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Article

Austere Conservation: Understanding Conflicts over Resource Governance in Tanzanian Wildlife Management Areas

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Abstract

We explore how the regime of rules over access to land, natural, and financial resources reflects the degree of community ownership of a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Tanzania. Being discursively associated with participatory and decentralised approaches to natural resource management, WMA policies have the ambition to promote the empowerment of communities to decide over rules that govern access to land and resources. Our purpose is to empirically examine the spaces for popular participation in decision-making over rules of management created by WMA policies: that is, in what sense of the word are WMAs actually community-based? We do this by studying conflicts over the regime of rules over access to land and resources. Analytically, we focus on actors, their rights and meaningful powers to exert control over resource management, and on accountability relationships amongst the actors. Our findings suggest that WMAs foster very limited ownership, participation and collective action at the community level, because WMA governance follows an austere logic of centralized control over key resources. Thus, we suggest that it is difficult to argue that WMAs are community-owned conservation initiatives until a genuinely devolved and more flexible conservation model is implemented to give space for popular participation in rule-making.

Keywords: CBNRM, WMA, Tanzania, management plan, participation, accountability, governance, conflict, community-based conservation, decentralised management, wildlife management

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, fortress conservation and central government control have been accompanied by policies and legislation that put communities in focus for conserving natural resources in the Global South (Roe et al. 2009). Much has been written about community-based approaches to conservation (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Songorwa et al. 2000; Balint 2006; Ribot et al. 2006; Nelson 2007; Dressler et al. 2010), illustrating all too well the need for continued critical observation and concern. A number of labels for community-based conservation (CBC) schemes have been promoted in the context of wildlife conservation, such as community wildlife managament (CWM) (Balint 2007), CBC (Goldman 2003) or community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) (Nelson and Agrawal 2008). All these schemes are typically defined as systems of resource governance, whereby the rules for resource allocation and management are primarily set by communities themselves (Li 2005: 435).

CBC schemes are uncritically hailed by proponents from government and non-government sectors alike to be participatory and widely beneficial, despite the difficulties of evaluating the impact of what is often framed as 'success' (Blaikie 2006), with little evidence of the actual workings of participation on the ground (Lund et al. 2009). Despite the overabundance of win-win rhetoric in development policy circles and lack of evidence to support it, scholars believe

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in the virtues of participatory policies if: a) a wide range of information is available to local communities to enable informed decision making (Arnstein 1969; Parkins and Mitchell 2005; Fernandez-Gimenez et al. 2008; Turnhout et al. 2010); b) meaningful powers to manage resources are actually devolved to democratically elected local bodies that are downwardly accountable to their electorate (Smoke 2003; Ribot 2001, 2004); and c) substantial benefits can be generated and captured by the communities to improve their well-being (Homewood et al. 2012).

Tanzanian Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) represent such a policy for community-based wildlife conservation that is hailed to be participatory and community-owned (WWF 2014; AWF n.d.), because WMAs seem to constitute a break with past, more centralised and exclusion-based approaches, i.e., fortress conservation (Brockington 2002). Critical voices see them as non-participatory, overly focused on conservation, and neoliberal in the sense of expanding the territories and resources that can be commoditised with little attention to local concerns and rural development (Goldman 2003; Igoe and Croucher 2007; Benjaminsen and Svarstad 2010; Benjaminsen et al. 2013). The literature on the politics of participation is typically inspired by a rich set of critical perspectives on participation (Ribot 1999; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Hickey and Mohan 2005; Cornwall 2008), continuously offering critique pertaining to community-conservation relations in Northern Tanzania (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2010; Goldman 2011; Mariki 2013; Loveless 2014) and potential ways to move beyond the critique (Goldman and Milliary 2014). With this article, we wish to explicitly examine an often overlooked, albeit a core assumption of WMAs. That is, in what sense their governance fosters or at least allows for popular participation in decision-making over rules that regulate access to land, natural and financial resources.

Studying CBC through the regime of rules and regulations

Little attention has been paid to the regime of management rules and regulations that constitute a key element for community-based interventions and shape a project's success or failure. Scholars who look at management rules and regulations typically ask whether they are adhered to, what are the effects of lack of adherence, and how can compliance with rules and regulations be ensured (Keane et al. 2011, 2012; Nielsen and Meilby 2013). However, the question of legitimacy of the regime of rules and regulations is rarely addressed.[1] We wish to contribute to the debates on CBC by explicitly looking at the operational regime of rules and regulations over access to land and resources. Building on previous work done by others who studied the initiation of WMAs (Igoe and Croucher 2007; Trench et al. 2009; Benjaminsen et al. 2013; Loveless 2014), our hypothesis is that processes of broad-based participation and devolved community-led rule-making and implementation are largely absent in operational WMAs, partly because these projects lacked genuine community involvement in the phase of establishment. Empirically, we direct our attention to conflicts over access to land and resources, and examine how tensions over rule-making and compliance are dealt with and resolved by different actors. We focus on conflicts because they are indicators of a lack of popular consent to a regime of conservation rules, and can reveal dominant power relations and the workings of politics of participation on the ground.

