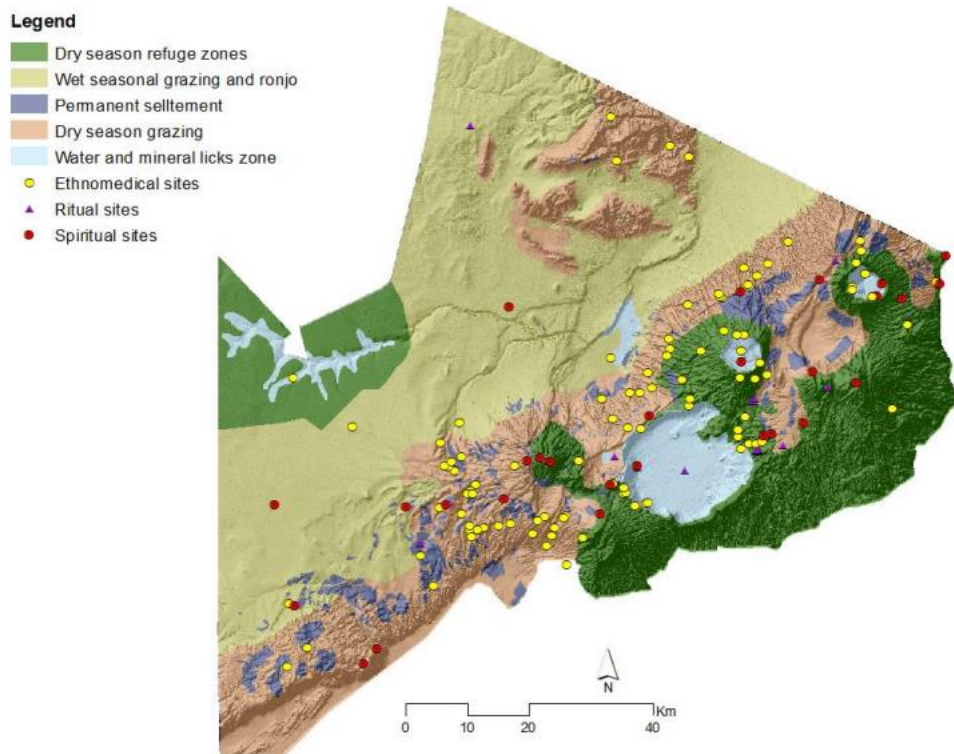


Figure 19 The Maasai's land use in the NCA (PINGO's Forum 2022, 27)

For example, mountains like Makarot Mountain are spiritually and culturally significant places for the Maasai to upkeep their “cultural and spiritual rituals and ceremonies” (Melubo 2020, 188).

Over the last decades, the livelihood and practices of the Maasai as nomadic pastoralists have become increasingly restrained through various factors. This leads not only to a change in their livelihood methods but also forces them to more sedentary patterns of pastoralism affecting the environment and the wildlife. The management system the Maasai practised over the last centuries was part of the ecosystem and impacted for example the movement patterns of herbivores like “Grant's and Thomson's gazelles, eland, kongoni, and waterbuck” (PINGO's Forum 2022, 52). Here, Moehlman et al. (2020) draw a connection between the possibility of a decreasing number of herbivores due to the removal of Maasai and their livestock from the Ngorongoro Crater and thus, the change of the Crater's vegetation structure (31).

Next to that, the traditional methods of livestock-keeping practices have become more and more difficult because of more rigid restrictions on accessible pastureland, sources of water and mineral licks necessary for keeping cattle (PINGO's Forum 2022, 6). Additionally, the lack of sufficient improvement of settlement and livelihood diversification for the Maasai in NCA is related to the fact that “denied social services created multidimensional poverty and chronic



dependence among the Maasai” (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 6). A study has shown that around 55 per cent of the pastoral communities in the Ngorongoro district are food insecure (Safari, Kirwa and Mandara 2022, 1). This situation is increasingly abused by the NCAA and the government to intimidate the Maasai. The authorities claim to have the right to relocate the Maasai on the basis that their current livelihood methods are destructive to conservation efforts (MNRT 2019, 95). The government views itself to be in the right, since international actors like UNESCO have continuously pointed out that the increasing population of the Maasai is related to negatively affecting the pristineness of the area (MNRT 2019, 95).

