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## Conservation, green/blue grabbing and accumulation by dispossession in Tanzania

Tor A. Benjaminsen and Ian Bryceson

This article shows how wildlife and marine conservation in Tanzania lead to forms of ‘green’ or ‘blue grabbing’. Dispossession of local people’s land and resources has been gradual and piecemeal in some cases, while it involved violence in other cases. It does not primarily take the usual form of privatization of land. The spaces involved are still formally state or village land. It is rather the benefits from the land and natural resources that contribute to capital accumulation by more powerful actors (rent-seeking state officials, transnational conservation organizations, tourism companies, and the State Treasury). In both cases, restrictions on local resource use are justified by degradation narratives, while financial benefits from tourism are drained from local communities within a system lacking in transparent information sharing. Contrary to other forms of primitive accumulation, this dispossession is not primarily for wage labour or linked to creation of a labour reserve. It is the wide-open spaces without its users that are valued by conservation organizations and the tourism industry. The introduction of ‘community-based conservation’ worked as a key mechanism for accumulation by dispossession allowing conservation a foothold in village lands. This foothold produced the conditions under which subsequent dispossessions could take place.

**Keywords:** accumulation by dispossession; conservation; wildlife; coastal; Tanzania

### Introduction

The recent burst of international attention to ‘global land grabbing’ has mostly focused on large-scale land deals and direct foreign investments in food and biofuel production (e.g. Von Braun and Meinzen-Dick 2009, Vermeulen and Cotula 2010, Deininger 2011, De Schutter 2011, Lambin and Meyfroidt 2011). African countries are, in particular, targeted by these investments, which capitalise on generally low land prices due to the fact that large parts of the continent are still relatively land-abundant<sup>1</sup>.

The current global land rush also takes other forms. Zoomers (2010) points at seven processes contributing to what she calls ‘the foreignisation of space’. In this

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<sup>1</sup>It is, however, interesting to note in policy debates that African land is generally claimed to be either ‘overpopulated’ or ‘abundant’ depending on the agenda that is being promoted.

article, we discuss one of these processes, environmental conservation, in particular wildlife and marine conservation, and how it leads to forms of ‘green’ or ‘blue grabbing’ in Tanzania. We argue that these conservation processes result in dispossession of land and resources from local users, as well as capital accumulation by more powerful actors. Hence, the consequences of conservation practice may be seen as another example of ‘primitive accumulation’ as described by Marx (1976).

In primitive accumulation, Marx included processes such as commodification and privatisation of land, the conversion of communal property to private property and the suppression of rights to the commons. His definition of ‘primitive accumulation’ was ‘the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production’ (Marx 1976, 875). In a rural development context, this implies expropriating land and resources used by smallholders and thereby also creating a reserve of cheap labour. The classic example of this process is, according to Marx, the enclosure of the commons in England<sup>2</sup> that later provided labour for industrialization.

According to Harvey (2003, 149), ‘primitive accumulation as Marx described it, . . . entailed taking land, say, enclosing it, and expelling a resident population to create a landless proletariat, and then releasing the land into the privatized mainstream of capital accumulation’. Since accumulation is an ongoing process, Harvey (2003) proposes the term ‘accumulation by dispossession’ to describe current processes. The introduction of this term has sparked a renewed interest in the combination of dispossession and capital accumulation in development studies as well as in studies of capitalism in the Global North (Glassman 2006).

In a development context, ‘land grabbing’ more generally (Shivji 2009), the commodification of water (Roberts 2008), the governance of freshwater fisheries in Cambodia (Sneddon 2007), the introduction of shrimp farming in Ecuador (Veuthey and Gerber 2012), and the dispossession of ‘surplus populations’ (Li 2009) have been studied within such a framework. Büscher (2009), Kelly (2011) and Corson (2011) have also recently discussed conservation practice as a form of primitive accumulation.

Non-capitalist spaces and resources are opened up for accumulation through the combination of tourism and conservation. As pointed out by Kelly (2011), in conservation practice ‘ecotourism’ works as a key tool in this process. Tania Murray Li has developed this idea further by proposing that it is the places and the resources in these places that are valued, ‘but the people are not, so that dispossession is detached from any prospect of labour absorption’ (Li 2009, 69). These places might be interesting for investments in large-scale production of food crops or biofuels – or for the development of ‘ecotourism’ such as safari and coastal tourism in Tanzania. But local people are in the way of such investments.

According to the Tanzanian government, around 36 percent of the country’s total area was protected in various ways in 2007 (United Republic of Tanzania 2007). Since then, new protected areas are being created, where forest and wildlife are conserved under the label ‘community-based conservation’. In 2012, at least 40 percent of Tanzania’s total land area is conserved in one way or another, depending on what one includes as ‘conservation’. In addition, increasingly large areas of Tanzania’s seascape have been designated as marine parks, reserves or conservation areas. Currently 8 percent of marine waters are under conservation, but with 10

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<sup>2</sup>The whole of chapter 27 in Volume 1 of *Capital* is devoted to this example.

percent targeted, and an additional 10–20 percent proposed by conservationists for ‘no-fishing’ zones. Hence, a substantial and increasing part of rural and coastal Tanzania is no longer available to smallholders, pastoralists or small-scale fishers for productive activities.

Through the lens of accumulation by dispossession, we analyse enclosures in wildlife and coastal conservation to detect the differences and similarities between them. We show how recently established conservation initiatives, especially related to wildlife and coastal areas, steadily lead to local people’s loss of access to land and natural resources. In both wildlife and marine conservation, we see parallel trends of enclosure of resources and dispossession by previous users combined with capital accumulation by some powerful actors (rent-seeking state officials, international conservation organizations, tourist companies, the State Treasury). Hence, while wildlife and coastal areas may be widely different in terms of biological characteristics, species composition, ecosystem types, and ecological processes, as well as human production systems, social dynamics, livelihoods and lifestyles, they are strikingly similar in terms of political economic forces and processes.