Conceptual framework

We ground our research interest in political ecology (Robbins 2004) and propose to build an understanding of WMA governance by looking at the rules that govern rights, responsibilities, and powers over access to material and financial resources, and how these rules are made. Having the perspective of a WMA community in mind, we ask if the rules can be changed by WMA villages to accommodate local needs and conditions. We discuss the policy-driven architecture for WMA governance by identifying key actors pertaining to communal access to land and natural resources, and to tourism-generated revenues from hunting and safari activities on village land. Throughout our analysis we follow Agrawal and Ribot (1999) in assessing how rules governing access to land, resources and tourism-based revenues in WMAs distribute decision-making powers to different actors and how these actors are tied into relations of accountability. We study the distribution of powers to make decisions in community-based interventions by focusing on the degree of popular participation in rule-making. To do this, we see the need to examine the relationship between the WMA villages and the community-based organisation (CBO), because WMAs are primarily managed at the supra-village level by (CBO, also refered to as 'Authorised Association' in the context of WMAs). Therefore, we are interested in understanding what powers are assigned to the CBO—the managing body comprised of elected village representatives—and what powers are further devolved to village councils. With this, we are able to assess the degree of decentralisation, and to what extent decentralisation policies distribute 'meaningful powers' over resources to WMA governance bodies that are held accountable by their constituencies. When accountability relations force authorities to respond downwardly to its constituency, decentralisation takes democratic traits (Ribot et al. 2010). When local governments are mainly upwardly accountable to higher authorities, it resembles an extension of central government's control into rural areas (Ribot 2004, following Rondinelli 1981) or in other words recentralisation (Ribot et al. 2006). In our exploration of WMA governance at the village level we look at how flexible the rules are and what it takes to change them. If certain rules cannot be changed, we look at patterns of conflict as an indicator for lack of genuine community participation in rule-making.

METHODOLOGY AND CASE DESCRIPTION

We use empirical data collected from a field study in Burunge WMA in Northern Tanzania. We rely on a review of relevant policy documents and on qualitative data compiled through observation (in two village assemblies, three CBO meetings, and one meeting of Village Game Scouts), semi-structured and unstructured interviews with agro-pastoralists and farmers (individually and in focus groups, >100 interviews), village and traditional leaders (>40 interviews), members and employees of the CBO (13 interviews), Village Game Scouts (individually and in focus groups, 23 interviews), district officers (five interviews), ministry representatives (four interviews and continuous email exchange), conservation NGO representatives (four interviews), investors (two interviews), and Protected Area authorities (one interview with three Tanzanian National Park Authority representatives). Data were collected in all Burunge WMA villages, in Babati town (District centre), in Arusha (Regional centre) and in Dar es Salaam (location of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism). The field work was conducted from January to May 2014, and in February, May, and November 2015 by the authors—either in parallel at different locations or jointly.

We deal with highly sensitive and contentious issues of land ownership, local conflicts, and criminalized access to conservation territories. To build reliable narratives of events and conflicts we triangulated (Nightingale 2003) by talking to actors across all levels of WMA governance and local politics, and we used high-resolution satellite images (Google Earth) to gain a better understanding of different land uses and spatial relations in the area. Triangulation techniques do not always yield consistent accounts, and can produce discrepancies and incompatibilities between different sets of data (Nightingale 2003). This dissonance, however, is telling in multiple ways, and can inform about local interests and what is at stake for different actors, making social conflicts and the politics of conservation visible. To elicit historical events we asked the same questions to different research participants until we did not receive new information. To reduce the various biases inherent in the study of conflicts, we put great stress on building trust with our interlocutors, being transparent in our research questions, asking for informed consent to be interviewed, an option to opt out at any time, and ensuring anonymity. Nonetheless, mutual trust does not prevent us from being 'used' by our informants in what they often referred to as a political game that the 'others' are playing, a game that one can hardly observe without being drawn into.

We also recognise that by relying on qualitative methods in the field we lack a number of other techniques that could shed a different light. Our research design and methodology does not include environmental evidence that could inform a study of conflicts over access to land and resources in juxtaposition with claims to environmental stewardship or degradation (e.g., Brockington and Homewood 2001; Benjaminsen 2008). We interacted mostly with members of village governments and other more 'visible' community members, and we probably have not spent enough time in the villages that we study to be able to fully observe the daily workings of local politics.

In this article we discuss WMA governance at large, despite drawing from one case study only. Every WMA is different as is every village. This makes any generalisation problematic, yet not impossible (Flyvbjerg 2006). We try to overcome the problem of generalisation of ethnographic qualitative research findings by using a conceptual framework that can be equally applied to most localities and contexts. Further, our case was not selected randomly. Rather—following Flyvbjerg (2006)—we selected it purposefully as a case: a) that stands out, being one of the first operational Tanzanian WMAs and attracting more tourism investment than most other WMAs in the country; and is b) with internal variation, being arguably one of the most heterogeneous WMAs in terms of the mix of ethnicities and languages, livelihoods and land use practices.