Furthermore, decreasing the area of pasture for grazing leads to higher chances of outbreaks and spreading of diseases (PINGO’s Forum 2022, 39). The originally nomadic lifestyle of the Maasai is being removed from them due to their containment to certain areas and the inaccessibility of other areas. Here, from February 2019 onwards the pastoralists were no longer allowed to use the pasture of the “Ngorongoro Crater, Olmoti Valley, Embakaai Valley, Lake Ndutu, Masek Forest and Northern Forest Reserve” (IWGIA 2020).

Even though, the Maasai have been facing severe backlash and challenges from actors like the Tanzanian government, they have been actively voicing their resistance through various channels. As aforementioned, they were successful in delaying evictions in 2021 through protest. Furthermore, using legal channels, they have been trying to fight for their right to land at the East African Court of Justice against the Tanzanian state.

Another initiative, given the international nature of the conservation in the NCA, was the visit of a Maasai delegation to various EU countries and the EU Parliament in May 2023. Here, they pledged donor countries to support a change in conservation methods by recognising the importance of the Maasai for nature conservation. Furthermore, during a roundtable in the EU Parliament, the Maasai delegation was able to voice their concerns and discuss their forced eviction from NCA and the Loliondo GCA with ambassadors from the Tanzanian government, members from the EU Parliament and a OHCHR special rapporteur (PINGO’s Forum 2023). The OHCHR special rapporteur highlighted during the panel indigenous peoples’ right to land considering that they must be protected under human rights laws (Mwanzo TV Plus 2023).

The Maasai regard the role of European countries as implicit in their removal. They specifically refer to the European states, like Germany, which are funding nature conservation in Tanzania (Widdig 2023).

Overall, this chapter has shown that the Maasai are marginalised considering their economic, political, and social position in Tanzania. Specifically, their dependence on the NCAA’s decision-making makes their position even more precarious. Furthermore, the role of

tourism and its economic importance for the country has led to the eviction of the Maasai from the NCA. However, through raising their voices on the international stage the Maasai shed light on the various positions of stakeholders and the role of the state in the nature conservation in NCA. Moreover, this research has also highlighted the importance of the Maasai for the nature preservation of the NCA. Especially, through centring the role of the Maasai as stakeholders in an indigenous political ecology approach this gives a more multi-dimensional perspective of the actors involved. At the same time, it underscores the urgency of actively including pastoralists in matters of nature conservation and simultaneously protecting the land rights of marginalised actors like the Maasai in the NCA.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has argued that the practices of nature conservation in the NCA fall short of adequately representing and protecting the rights of the Maasai as the indigenous pastoralist population of the area. It especially considered the predominant role of foreign actors like IOs and NGOs in nature conservation. It has shown that nature conservation in this African case study is inherently connected to the dispute over the land rights of pastoralists. Considering the infringement of land rights of pastoralists in Tanzania the case of the NCA displays this.

First, the review of the literature has regarded the return to mainstream conservation approaches like fortress conservation which implicates a dichotomous understanding of human and nature relations. However, this has to be critically analysed considering the origins of this perspective in colonial discourses on wilderness and the imperial origin of protected areas in the African context. Furthermore, the aspect of asymmetrical power relations within the spectrum of actors involved in practices of nature conservation is crucial to examine from a critical political economy approach. From an indigenous political ecology approach the centring of the marginalised voices and experiences is crucial when considering the connection between climate adaptation and nature conservation. Furthermore, in the African context nature conservation is connected to a legacy of displacement of people and resource exploitation.

Second, with the historical chapter this research has described the inherent connection of the Maasai to the East African area and their centuries' cohabitation with the savannah ecosystem. In addition, this part of the paper has also traced the foundation of protected areas in East Africa, and in the specific case of Northern Tanzania to the colonial era. Here, both the German and British colonisers played an important role in the later creation of the Serengeti National Park and the NCA. Especially the close link between game hunting and the establishment of protected areas in the colonies has been established. Furthermore, Tanzania's post-independence period shows a continuation of colonial methods of nature conservation and rising tensions around land rights between the state as the legal stakeholder of the land and the Maasai as stakeholders of the NCA. Here, the appointment of the UNESCO heritage status of the NCA in the late 1970s further marginalised the role of the Maasai as pastoralists in the conservation area.