The initial attempts at introducing ‘community-based’ or ‘win-win’ conservation worked as a key mechanism to make dispossession take place in wildlife and coastal areas in Tanzania allowing conservation a foothold in village lands. This foothold produced the conditions under which subsequent dispossessions could take place under a centralized approach. We found that dispossession has been gradual and piecemeal in some cases, while it involved violence in other cases.

This contribution draws on two separate, but related, ongoing research projects involving co-operations between researchers based in Norway and Tanzania<sup>3</sup>. The two projects have produced nineteen MSc theses, and four Tanzanian PhD students are currently working on their doctoral theses. The material presented here is based on these various theses as well as our own repeated fieldwork linked to wildlife and marine conservation during several visits from January 2007 to November 2011. Research methods have included quantitative ecological studies, mapping exercises and social sciences studies that have been mostly qualitative in approach, consisting of in-depth interviews and group discussions with representatives from all the main groups of actors at village, district and national levels.

### **Wildlife conservation as green grabbing**

This section will demonstrate that dispossession in the wildlife sector has been facilitated by government policies and laws occasionally combined with the use of violence to enforce the laws. While these dispossessions started in the colonial period, there was a short period in the 1990s that gave hope for a different practice with the introduction of a more ‘people-friendly’ wildlife policy. This trend was, however, reversed from around the turn of the millennium. Since then, a revised wildlife policy accompanied by a new act and regulations and the establishment of ‘community-based conservation’ under the label ‘Wildlife Management Areas’ have

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<sup>3</sup>The projects are ‘EKOSIASA: Political Ecology of Wildlife and Forest Governance in Tanzania’ and ‘Coastal fisheries of Tanzania: the challenges of globalisation to resource management, livelihoods and governance’. Both projects involve the Norwegian University of Life Sciences and the University of Dar es Salaam, while the former also includes the Sokoine University of Agriculture. Both projects are funded by the Norwegian programme of academic research and educational co-operation (NUFU) for the period 2007–2012.

provided new mechanisms for the appropriation of benefits originating in pastoral and village land. The resulting dispossession takes place through loss of access to pastures justified by a narrative about overgrazing, lost control over benefits from tourism combined with the State's lack of information-sharing with villagers and its lack of transparency in handling collected tourist fees, and lost control over crops through increased crop damage by wildlife. But first we present a short historical and institutional background to the wildlife sector in Tanzania.

During the colonial period and the first decades of independence there was a steady process of centralizing control over wildlife in Tanzania (e.g. Neumann 1998) following the 'fortress discourse' stressing the need to enclose conservation areas, evicting previous users and policing these areas against 'poaching' (e.g. Adams and Hulme 2001, Brockington 2002, Benjaminsen and Svarstad 2010). From the late 1980s, the fortress discourse was, however, gradually overtaken by a competing discourse focusing on the role of local participation in conservation (Adams and Hulme 2001). This 'win-win discourse' consists of two main elements. First, it states that it is necessary to let people in and around the protected areas participate in the management of these areas. Second, the local population must benefit from conservation.

The win-win discourse promotes an integration of interests of local people as a means to achieve conservation. Thus, the set-up involves aspects of benefit sharing, compensation, and local participation, and the partnerships are argued to constitute win-win situations implying both environmental conservation and local development. Hence, this discourse seemingly goes against accumulation by dispossession, but we argue that in practice it has facilitated accumulation by various actors as well as a gradual dispossession by local resource users in the wildlife sector in Tanzania.

Four main factors have made the win-win discourse on conservation hegemonic at the global level. First, it draws upon the basic ideas of a win-win relationship between environment and development that became influential through the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). Second, from the 1980s, there has been increased pressure from development and human rights-based activists and indigenous groups to change conservation practices in a more 'people-friendly' direction (e.g. Adams and McShane 1992, Bonner 1993). Third, the shift to the win-win discourse on protected areas also forms part of a more general shift within developmental policy, from a 'top-down' approach to a focus on 'participation' (Cooke and Kothari 2001, Adams 2009). Fourth, neoliberal economic policies have had great influence on conservation policy in general during the last two decades (Sullivan 2006, Heynen *et al.* 2007, Brockington *et al.* 2008, Igoe and Sullivan 2009, Büscher 2010). The win-win discourse is in line with neoliberal thinking by the emphasis on how markets for tourism are needed to finance conservation.

Influenced by the win-win discourse in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were some attempts to establish community-based wildlife management projects in Tanzania. These were small donor-driven projects that introduced incentives to reduce poaching in communities close to protected areas (Baldus 2001). Due to a strong international interest in conserving Tanzania's rich biodiversity, and the emerging acknowledgment among conservationists that successful conservation depended on the involvement of local communities and the distribution of benefits to these communities, the needed change from fortress to community-based conservation was, therefore, introduced already in the 1980s in Tanzania.

This later led the Tanzanian Government to launch a new Wildlife Policy in 1998, which included a focus on the rights of local people to wildlife and the role wildlife management may play for rural development. The policy also stressed how important it is that people in rural areas receive a fair share of the large revenues from safari tourism and sport hunting (URT 1998). Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) were the main tool proposed to implement this new more development-friendly approach. In WMAs, local communities would have 'full mandate of managing and benefiting from their conservation efforts, through community-based conservation programmes' (URT 1998, 31).

WMAs are established on village land and are situated close to existing protected areas such as national parks, and they often represent corridors between various protected areas. Since Tanzanian wildlife generally migrate over long distances, and since much of it is found outside protected areas, the idea is that one must conserve large ecosystems if one is to succeed with conservation. To conserve areas as large as those in question, it is also necessary to introduce conservation of land belonging to farmers and pastoralists. The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) works in 'heartlands', while the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) uses the term 'ecoregions' for large-scale landscapes where they implement projects. Hence, introducing 'community-based' approaches seems to be driven by the idea of 'signing communities on to conservation projects primarily as a means to protect the integrity of the national park system' (Goldman 2003, 838). The idea with WMAs is that several villages come together<sup>4</sup> and give up land for conservation. In return, the villages shall receive a certain proportion of the tourism revenues from these areas.