Case study area

Burunge WMA is located in Babati district in Northern Tanzania, around 190 km from Kilimanjaro international airport, the main entry point for international tourists visiting the Tanzanian northern circuit (Figure 1). Burunge WMA was established in 2003 and registered in 2006 with a total area of 280 sq. km (WWF 2014). The WMA initially comprised of five villages with a total population of around 22,000 individuals (2002 national census). Between 2004 and 2009, the five villages split into ten (Figure 2) and the population increased to around 34,000 in 2012 (2012 Babati District Council Population and Housing Census).

Although Burunge WMA is located within a world-famous network of well-established protected areas that generate significant revenue for the safari industry and the Tanzanian state, Burunge villages cannot capture tourism revenue unless the tourists stay overnight in Burunge WMA lodges, go on a photo-safari, or hunt game in the WMA. The revenues from Burunge WMA-based tourism amounted to TZS 412 million (around USD 248,000) in 2014, after taxation by central and district governments. Assuming a population of 36,000 people in 2014 in Burunge villages based on the past population growth, around USD 7 per person per year are made available for the communities after taxation in 2014. Yet, only half of the sum is distributed to the villages for social development projects; the other half remains with the WMA office for administrative purposes, conservation activities and a development reserve (Homewood et al. 2015).

Agriculture and livestock husbandry continue to be the main livelihood activities, with farmland and livestock herds constituting most important household assets and two pillars of the local economy. The extent of agricultural activities in Burunge villages is shown in Figure 2. Burunge villages, except Manyara village, are accessible by all-weather roads. Primary schools and mobile phone networks are present in each village, health centres are easily accessible for many, and in 2015, efforts to connect the area to the national electrical

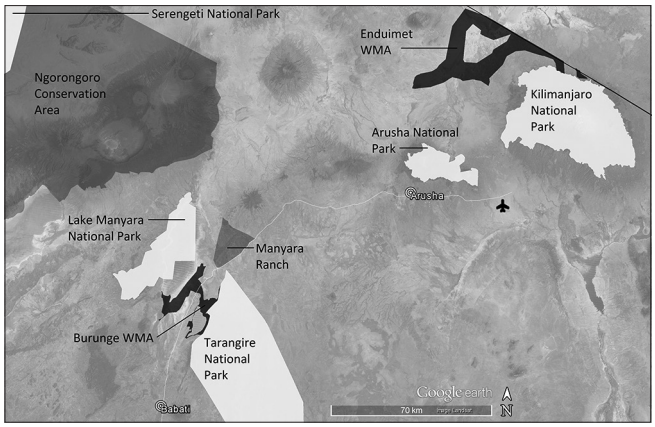

Figure 1
Burunge WMA in the regional context
Note: ***GIS shapefiles provided by TANAPA, TAWIRI, WWF, and WDPA. Illustration by Jevgeniy Bluwstein***

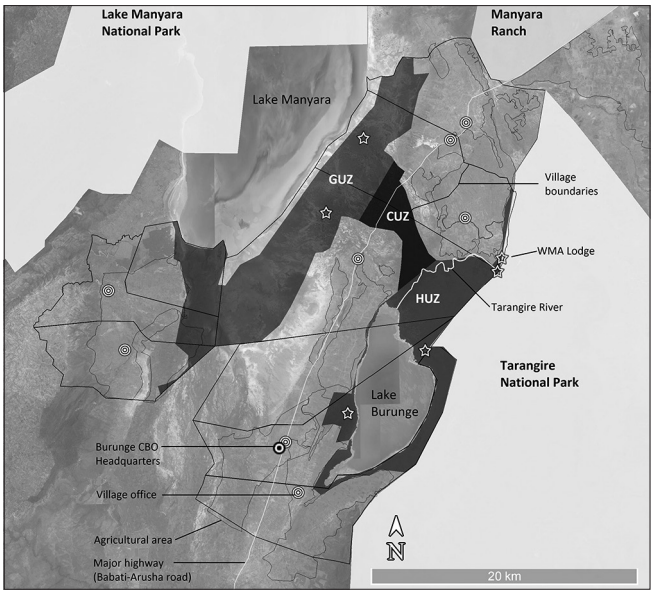

Figure 2
Villages of Burunge WMA
Note: ***Some village boundaries are not official and might change in local negotiations, estimated to our best knowledge based on field presence and corroborated with preliminary maps from Babati District, Village Land Use Plans, GIS shapefiles (WWF, National Bureau of Statistics) and Google Earth satellite images. Agricultural area is mapped based on 2014 GIS shapefiles (Honeyguide Foundation). Burunge WMA is divided into three zones: General Use Zone (GUZ), Corridor Use Zone (CUZ), Hunting Use Zone (HUZ). Illustration by Jevgeniy Bluwstein***

grid have been launched. Access to water remains a challenge for all.