Third, with the basis of the historical chapter, this research continued to examine the role of international actors involved in nature conservation in the NCA and their role in marginalising the Maasai in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the one hand, analysing UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN reports and their view of pastoralists in the NCA and the threat of the IO to revoke the World Heritage Status from the region if conditions are not met to decrease the livelihood

activities of the Maasai as resident population of the area. This has shown that these reports have consequences for the Maasai. IOs like UNESCO are influencing and strengthening with their negative portrayal of the Maasai Tanzanian policymakers' decision-making in the removal of the pastoralists from their lands. Thus, these IOs cannot be depicted as neutral actors in this dispute over land and conservation. On the other hand, Germany as a donor state and economic partner to Tanzania has been closely examined regarding its role in influencing the conservation practices in the NCA. Here, Germany's active support of the 30 by 30 agenda cannot be ignored since it furthers a fortress conservation approach in countries like Tanzania. It excludes pastoralists like the Maasai as important stakeholders of nature conservation and undermines their rights to the land. The German state also supports German conservation NGOs with funding. Especially, the questionable historical role of the FZS in the NCA has been analysed. Here, highlighting its approach towards more securitised nature conservation of animal protection in the area. Overall, the militarisation of conserving practices has been critically observed. This connects to a pattern where especially Western conservation NGOs are supporting fortress conservation approaches and get in the case of the FZS funding from state institutions.

Lastly, on the national level, the state and the Maasai as stakeholders in the NCA land dispute have been examined. The Maasai's role in the NCA is undermined through their insufficient representation in decision-making processes whereby the state, through its representation by the NCAA has the upper hand. Additionally, the government's decisions to further the economic efficiency of the NCA through expanding the tourism sector not only exclude the Maasai. It also restricts the pastoralists to certain areas of the conservation zone and hinders them to follow seasonal patterns of migration with their livestock. Over the last years the government has increased efforts to remove the Maasai population from the NCA to other areas in the country. Here, the government takes the reports of for example the UNESCO as justification for these forced removals of pastoralists from the NCA. This research has viewed this through a critical lens as influenced by an imbalance of power dynamics between the Tanzanian state and UNESCO. From an indigenous political ecology perspective, it is essential to centre the Maasai and the repercussions the replacements have on the ecosystem of the NCA and the people itself. This research has regarded the aspects of the decline of the savannah ecosystem, the cultural importance of the area for the Maasai and their lack of food sovereignty. Finally, this section has briefly highlighted the Maasai's activism and resistance in their removal from the NCA. Next to legal action, this has also included a visit of a Maasai delegation to EU

countries to raise awareness of their land struggle and the involvement of European countries in nature conservation, like Germany.

For the survival of the savannah ecosystem in NCA, the Maasai are an essential factor of nature conservation and cannot be disregarded. This is endangered through, on the one hand, creating securitised areas of nature conservation and on the other hand, making nature profitable. Capitalising nature is a crucial factor that has to be regarded. In the case of the NCA, as one of the most important tourist attractions of Tanzania, the capitalisation of nature is inherent and will have further consequences for the Maasai. I regard here the protection of human rights, the Maasai and the conservation of nature in the NCA as interrelated.

From a broader, global perspective the interrelatedness between international, national and local actors shows the need to view this from multiple perspectives to get a broader picture of the interconnectedness of nature conservation, land and human rights in the case of the NCA. Nevertheless, this is not an exception but more a pattern happening within African states like for example in the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Schlindwein 2023). But also in other parts of the world like the Amazon Rainforest and in the Global North when considering the marginalisation of Native Americans in North America. Scientists who are critics of fortress conservation have been highlighting this for the last decades. The aspect of nature conservation as a zero-sum game that only wants to protect the biodiversity of the planet is flawed. As this research has shown there are many factors, interests and actors involved that transcend the borders of states, which in the case of Africa are disputed due to their colonial heritage.

Limitations of this research have been the time and resource constraints. Thus, fieldwork, for example, can enhance future research on the displacement of the Maasai from the NCA and the role of fortress conservation practices. Next to this, the conflict between the Maasai and the Tanzanian government is still ongoing which limits conclusions about future outcomes on the matter. Furthermore, for future research more focus on the important role of indigenous peoples and their practice of sustainable methods in connection to nature conservation is crucial. Especially, considering their marginalised position also with the effects of climate change is essential. Moreover, the role of land rights is crucial to depict, reflecting on the continued exploitation of resources and land in the African context by foreign actors. Overall, more appreciation for a bottom-up approach is needed when regarding nature conservation, whereby the Western conservation model is insufficient and discriminatory.

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