Many donors had been involved in the wildlife sector during the 1990s (e.g. GTZ, NORAD, USAID, DANIDA), and the new policy was to a large extent a consequence of influence from these donors who subscribed to the win-win discourse. In 2007, however, the policy was revised and its tone changed (URT 2007). The focus is now on state management of wildlife, and little is mentioned about participation, development, and benefits for local communities. In the period between the publications of these two policy documents, discoveries of extensive corruption in the wildlife sector (Nshala 1999, Sachedina 2008, Nelson 2009, 2010) and the failure of the government to implement the 1998 policy led most donors to withdraw from directly supporting the sector. USAID is the main donor currently remaining. It funnels its support mainly through WWF and AWF to implement the establishment of WMAs on village land. With less donor pressure to highlight issues of community benefits and participation, the government could refocus its policy back to a centralized approach.

In 2009, the new Wildlife Act was passed in the National Assembly. This law strengthens central control of wildlife and provides the Wildlife Division more authority to intervene in the management of village land. It facilitates the ongoing recentralization in Tanzanian wildlife management, which is played out in the control of the two main income-generating activities in the sector: photo safaris and sport hunting. The process implies appropriation and dispossession by transferring resources and the control over these resources from local (village) level to central authorities, international conservation groups, and the tourist business.

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<sup>4</sup>There are currently 21 WMAs in Tanzania in various stages moving towards formal establishment. The number of villages in each WMA varies from 2 to 30.

While the push towards decentralized management in the 1990s was clearly a result of international donor influence, it appears that the Tanzanian government never intended to decentralize control over wildlife in practice, because of the valuable ground rent and the attendant possibilities for accumulation that this resource represents –in terms of both sport hunting and safari tourism. Centralized conservation, although labelled ‘win-win’ and ‘community-based’, also fits the interests of powerful international conservation groups whose main focus is on wildlife and biodiversity conservation and who tend not to trust the interests and knowledge of local communities in achieving set conservation goals. Some actors within the tourist industry may also find it easier to work within a centralized model rather than having to depend on communities that often have their internal conflicts and shifting politics. This may, however, vary among investors as their approaches to working with communities vary.

The recent developments in the village of Sinya in West Kilimanjaro may illustrate this process of appropriation and dispossession and how a village with abundant wildlife on its land has lost control over this land and its resources. The village area of Sinya borders Kenya and has a central location between Amboseli National Park and conservation areas in Tanzania. Here, a number of species such as elephants, zebras, wildebeest, and various antelopes migrate across Sinya land. In addition, these migrations are followed by different predators. This means that Sinya is located in an attractive area for both photographic safaris and sport hunting.

In the 1990s, Tanzania’s tourism industry grew by over 10 percent per year (World Bank/MIGA 2002). A consequence of this growth was that safari companies developed individual agreements with villages that had abundant wildlife on their land. In 2001, Sinya made a formal agreement with Kibo Safaris through its branch Tanganyika Wilderness Camps. This deal gave the safari company the right to establish a tented camp on village land and it meant that the village, for instance during 2002–2004, earned nearly USD 30,000 per year in direct revenue from safari tourism (Trench *et al.* 2009). The village, which has around 2000 inhabitants, spent this income on shared development projects such as school buildings, dormitories for school pupils, and school grants for children from the village<sup>5</sup> (Nelson 2004, Honey 2008, Trench *et al.* 2009, Minwary 2009).

At the same time, the Wildlife Division in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism allocated a hunting block also covering Sinya’s village land to the company Northern Hunting. While Sinya, according to the Village Land Act of 2001, holds land rights to its village land, all wildlife is formally the property of the state in Tanzania. This means that the fees paid by the hunting company for hunting on village land go directly to the central government.

This overlap between hunting and photographic tourism was the source of a major conflict that emerged in Sinya, and which became a legal court battle in 2005. Hunting is still totally controlled by the Wildlife Division, despite previous promises that authority would be devolved to the WMAs. Some villages such as Sinya had tangible income from photographic tourism before the introduction of WMAs. Hence, the conflict was between an activity controlled by the state (hunting) with

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<sup>5</sup>There are also stories circulating about elite capture of these revenues, but most villagers seem to welcome safari tourism (Trench *et al.* 2009), probably because, after all, in some cases it meant a substantial amount of revenue, which also benefitted ordinary people through various shared development projects.

considerable rent-seeking opportunities for individual officials and an activity that at the time was outside state control (safari tourism), but that later was to be enrolled under state authority through the establishment of WMAs. The conflict also therefore opposed two different investors in the tourist industry. On one side were the state and the hunting company ('Northern Hunting'<sup>6</sup>), and on the other side were the village of Sinya and the safari company ('Tanganyika Wilderness Camps'<sup>7</sup>).

The court sided with the hunting company and the decision forced Tanganyika Wilderness Camps to relocate to the neighbouring village of Elerai. Henceforth, the company had to pay bed-night fees to Elerai, which has resulted in a significant loss of revenue to Sinya. With the establishment of the WMA, these payments have been centralized and tourist fees are now paid by the company to the regional office of the Wildlife Division in Arusha. A share of 65 percent of these fees is presently supposed to go back again to the WMA. Hence, the introduction of 'community-based conservation' through the establishment of WMAs has resulted in villages such as Sinya, which previously had individual deals with safari companies, being dispossessed of their earnings from tourism. While dispossession usually takes the form of people losing control over their means of production, this adds a new element.

The court's decision was based on the Wildlife Conservation (Tourist Hunting) Regulations of 2000, which prohibits game viewing within a hunting block without the written permission of the Director of Wildlife. Furthermore, the Regulations give the Director the authority to withdraw or revoke investment agreements on village land (Minwary 2009). Hence, the courts implement laws and regulations designed to maintain and increase the State's and State officials' power to appropriate valuable resources in rural areas. Hunting wins over game viewing because it is an activity that to a larger extent is controlled by policy-makers in the wildlife sector and it therefore also represents a better possibility for rent-seeking and accumulation.