Past conservation efforts squeezed the local population between a network of various types of protected areas. Burunge WMA is located within the Tarangire-Manyara Ecosystem (TME), that also encompasses Tarangire National Park (gazetted in 1970), Lake Manyara National Park (gazetted in 1960), Manyara Ranch (since 2000, operated by African Wildlife Foundation), and a newly established Randileni WMA (gazetted in 2012, to replace the Lolkisale Game Controlled Area, not mapped here) (Figure 1). From a conservationist point of view the priorities are to maintain the ecological integrity of the entire ecosystem by protecting wildlife corridors, enabling wildlife to safely migrate across borders within TME (Goldman 2009; Jones et al. 2009; Kikoti 2009).

ANALYSING RESOURCE GOVERNANCE IN WMAS: RIGHTS, POWERS, AND RELATIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

WMA policy aims to establish restrictions on local land use and access to natural resources in return for a share of tourism revenues that are generated on village lands under a WMA regime of rules and regulations. Therefore, taking a community perspective we discuss the kind of changes the WMA policy brings at the village level in terms of local people's ability to access communal lands for cultivation, livestock grazing, collection of natural resources (firewood, timber, non-timber forest products, poles, thatch, bushmeat, water, etc.), and their ability to benefit from tourism-based revenues generated through hunting and safari activities.

Evolution of central government control over tourism activities on village lands

Under the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974—long before the WMA era—the central government of Tanzania has reconsolidated state control over wildlife resources in post-independent Tanzania, developing a vibrant tourist hunting industry and liberalising it to private investments in the 1980s (Nelson et al. 2007). This led to a growth of tourism activities on village lands. Hunting outfitters received hunting block concessions from the central government to bring in tourists to shoot game in Game Controlled Areas (GCAs) that often overlapped with village lands, while tour operators established direct investment contracts with village governments to conduct non-consumptive activities (e.g., photo safari) and to facilitate tourist camping and lodging on village lands.

While no restrictions on human activities were imposed from central authorities on village lands inside and outside of GCAs, the Director of Wildlife, under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) had the power to allocate a hunting block on village land in a GCA without local consent, to allocate a hunting concession to an outfitter, and to collect the fees and revenues, channelling back only 25% to the District that would share a small and unspecified amount with the village government (Nelson et al. 2007). Communities were dependent on the goodwill of hunting outfitters to support 'community development' as required through Tourist Hunting Regulations in 2000. The presence of hunting outfitters on village land could entail restrictions to local access to land and natural resources during the hunting season, and some concessions granted exclusive access to the outfitters (Snyder and Sulle 2011).

The Ministry had no role to play in non-consumptive tourism on village land. The village governments could enter into direct negotiations with tour operators and lodging investors, negotiating a shared land-use regime that could entail self-imposed restrictions on access to land and resources to secure an attractive safari experience for visitors, and keep all the revenues (Nelson et al. 2007; Schroeder 2008; Sachedina and Nelson 2010). Obviously, communities would prefer self-negotiated non-consumptive tourism activities on their village land as opposed to having to host non-accountable hunting outfitters. The Ministry, however, benefited from tourist hunting financially, and had little interest in seeing the villages interfere with hunting activities by hosting tourism safaris through direct contracts with safari operators (Snyder and Sulle 2011). The growing competition between consumptive and non-consumptive tourism activities within hunting blocks on village land has led the central government to pass a number of reforms to regulate in favour of tourist hunting, banning any kind of tourism activities within a hunting block without the approval of the Director of Wildlife, and introducing new fees on all tourism activities (URT 2000, 2008; Nelson 2011; Snyder and Sulle 2011).

The evolution of wildlife conservation and tourism reforms was paralleled by deliberations over a comprehensive policy for devolved and community-based wildlife conservation. Eventually it was implemented under the Wildlife Regulations of 2002 (URT 2002), stipulating how WMAs can be established on village lands. Until today, Tanzania's WMA policy has undergone significant changes and is presently codified in form of the Wildlife Conservation Act 2009 (URT 2009) and the Wildlife Regulations 2012 (URT 2012). In what follows, we outline what has changed for communities' access to their lands and resources, and how their relationships vis-à-vis tourist hunting outfitters and safari tour operators have been affected by WMA policies.

What powers over community-based wildlife conservation are vested in the CBO?

When villages set aside a part of village land to be gazetted as a Wildlife Management Area, the WMA is created as a continuous piece of land spanning across village borders. In the process of WMA establishment, participating villages have to elect village representatives who form a supra-village CBO. The CBO has the right to apply for 'user rights to wildlife' at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. In case of a successful application, the CBO can use the newly acquired powers to attract private investors to establish wildlife-based tourism activities (hunting and/or safari), and it can also apply for a resident hunting quota on behalf of the WMA villages, allowing–albeit very limited–access to legal bushmeat for local communities. While it is still up to the Director of Wildlife to allocate a hunting block even inside WMA territory, the Wildlife Regulations of 2012 give the CBO the right to decide upon whether a hunting block should be established or not, and CBO members are involved in negotiations with potential investors. Ultimately the village who hosts a WMA investor has to approve of the contract between the CBO and the investor.