Trophy hunting in Tanzania is based on a system of 'hunting blocks'. Hunting blocks are hired out to hunting companies by the Wildlife Division for a period of three years. Among observers of this sector in Tanzania, there is general agreement that the hunting business is marked by extensive corruption (Nshala 1999, Sachedina 2008, Jansen 2009, Nelson 2009, 2010). Tanzania is also the only country in eastern or southern Africa that does not have bidding rounds for hunting block allocation. The process lacks openness and the prices are estimated to be well below the market level (World Bank 2008, Nelson 2009). This under-pricing creates opportunities for personal rent-seeking for key officials who control the allocation of hunting blocks and the collection of hunting fees.

When the WMAs were introduced around 2003–2004, villagers were promised hunting quotas and that state-controlled sport hunting would be phased out to the advantage of local control. But devolving control over hunting to the local level is evidently not on the agenda anymore. The hunting industry simply seems too lucrative for decentralization. Of the hunting fees collected by the Wildlife Division, 25 percent is supposed to go back to the local level. This includes the Districts as well

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<sup>6</sup>Northern Hunting Enterprises has Mohsin Abdallah, also known as 'Sheni', as its main owner. Abdallah is known to have close allies in government and the ruling political party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). He also sits on the Board of Directors of Tanzania National Parks.

<sup>7</sup>The main owner of Tanganyika Wilderness Camp is Willy Chambulo, who is a Tanzanian resident of German/Maasai origins.

as the WMAs. But it is not clear how much should go to the WMAs, and, here again, there is lack of transparency.

Much evidence suggests that the sector is controlled by a network of central bureaucrats and politicians in co-operation with Tanzanian and foreign business people (Nshala 1999, Nelson 2009). According to the national newspaper *This Day*,

... ever since way back in the late 1970s, the (hunting) industry as a whole has been monopolized by an elite group of foreign companies. ... The current roster of key players in the industry shows a huge presence of French, American, Arab, British, Italian, German, Dutch, Belgian, Swiss, South African, Kenyan and Greek businessmen to name but a few nationalities.

But the newspaper also notes that

... at least one government minister, a couple of ruling CCM party legislators, several retired top public leaders and a good number of prominent businessmen are all named in a shortlist of Tanzanian citizens reported to have a substantial stake in the country's lucrative but largely foreign-dominated tourist hunting industry (This Day 2007).

We have attempted to acquire turnover figures from hunting companies as well as from the Wildlife Division, without much success<sup>8</sup>. There is great reluctance to disclose such information. Key actors have also resisted efforts to introduce more transparent processes around the allocation and monitoring of hunting blocks.

In Loliondo, there is the best-known and most mediatized conflict between sport hunting and local livelihoods. Despite protests from local Maasai, in 1992 a hunting block in a Game Controlled Area was leased out to Ortello Business Corporation (OBC), a company originating in the United Arab Emirates. This led to a national debate that had international repercussions including an editorial in the *New York Times*. The case became known as 'Loliondogate', because it transpired that the hunting block had been leased to OBC directly by the minister for tourism himself (Gibbon 1995). This conflict peaked again in July 2009 when the government evicted Maasai from about 200 homesteads and also burned their huts (TNRF 2011). The main reason given was that livestock overgrazed the area that was leased by the foreign investor. The evictions were facilitated by the new Wildlife Conservation Act of 2009 that provides for the prohibition of grazing in Game Controlled Areas<sup>9</sup>.

The violent evictions of pastoralists from the Usangu Plains in 2006 constitutes an example of the broader pastoral policy environment in Tanzania and how the state uses legislation to dispossess mobile herders from their seasonal pastures. Accusations of 'overgrazing' usually play a key role to justify evictions, despite little research and poor empirical evidence supporting such claims. The evictions in Usangu were justified on the grounds that livestock grazing in the catchment area of the Mtera Dam was seen as a main cause of the water shortage and associated frequent power cuts. A full-scale military operation was launched on 18 May 2006 to

<sup>8</sup>In Enduimet WMA, there are two hunting companies that each control one hunting block: Old Nyika Safaris (owned by Danny McCallum) and Northern Hunting Enterprises. While the former company agreed to share financial information with us, the latter declined.

<sup>9</sup>Game Controlled Areas (GCA) have until the adoption of this new act been a purely nominal protected area category that only has restricted wildlife utilization and not human activities such as settlement, grazing or cultivation (Nelson and Ole Makko 2005). GCAs are also areas where village land and hunting blocks overlap.

evict pastoralists from Usangu using heavily armed police, anti-poaching units and game wardens. Hundreds of pastoralists with 300,000 cattle were cleared from the area (Benjaminsen *et al.* 2009).

State institutions at various levels are currently putting pressure on villages to establish WMAs. This is particularly true for villages located in or around wildlife migration routes. In Enduimet WMA, Sinya village resisted for several years to be included in the WMA, but after long-standing pressure from the government and the AWF, the village elected a new leadership in late 2009 that accepts this inclusion. Sinya earlier refused to be part of the WMA because the villagers did not understand why they should share the tourism revenue with eight other villages since Sinya is clearly the village with the most wildlife within its area. In addition, the people of Sinya were afraid of losing control over their own natural resources, especially their own grazing land, if they joined Enduimet WMA. It is common in a WMA to have zones within which there are restrictions on grazing. Hence, some villages are hesitant to join WMAs, because they see these as possible sources for future land grabs.

With the new Wildlife Utilization Regulations of 2008, the Wildlife Division also attempts to appropriate a large part of the revenue from photographic safaris. The regulations state that the regional offices under the Wildlife Division shall collect the income from tourism in the WMAs. The reasoning behind this is an allegedly insufficient capacity or knowledge of financial management in the community-based organisations (CBOs) that are in charge of running the WMAs.