The CBO is in charge of the preparation of a General Management Plan (GMP) that governs local access to land and natural resources on WMA territory as well as tourist operators' conduct and access to WMA-based village lands. This empowers the CBO to manage the WMA on behalf of the participating communities pertaining to local access to land and use of all natural resources, both inside and outside of a WMA hunting block. Hence, powers to make decisions over local access are recentralised away from the village councils up to the CBO pertaining to village lands that are outside of a hunting block and are set aside for a WMA. However, when a hunting block is operated on village land, powers partly shift from the central government to the CBO with the implementation of a WMA. In order to understand whether this shift enables more or less attention to residents' needs and concerns, it is important to study the relationships between the communities, their CBO and the investor. We will return to this later.

The CBO is also entitled to a share of tourism-based revenues that are generated within WMA territories. Depending on the nature of revenues (consumptive and non-consumptive) and fees, different revenue sharing formulae apply, as specified by the law for hunting (URT 2009, 2012), and suggested but still unspecified (Nelson et al. 2007, URT 2008) for non-consumptive utilisation. A share is allocated to the government, the district and the CBO. As of 2012, the CBO receives 75% of the hunting block fees (25% go to the central government) and 65 % of non-consumptive revenues. Due to a number of additional taxation mechanisms on hunting-related fees, the revenues from hunting to the CBO are reduced to roughly 60%. The CBO is entitled to keep whatever amount is negotiated between the CBO and the investor above the government-prescribed fees.

The CBO is also encouraged to retain roughly half of the taxed WMA revenues for administration, conservation and other activities, and to distribute the other half to the participating villages (URT 2012), who manage their share independently, typically investing the funds into public development projects and education. Although it is not regulated how the revenues should be distributed among the villages, the CBOs typically allocate equal amounts 'as an easy answer to a difficult question' (former WWF Tanzania employee, pers. comm. 2014) instead of putting it up for debate amongst the communities within the process of deliberations over the WMA rules. It creates or fuels conflicts amongst communities and the CBO, when a wildlife-rich village hosts a lodge and is persuaded to join other villages to establish a WMA, and subsequently to share tourism revenues with villages that might have much less wildlife and no tourism. These wildlife-poor villages are often more than willing to join and receive tourism-based revenues that are generated elsewhere (Trench et al. 2009; Benjaminsen et al. 2013; Green and Adams 2014).

What powers remain with the central government?

The Director of Wildlife retains its powers to authorise key proposals put forward by the CBO, such as the allocation of a hunting block within a WMA, the choice of tourism investors, the stipulations within the General Management Plan, that is regulating local people's access to village lands inside the WMA, and the collection and distribution of tourism-based revenues on WMA territory.

In 2014, the decision by the former Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism has freed several tour operators in three WMAs from paying entry and motor vehicle fees for tourists staying in WMA lodges in a move that by-passed the parliament (Letter by the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism to Tanzania Association of Tour Operators, 22.12.2014), effectively reducing WMA revenues from tourist visitors from USD 25 to USD 15 per person. This incident is telling in multiple ways: it demonstrates the bargaining power of tour operators who negotiate tourist fees directly with the Ministry (member of Tanzania Association of Tour Operators, pers. comm. 2015), while the villages have no say; it shows the power of the Ministry to decide and influence how much WMA villages will be able to generate from WMA-based tourism; and it invites patronage and rent-seeking (Nelson and Agrawal 2008; Benjaminsen et al. 2013).

Furthermore, correspondence from Burunge CBO to the Wildlife Division shows that the latter distributes a part of collected revenues to the CBO erratically, with delays and often without a way to trace back the payments to the respective investors and tourism activities, making the revenue generation and distribution non-transparent (Benjaminsen and Bryceson 2012; WWF 2014). This does not allow the CBO to effectively hold the Wildlife Division to account, and it makes adequate financial planning difficult at the CBO and village level.