The CBOs shall now receive 65 percent of the tourist revenues from non-consumptive use (photo safaris). For the villages that previously had individual deals with safari companies, such as Sinya and Elerai (these villages earlier received USD 20 per tourist per night directly from the safari company), this represents a considerable decline in income; also because they have to share this income with several other villages. In addition, since there is no open, accessible information about the total revenue, it is difficult to verify whether the correct amounts are actually transferred to the CBOs in practice. The CBO office receiving the checks has no way of knowing what the total revenue from tourism is in the area it is supposed to manage.

An additional example of the ongoing process of dispossession is the fact that according to the Wildlife Act of 2009, pastoralists now risk being required to seek permission from the Director of the Wildlife Division to graze their livestock in Game Controlled Areas. Many pastoral villages are located in such areas. This is the case, for instance, for the entire Longido District<sup>10</sup>, where Sinya village and Enduimet WMA are located.

In addition, in West Kilimanjaro, there has been a growth in the number of elephants during the last decade causing widespread crop damage in the area. This has led to some recent killings of elephants, which may be understood as a form of resistance to conservation. Increased crop damage in villages in West Kilimanjaro associated with a growing elephant population may also be seen as a form of dispossession resulting from conservation practice because villagers lose control over their crops (Mariki *et al.* in prep).

As pointed out by Li (2009), the dispossession resulting from conservation practice is not for wage labour, but to appropriate the spaces and the resources in

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<sup>10</sup>The District has almost 100,000 inhabitants according to its own records.

these spaces. Hence, in this case, expropriation is not linked to any creation of a labour reserve. It is primarily the wide-open spaces with wildlife, but without people, that are of interest to the tourism industry, in particular hunting companies, and conservation organizations. The ongoing dispossession in the wildlife sector usually does not involve evictions, but is rather incremental with a gradual loss of access to resources. Hence, the people who are dispossessed to a large extent remain in the area.

There are three groups of actors that accumulate capital on the back of these processes of dispossession in the wildlife sector. First, there are rent-seeking state officials and politicians who benefit directly from the fees collected by the state or who own safari and hunting companies that manage to capture the increased ground rent created through conservation. Second, as pointed out by Kelly (2011, 692), large transnational conservation organizations accumulate large sums of money in a highly competitive funding environment through the presentation of ‘successful’ conservation within a win-win discourse (see also Dowie 2009, Benjaminsen and Svarstad 2010). Third, tourist companies, especially hunting companies, also benefit from these processes of dispossession. There are, however, safari companies with closer relationships with local communities and different approaches to working with these communities.

### **Marine and coastal conservation as blue grabbing**

This section will address the issue of ‘blue grabbing’ by conservation in the coastal and marine context, which occurs in parallel to the terrestrial ‘green grabbing’. The histories of these processes differ somewhat in the timing and manner in which they have unfolded. We demonstrate that there are both similarities and differences in how the processes of dispossession have been articulated and actualised. In cases of ‘blue grabbing’, the demarcations and distinctions of areas of underwater resources invoke somewhat different types of ecological knowledge and social understanding. Customary communal ownership of particular marine areas, and the traditional rights and obligations of visiting or seasonally migrant marine resource users, have been even less recognised or respected by colonial and post-Independence formal legal systems than their terrestrial counterparts.

We have chosen Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP) as our main example due to the fact that this is the largest and most longstanding marine park in Tanzania (also the largest in Africa). At the outset of our research project, district and park authorities cautioned us that some village leaders and villagers were ‘troublesome’ to work with due to their oppositional political leanings, and they advised us to avoid these places, but we explained that we also needed to understand cases in which ‘co-management’ was evidently not functioning optimally<sup>11</sup>.

Tanzania has a coastline of over 800 km with many islands (including Zanzibar (Unguja), Pemba, Mafia and numerous smaller ones) with biologically diverse marine and coastal resources that provide the livelihood basis for the incomes of

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<sup>11</sup>We were then offered police escorts for our protection to visit these villages, but we declined. In the course of our research, all villagers, including these supposedly ‘troublesome’ villagers of Mafia Island, turned out to be courteous and hospitable, so we have endeavoured to understand the reasons for and implications of the existing contradictions and counterclaims that have emerged in this situation.

small-scale fishers and their dependents in coastal villages and towns. Small-scale fisheries also provide important protein-rich food to coastal populations, and account for 95 percent of the fish catches in Tanzania. Industrial fisheries and offshore fishing fleets principally focus on export markets and luxury food items. Coastal tourist facilities are occupying increasingly extensive stretches of the most attractive shorelines, often with fencing, guards and dogs to enforce strict exclusion of neighbouring villagers from accessing these formerly common property areas.

The Tanzanian coastal environment is characterised by a wide range of biotopes (coral reefs, mangrove forests, estuaries, seagrasses, sandy-muddy flats, intertidal rocky shores, cliffs, beaches, etc.) that contain important natural resources (Francis and Bryceson 2001) and also provide habitats supporting the highest marine biodiversity in eastern Africa and the western Indian Ocean (McClanahan *et al.* 2007, Obura *et al.* 2008).

Initial proposals for marine conservation areas were proposed by Ray (1968), followed by the passing of the Fisheries Act of 1970 by the Tanzanian Parliament, and by the promulgation of seven small marine reserves near Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Mafia. However, the regulations and the enactment of these reserves were not actually translated into practice for more than 25 years, due to low prioritisation and lack of funds and qualified personnel. These moves towards marine and coastal conservation in Tanzania emerged decades later than the establishment of areas for terrestrial conservation of wildlife and forests, as has been the case in the rest of Africa and the world.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, community leaders in Mafia Island complained vociferously of destructive fishing practices in the form of dynamite explosives perpetrated by outsiders from urban centres, and this catalysed governmental agencies, donors and conservationists to respond positively. It provided an opportunity to embark upon wide-reaching marine and coastal conservation initiatives in practice.

In 1988 the Institute of Marine Sciences of the University of Dar es Salaam initiated studies in Mafia Island supported by a British NGO, Frontier-Tanzania (Horrell and Ngoile 1989), and participatory approaches were enunciated and partially incorporated. In 1991 a workshop was held in Dar es Salaam for various interested actors that mapped out ideas for the establishment of a steering committee who could advise the Government about the formation of a marine park (Mayers *et al.* 1992). In 1993, a draft General Management Plan was formulated. In the Parliament of Tanzania, the 'Marine Parks and Reserves Act No. 29' was passed in November 1994, and the Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP) off the coast of Tanzania was established by Parliament on 1 July 1995 as the country's first Marine Park. Promptly thereafter the Fisheries Division received funding from the Norwegian development assistance agency, Norad, and the WWF simultaneously showed a keen interest in playing a role as technical adviser towards the establishment and implementation of MIMP (Andrews 1998, Walley 2004). The boundaries of MIMP were gazetted in September 1996. Amendments were published in the Marine Parks and Reserves (Declaration) Regulations of 1999 and subsequently the Tanzanian Parliament passed the Fisheries Act of 2003, which is still in effect. The 'Marine Park and Reserves Act' stipulates that village governments within the park should participate fully in all aspects of the development of, or any amendment to, the regulations, zoning and general management plan for the marine park. Village Liaison Committees were therefore formed to represent the views of the resident fishing communities.

The Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism appointed a Board of Trustees who subsequently approved the implementation of the General Management Plan in September 2000 for the development of MIMP (Francis *et al.* 2002, Rubens and Kazimoto 2003). The overall goal of MIMP was defined as ensuring that 'The ecological and economic sustainability of Tanzania's coastal and marine ecosystems is improved and maintained', and the two objectives were 'To assist the management of the Mafia Island Marine Park so that the ecosystem processes and biodiversity are maintained for the benefit of the people of Tanzania, and particularly the Mafia Island community' and 'To facilitate the development of economic activities to reduce pressures on the Park ecosystems, while ensuring all natural resources within the Park are used sustainably'. In spite of the participatory intentions stated in the formation of MIMP, and the popularity of the initial successes in collaborating with local communities to halt the destructive and unpopular practice of dynamite fishing, MIMP subsequently became more centralised, and they de-emphasised consultation with and participation by villagers. Popular steps to improve education and health services were initiated and have proved meaningful for the development of village communities. But the long-term priorities of MIMP have clearly been on conservation of biodiversity, which had become subsequently more protectionist and restrictive, with centralisation of power over decision-making, and with promotion of new 'alternative' economic activities in order to try to entice villagers away from utilising marine resources.

Mafia Island Marine Park covers an area of 822 square kilometres, and it is the biggest marine park in the Indian Ocean. The park encompasses 10 villages inhabited by approximately 18,000 residents of whom 45–65 percent rely heavily on marine resources for their livelihoods (Bryceson *et al.* 2006). Firstly, the park declared 'core zones' of coral reefs, mangroves and coastal forests where fisherfolk and inhabitants are not allowed to venture or to access resources at all, despite these areas being the richest traditional fishing grounds, whilst tourists, hotel businesses and researchers are allowed to visit, dive, snorkel and conduct research there. Secondly, there are 'specified use zones' in which fishers are only allowed to use certain types of fishing gear (hand-lines and basket traps) and fishing by non-residents is prohibited. Thirdly, the remaining areas are referred to as a 'general-use zone' in which net fishing is allowed, but mesh-sizes are more restricted than in general coastal waters (Francis *et al.* 2002), and outsiders are obliged to pay additional fishing licence fees. The fisheries regulations regarding allowable mesh-sizes and types of nets within and outside the Park have been changed several times in the last four years, and several hundred fishing nets as well as numerous small dugout and planked fishing boats have been confiscated or destroyed.

Despite initially genuine claims about the participatory process towards the formulation of the General Management Plan, and declared intentions about community-based conservation, the Plan was published in the English language and was not translated into Kiswahili for seven years.

Statements about community-based conservation and co-management did have some meaning in the consultative period prior to the formation of MIMP, and in the initial period of collaboration with villagers to successfully combat dynamite fishing. But in subsequent years, community-based conservation has become mainly rhetorical as well as authoritarian in its implementation. The MIMP administration became larger and larger, wherein internal administration, contact with national authorities and emphasis on patrolling and reinforcement of a 'policing' role have

become steadily more prominent. Meetings between the Village Liaison Committees and the park administration have become less frequent, and the committees exert little influence concerning conservation or enforcement issues. Some villages have become branded as uncooperative or troublesome, and the MIMP leadership has not visited these places for several years: these tendencies are an attestation to a predominant failure of their proclaimed policy and practice of co-management.

The General Management Plan was scheduled for review in 2005 with participation of district authorities, hoteliers, conservation organisations, and villagers, but this was not carried out until 2011. During this exercise few complaints were raised openly by fisherfolk, but afterwards some villagers expressed that they felt that MIMP was not willing to listen to opposing views, and they felt intimidated by MIMP's Enforcement Unit. One village did, however, voice strong criticisms and declared their wish to be excluded from the Park altogether.

The establishment of MIMP paved the way for tourism enterprises, and WWF took the initiative to arrange an 'Ecotourism Seminar' in October 1995 for this purpose (Walley 2004). A large Tanzanian government-owned hotel, the Mafia Island Lodge, originally built in 1971, was significantly modernised in 1995, adjacent to the site for the MIMP headquarters. Three luxurious and exclusive foreign-owned tourist hotels have been established in close proximity at Utende and Chole. Land was appropriated from villagers, fences erected and access to beaches and landing sites progressively strictly hindered. Snorkelling and SCUBA-diving tourism facilities were also established in parallel, and operated by hotel-linked and foreign-owned enterprises to the exclusion of attempts by local residents to operate such tourism services on a small-scale basis. The state-owned lodge was subsequently privatised, and has since been owned and managed by foreign investors, with their clientele being almost entirely foreign tourists. It is difficult to obtain data on the earnings of tourist establishments, but by viewing the daily room-rates (current rates from USD90 to USD320 per night) and occupancies, it is evident that substantial profits are made by these foreign-owned enterprises. The owners of tourist hotels within MIMP are foreigners (South African, Australian and Italian, some of whom currently reside in Tanzania), and they are presently undertaking investments in new larger hotels on Mafia Island, indicating profitability from their initial investments. The Tanzanian state gains entrance fees from tourism and various licence payments from the hotels, but in contrast to the case for wildlife tourism and hunting safari operations, there seems to be little evidence or published accounts of rent-seeking by state officials in relation to marine and coastal tourism, diving operations or game-fishing sectors in Mafia Island beyond multiple rumoured instances of petty corruption.