Perhaps most important and far-reaching is the continuous state ownership of all wildlife in Tanzania (URT 2009), allowing the CBO–on behalf of the Wildlife Division–to retain user rights over wildlife on village land and to manage and benefit from wildlife utilisation for tourism activities, even if the village leaves the WMA (URT 2012, section 34(6)), creating tensions and ambiguities with the Village Land Act No. 5 (URT 1999, section 8). The Village Land Act gives Tanzanian village governments the right to use, administer and manage village land—land that is owned by the state—on behalf of the village assembly, i.e., all adult members of the village. In case a WMA village withdraws from the WMA, all decisions about the use of village land, that are considered by the Wildlife Division to be of importance to wildlife conservation, remain with the CBO (representative of Wildlife Division, and District Game Officer of Babati district pers. comm. 2014). Should the CBO cease to operate in the unlikely case that all villages of a WMA decide to dissolve the WMA and succeed in doing so, the user rights to wildlife over former WMA land return to the Wildlife Division, which then decides whether to 'give' back this land to the village or to use it for hunting tourism (representative of Wildlife Division, and District Game Officer of Babati district pers. comm. 2014). In the case of the latter, the village would not be allowed to utilise its own land, nor benefit from any generated fees or revenues from hunting tourism. While this is not clearly regulated, it has been used by Babati District Game Officer and Wildlife Division as a threat to Burunge WMA villagers. Should villages withdraw from the WMA, their village land set aside for the WMA would be converted into a Game Controlled Area, we were told, which would render this land a protected area without rights to any human activities according to Wildlife Conservation Act 2009 (URT 2009, section 20(1),(c) and section 21(1)). This threat has no legal substance (Edward Lekaita pers. comm. 2016) but can exert political power when central and district government 'experts' use it against villagers with little knowledge of the law, and most importantly little access to independent legal representation to claim their rights. Similarly, WMA villages and the CBOs seem not to know that the CBO user rights cannot be automatically renewed by the Director of Wildlife, if there have been changes to the General Management Plan. In order to pull out from a WMA, a village would have to change its own village land-use plan and announce it to the CBO and the Director of Wildlife. This would force the Wildlife Division to review the WMA status after five years (Edward Lekaita pers. comm. 2016). Because villages do not know their legal rights, nor are they appropriately informed about WMA laws by District authorities or the Wildlife Division, no village has yet managed to pull out of a WMA in Tanzania.

Instead, the confusion about WMA laws and villagers' rights can be used as an opportunity for conservationists and investors to engage with villages that cannot simply pull out from the WMA if residents change their minds about what they are willing to invest in or sacrifice for conservation. The stabilising effect of being under the WMA framework can create incentives for organisations that represent conservation interests to convince or, if necessary, coerce villages to join a WMA as a strategy to put more village land under a conservation regime without an option for reversal.

Accountability relations matter

The apparent lack of downward accountability of the CBO to the villages has already been criticised by others (Shivji 2002; Nelson 2007; Humphries 2013). The CBO does not need to be responsive to communities' requests to change the rules, however it can ask the village governments for support in enforcing rules that are decided upon elsewhere. Due to the top-down revenue collection the villages cannot hold the CBO accountable in terms of how revenues are generated and collected, because this responsibility is with the Wildlife Division, not the CBO. Similarly, the CBO is following central government regulations and guidelines on how to allocate the money, leaving little room for manoeuvre to meet villagers' demands.

The Local Government Act (URT 1982) gives the village assembly, i.e., the villagers, the power to elect and remove the village chairman or village council members. However,

in the context of WMA-based tourism villagers can only complain about investors' conduct, but they cannot make an investor leave, as the contract is signed between the CBO and the investor. The most important mechanism to hold the CBO downwardly accountable to the villagers is the power granted to villagers to elect and remove CBO representatives. While this right can be easily exercised in practice, the establishment of a supra-village CBO does not promote the empowerment of existing village government organs (Shivji 2002; Ribot 2004; Nelson 2007) and weakens accountability links that are already available, because the CBO is spatially further detached from the villagers than the village government that resides in the village office. For most villages, a CBO has its headquarters hours, if not a day trip away, depending on distance, terrain, means of available transport, and season. Burunge villagers are arguably least affected by this, having a tarmac road cutting through the region, but for communities in more remotely located WMAs this is a serious burden and barrier to access their CBO (e.g., Lake Natron, Makame, the WMAs in the Selous-Niassa Corridor in Southern Tanzania). With the recentralisation of resource management from the village office up to the CBO, negotiations over access to some of the resources are also recentralised to the CBO level away from village committees, such as livestock grazing, collection of firewood, thatch, or medicinal plants. The bargaining power of villagers also diminishes if people from several villages have to lobby the CBO through village representatives instead of attending village assemblies where demands can be expressed directly to an elected village council.

We conclude that the CBO is upwardly accountable to the Wildlife Division, that makes state policy and regulations, gives authority to the CBO to manage the WMA, and can take this authority away. Given the strong relations of accountability between the CBO and the Wildlife Division, CBO's downward accountability to the communities is relatively weakened. That is to say, it does not matter much who will be elected to represent the villagers at the CBO, if CBO's powers to do what the villagers like it to do are limited by state policy and regulations that give the Director of Wildlife key decision-making powers in community-based natural resource management. At the same time, the CBO holds the villagers accountable to the rules over access, and it can enforce many of these rules through force or financial sanctioning. Hence, WMA villages are trapped into relations of accountability that make it difficult to leverage political power to change rules that govern rural livelihoods in their communities. In other words, there is no 'balance of powers' (Oyono 2004) to effectively hold community representatives (i.e., CBO members) accountable at the village level.