Park fees are collected from tourists as they enter the MIMP area, currently \$20 per day, and it was originally promised that villagers resident within the park boundaries would benefit substantially from a portion of these fees, but the villagers and their representatives have become disenchanted because they feel that even this process is non-transparent and they witness little tangible benefit.

A small number of Mafia residents have gained markets to sell products and services to the hotels and to MIMP staff – a few actually gained opportunities for employment – but there are less than 200 persons employed by the tourist hotels. A small number of Mafia residents provide low-cost guesthouse facilities for visiting researchers, but the better-paid jobs in the marine park administration and the tourism hotels have been awarded entirely to Tanzanians from outside Mafia Island or to foreigners.

Walley (2004) wrote that residents of Chole initially felt that the Park was theirs, but later came to hate it, and that by 2000 they felt the Park had become an expanding and increasingly oppressive bureaucracy that threatened their very survival. Similarly, the key problem with the intervention of the park from the point of view of residents of Mafia Island, as expressed by several villagers and village leaders in meetings and interviews with our research team during 2006 to 2012, was that the benefits clearly accrue mainly to the State, to foreign-owned tourism enterprises, to conservation organisations and to visiting foreign tourists, whilst local communities witnessed few gains. This was felt to be in direct contrast to the fact that villagers have lost access to formerly traditionally governed and utilised natural resources (including the most productive coral reefs, mangrove forests and the best beaches), without gaining commensurate economic compensation for losses in fishing rights and land or seascape rights, or being allowed, for example, to make some income by taking visitors on guided tours or snorkelling. Fisherfolk and villagers from within the park repeatedly expressed disappointment and scepticism about the increasingly exclusive practices of both conservation and tourism for these reasons. Mwaipopo (2008) recalls from her interactions with Mafia residents that they asserted they were made to accept that regulations were inevitable and therefore they were obliged to mould their ways and fit into the process without their doubts and questions being satisfactorily answered.

On Chole Island and in the large village of Utende within MIMP, some tourist hotels are expanding their land claims and thus preventing access by local residents to prime beaches, national archaeological ruins, landing places, market sites, and freshwater access points, thereby also hindering villagers from benefiting even marginally from tourism. Villagers have appealed to MIMP and District authorities, but they have not supported the complaints of villagers, who have then had to seek legal aid from land rights lawyers based in Dar es Salaam.

Supported by WWF's East African Marine Ecoregion programme, MIMP embarked upon a pilot programme for exchanging fishing gears. According to Ngusaru (2003) 'This was envisaged as part of a wider strategy to promote alternatives to fishing gears such as seine nets, which are considered by MIMP and WWF to be destructive and to lead to overfishing, although there are no substantial fisheries data to support these claims'. The programme provided large-meshed gillnets and collapsible fishing traps to fishers at Juani and Chole villages inside the marine park. Some local fishers initially responded to this opportunity, but many have become increasingly sceptical due to the low catches and long periods that they have to spend travelling to more distant fishing grounds, signifying that these so-called alternatives actually constitute a major loss in their means of production and a threat to their livelihoods. WWF claimed that fisherfolk were seeing land-based agriculture as the new 'Big Idea', and suggested beekeeping on the small island of Juani within MIMP as being a significant success story (Ngusaru 2003). However, the 'alternative livelihood' production of honey is tiny and the income is of low significance to the small community of Juani island in the villagers' own estimation, since this provides a minor supplementary income to only six people: whereas it is claimed by Mgeni (2006), in a report commissioned by MIMP, that in all the villages within the MIMP area, 40 to 150 people (less than one percent of the residents) individually earn up to USD 0.60 per day.

During 2000–2004, WWF and MIMP launched an Environmental Education Strategy and Action Plan in order 'to educate and train people to deal with major

environmental problems such as degradation of ecosystems, depletion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, soil, water and air pollution and haphazard urbanization and industrialization' (Ngusaru 2003). Again, while sympathising with conservation goals per se, many villagers viewed this as reinforcing restrictions on their daily livelihood activities and presenting few if any avenues for economically viable alternatives.

The density and size of a coral-related fish, the blackspot snapper, within and outside MIMP boundaries, are compared by Kamukuru *et al.* (2004), who suggest that conservation measures can play a key role in fishery management. However, they have not accounted for the influence and effects of the obvious difference between coral cover and structural complexity between these compared areas.

McClanahan *et al.* (2009) refer to the history of unresolved conflicts between resource users and managers in MIMP, and, based on interviews with different actors, suggest that gear and minimum fish-size restrictions would be more acceptable management options to fishers than spatial and temporal closures of the fishery, especially in villages where there are few livelihood alternatives.

Preliminary research findings do not show evidence of over-fishing or widespread destruction of habitats (Bryceson *et al.* 2006, Gaspare forthcoming, Moshy forthcoming), although there is increased fishing-intensity and lowered perceived individual catch-rates in the diminished areas where fishing is permitted. But the findings do illuminate a high dependence of people's livelihoods on fish resources, and serious problems of legitimacy of governance based upon increasing lack of communication and trust between MIMP and many villagers, including the democratically elected leadership of several villages.