BURUNGE WMA: GOVERNANCE THROUGH COERCION AND LEGAL STRUGGLES

In the following section we review some of the evidence in support of our analysis of WMA governance through the case of Burunge WMA. We focus empirically on local struggles over powers to change rules and the consequences of an ostensibly centralised management regime. Where it is necessary to ensure protection from possible reprisals, we anonymise the communities.

Creating a conservation regime of rules and regulations

As mentioned already, the CBO is in charge of land-use planning for village land inside a WMA. Depending on the zonation in accordance with the General Management Plan, WMA villagers can have access to pastures for livestock grazing, and to fuelwood and non-timber forest products, while cutting timber, making charcoal, farming or establishing permanent settlement structures is always prohibited in any WMA. Every WMA has to come up with its own regime of rules over access to land and natural resources. A GMP provides—at least in theory—the basis for developing and managing a WMA. Through an environmental resource assessment of the WMA, natural resources are to be valuated, challenges and goals to be identified, and solutions to be proposed. A core element of the management plan is the spatial dividing of a WMA into different resource zones that are assigned respective restrictions and allowable uses. We compile the various activities in Table 1 for Burunge WMA, showing how access to land, natural resources and tourist activities is spatially contingent. According to Kaswamila (2006) no biophysical or socio-economic data were actually collected for the preparation of the initial management plan in 2005, nor where there any set criteria for zoning. The current GMP (JUHIBU 2011) is based on largely unchanged assumptions and planning. The Corridor Use Zone is situated on village lands of Minjingu and Vilima Vitatu and connects the western and eastern parts of the WMA, acting as an ecological link between Lake Manyara National Park and Tarangire National Park (cf. Figure 2). The General Use Zone spans the villages Olasiti, Minjingu, Vilima Vitatu, Maweni, Magara and Manyara, acting as a buffer zone for Lake Manyara National

Table 1
Burunge WMA zone-based regime of allowable and prohibited activities

Activity	CUZ*	GUZ^	HUZ+
Dry fire wood collection	A†	A	P‡
Tree felling (poles for house construction)	P	P	P
Collecting Non-Timber Forest Products	A	A	P
Charcoal burning	P	P	P
Livestock grazing	P	A	P
Agriculture	P	P	P
Permanent settlements	P	P	P
Temporary settlements	P	A	P
Tourist hunting	P	P	A
Photo safari/game viewing	A	A	A
Local hunting	P	A	P
Entry without permit	A	A	P

Compiled based on Burunge General Management Plan 2010-2020 (JUHIBU 2011) and fieldwork. *Corridor Use Zone, ^General Use Zone, +Hunting Use Zone, †Allowable and ‡Prohibited

Park and hosting two tourist lodges, located in Minjingu and Vilima Vitatu, respectively (cf. Figure 2). The Hunting Use Zone spans the villages Kakoi, Vilima Vitatu, Ngolei, Mwada and Sangaiwe, acting as a buffer zone for Tarangire NP, hosting Burunge's hunting block and three tourist lodges (cf. Figure 2). Further, access to the west shore of Lake Burunge is prohibited to villagers, hosting a tourist lodge in Mwada.

Our fieldwork suggests that Burunge's regime of rules over access to land and natural resources is overly restrictive for many. How were these rules made? Formally, WMA policy and regulations put the responsibility to design access-specific rules in the hands of the CBO that should do it on behalf of the villagers. The policy is clear on the participation aspect here, it encourages participation of all and the village assembly has to sign off decisions pertaining to land use planning and the choice of investor. By unpacking the rhetoric of participation, we are looking at the distribution of powers in rule-making to qualify what it means when everyone is 'participating', and who holds meaningful powers in what is framed as decentralisation. We follow Agrawal and Ribot (1999) in order to focus on different types of powers for our analysis—powers to make or change rules and regulations, and powers to enforce restrictions.

Before becoming a WMA village, a village land-use plan needs to be prepared. Village land-use plans are in theory decided at the village level, being regulated through a set of Tanzanian laws (cf. ILC 2013), enabling all those who would normally attend village meetings to participate. Most likely, less than half of the adult population attends village meetings in communities that we studied for this article. Kaswamila and Songorwa (2009) report that 21% and 43% of adults (above 18) participated in village land-use planning in Burunge WMA villages of Vilima Vitatu and Sangaiwe, respectively. The authors further add that most of the active participants were 'district officials and ward/village leaders'. This counteracts claims of popular participation, and often the plans are actually done by 'experts' without involving the villagers (Goldman 2003; ILC 2013; Bluwstein and Lund, in review). We argue that this is due to what we call a 'conservation bias' which can override local needs and conditions, and is built into WMA governance from the outset on through the logic of wildlife corridors as the basis for a WMA, and the obligatory assistance of the District Game Officer and a conservation NGO in the establishment of a WMA.