During December 2008, MIMP patrol boats transported Tanzanian Army soldiers to some villages to physically whip the democratically elected village leaders in public, and on another occasion in February 2010, to assist the MIMP enforcement officers to confiscate all their fishing nets (including both legal nets and ones that had been newly defined as 'illegal'). These incidents led to considerable fear, food insecurity and impoverishment of the whole village community on the island of Jibondo, and caused much concern and intimidation in other villages. Later incidents in June 2011 have witnessed an MIMP patrol boat deliberately ramming a traditional fishing boat at Juani, endangering fishers' lives, ostensibly to prevent the transportation of a net suspected to be illegal. These heavy-handed actions have led to increasing disenchantment with MIMP and District authorities, and to a serious loss in people's respect for the legitimacy of the role of the State in relation to marine conservation. In 2010 and 2011, the Presidential Commission of Human Rights and Good Governance has been requested by village leaders and our research team to investigate breaches of human rights. Similar incidents have occurred in other villages in Mafia and other distant parts of the mainland Tanzanian coast, and in August 2010, while trying to confiscate villagers' nets in the dark, Army soldiers shot two fishers, killing one, before dawn in northern Tanzanian coastal village of Tongoni (George 2010).

The villagers increasingly feel, and actually are, dispossessed of their lands and resources, and even unwelcome in their ancestral home areas due to hostile actions by tourist operators, such as abusive language and cutting of anchor ropes, and steadily more repressive measures taken by the MIMP Enforcement Unit authorities, sometimes with military involvement.

In relation to marine and coastal conservation, it appears that the proclaimed approaches of people's participation and community-based conservation that were

highlighted and initially honoured during the 1990s have been replaced by a more protectionist, authoritarian and violently repressive practice of conservation in more recent years. Some villagers feel that they are losing key land rights to rich tourism enterprises as well as their rights of access to vast areas of the most productive marine resource sites, which they consider themselves to have traditionally governed and utilised sustainably in the past (Moshiy, forthcoming). Meanwhile, WWF has plans through its partnership with the Tanzanian Government and the East African Marine Ecoregion programme to advocate ever-larger areas of the coastline and seascape for conservation and no-fishing zones aiming at sea areas of 10 percent and 20–30 percent respectively (Wells *et al.* 2007), specifically targeting all the most highly productive and biologically diverse coral reefs and mangrove estuaries.

While narratives about ‘overgrazing’ are often used to legitimise green grabbing, somewhat similar narratives of ‘overfishing’ are also used to legitimise blue grabbing. Globally there are clear and massive cases of overfishing caused by industrial-scale capital-intensive fishing fleets (FAO 2010), but the depiction of artisanal and small-scale fisheries in a place like Mafia Island as being responsible for overfishing lacks empirical evidence and misrepresents the problem (Beymer-Farris and Bryceson 2011, Kolding and van Zwieten 2011).

In parallel to the wildlife case, dispossession in the instance of marine and coastal conservation has also been facilitated by the adoption of laws and regulations combined with occasional use of violence to implement this legislation. This blue grabbing has, however, a more recent history than wildlife conservation in Tanzania. Dispossession in this case takes place through the establishment of no-fishing zones, limitations on utilisation of invertebrate and mangrove resources, restrictions on fishing gear, confiscation of fishing gear, appropriation of near-shore areas, fencing of beaches, and lack of benefit-sharing of official fees collected. Restrictions on fishing are justified through the use of a narrative of overfishing and the benefit-sharing arrangements are obscured by a system based on lack of transparency in information-sharing.

The same three groups of actors as in the wildlife case are likely to accumulate capital based on these processes of accumulation. We do, however, have less information about the first group, the state officials, in this case. But clearly, transnational conservation organizations (in this case WWF in particular) and tourist companies benefit from these recently imposed conservation restrictions in coastal and marine areas in Tanzania.

## **Conclusions**

We demonstrate in this article how ongoing processes of conservation of wildlife and marine and coastal areas in Tanzania may be seen as forms of green and blue grabbing in terms of the combination of dispossession of previous users and capital accumulation by some powerful actors.

Wildlife and coastal conservation areas appear to be widely different in terms of biological characteristics, species composition, ecosystem types, and ecological processes, as well as human production systems, social dynamics, livelihoods and lifestyles. However, political economic forces and processes, characterised by power constellations, and in terms of contradictions between the rights and interests of people to land, sea and natural resources vis-à-vis foreign investors and state agencies vying to capture control over land and natural resources, are all strikingly similar.

In the two instances, dispossession may take different forms. Similarities, however, include increased restrictions on local resource use justified by degradation narratives, and the draining of financial benefits in tourism from communities within a system based on lack of information sharing and lack of transparency. Contrary to other forms of primitive accumulation, this dispossession is not for wage labour or linked to any creation of a labour reserve. It is the wide-open spaces with wildlife or beaches and coral reefs that are valued by conservation organizations and the tourist industry. The local users of these spaces, such as pastoralists, small-scale farmers or fishers, are, however, seen to be in the way. In addition, the dispossession studied here does not primarily take the usual form of privatization of land. The spaces involved are usually kept as state or village land. It is rather the benefits from the land and natural resources that are privatized.

Capital is accumulated based on three principal processes of dispossession. First, rent-seeking state officials and politicians may benefit directly from the fees collected by the state or they may own tourist companies that manage to capture the increased ground rent created through conservation: this is clearly the case in the wildlife sector. Second, big transnational conservation organizations accumulate large sums of money from ‘development assistance’ donors and private fund-raising through the presentation of ‘successful’ conservation following the win-win discourse. Third, commercial tourism operators may also profit from processes of dispossession, although there are widely different approaches in relating to communities among the various tourism investors.

Finally, dispossession has been gradual and piecemeal in some cases, while it involved violence in other cases. Attempts at introducing ‘community-based conservation’ worked as a key mechanism to make dispossession take place in the two cases, allowing conservation a foothold in village lands. This foothold produced the conditions under which subsequent dispossessions could take place.

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