Because a WMA is by default a continuous piece of land cutting across several villages to constitute a wildlife corridor or a buffer zone for a protected area, options for village land-use planning and WMA land allocation are restricted, since the goal is to establish a block of land instead of discontinuous patches. In addition, as soon as a part of village land is surrendered to the WMA through an approval in the village assembly, the power to make rules for 'how' to use this particular piece of village land is also surrendered to a group of actors—CBO members, District Natural Resources Advisory Board with the District Game Officer acting as a secretary, consultants and NGO facilitators—who prepare a WMA-wide GMP. Although District officers and the NGO have an advisory role of facilitators, and are merely supposed to bring together stakeholders at the negotiation table, in the case of Burunge WMA the District Game Officer and the facilitating NGO, AWF, did have a substantial impact on decisions over the establishment of Burunge WMA and WMA land-use planning (Igoe and Croucher 2007; Sachedina 2011). Villagers were misinformed and manipulated–including claims of forgery–to accept the WMA without informed consent (Baha and Chachage 2007; Igoe and Croucher 2007; Interviews by authors). The District Game Officer was allegedly demarcating parts of village lands for WMA without informing anyone, creating confusion, and sawing seeds for future land conflicts (interviews with anonymous). Sachedina (2008, 2011) offers a convincing ethnographic account on AWF's role in conservation projects across the Tarangire-Manyara Ecosystem, being the primary organisation in the region in pursuit of community-based conservation that is not so community-friendly (also see Goldman 2011; Goldman et al. 2013; Benjaminsen et al. 2013). The influence of the facilitators in the decision-making process over rules for conservation management explains why villagers have little to no access to natural resources such as dry-season pastures and non-timber forest products, despite the fact that the CBO is in a position to grant access to these resources without the central government watching over it. In an environment of imposed conservation 'expertise' the NGO and the District Game Officer appear to act in unison, as perceived by a village official:

> AWF and other conservation organisations all go to District level first and share same ideas and beliefs. So District Game Officer might sometimes represent conservation NGOs perspective. NGOs always come together with the District Game Officer, they coordinate their activities. The District Game Officer is the advisor to wildlife management. NGOs and District Game Officer say the same things, so they must accept each other's positions. (interview with a member of village government in Olasiti, 2014)

The CBO is the only actor with an assigned budget for rule enforcement and monitoring. Official rules are enforced through village game scouts or private investor guards (on investor's concession), and by relying on traditional leaders and village governments. As another instrument for rule enforcement, the CBO might threaten to withhold some of the revenues to a particular village, if the village WMA is not well maintained. This is not explicitly regulated, but expressing threats has been a common practice in Burunge WMA. Some of management plan rules, so far, only exist on paper. For instance, temporal limits to grazing (carrying capacity) and other livelihood activities are arbitrarily defined, yet not implemented. Access to land for livestock grazing in the General Use Zone is allowed according to the management plan but is insecure, because a tourist lodge operator claims much of that area and uses his guards to harass and police the residents. The residents never agreed to the establishment

of the WMA and won a legal case against the CBO and the village government, but efforts to evict the people continue to this day. Farming restrictions on Burunge WMA land in the villages Manyara, Magara, and Maweni are not policed by CBO's village game scouts for various reasons, including the challenge to patrol wetland areas and contesting claims to land ownership.

CBO's powers to change arrangements in response to conflicts are often constrained by higher levels of government, poor understanding of the land laws or simply reluctance to listen to WMA communities.

> This is a complicated process. The village would have to request to change boundaries at the Authorised Association [i.e., the CBO], the Authorised Association would have to ask the District and the Wildlife Division. Burunge WMA does not accept such requests, because villages would keep asking for more and more changes. (interview with former member of Burunge CBO, 2015).

Having a conservation NGO and the District Game Officer as facilitators and watchmen further reduces incentives to listen to demands from below.

> Although we have village representatives [at the CBO], they are not well educated and not well aware of legal issues, so the District and Wildlife Division impose their own will on WMA. Authorised Association [i.e., the CBO] members are sometimes tricked by District and other authorities by being taken to seminars and treated nicely. Authorised Association members feel obliged to accept whatever is told them. They forget that they should be representing the villagers. Only few Authorised Association members are strong enough to keep representing the village needs. (interview with member of Olasiti village government, 2014)

Community struggles over access to grazing land

One of Burunge's villages used to be part of another village until about five years ago, when it separated and became independent. The newly created village had to be sensitised by the District Game Officer anew to be persuaded to join Burunge WMA. With the attained independence, all grazing land set aside during the WMA establishment remained with the old village. To complicate matters, the new village is located next to and overlaps with the WMA hunting block, an area that has been traditionally used by livestock keepers from adjacent communities for dry season grazing. In 2013, the hunting block has been taken over by a new investor who does not offer any hunting tourism, but uses the concession for non-consumptive (safari) activities throughout the year. Until recently, livestock keepers from the new village believed that the village leadership gave away their land to the WMA, while the leadership sees itself as being lured into accepting the WMA, not being fully informed about the challenges during the sensitisation process (interview with former member of village government, 2015).

Not having enough land for dry season grazing, pastoralists from this and other Burunge villages continue to bring livestock into banned WMA territory (the hunting block), even though they are facing punishment from Burunge village game scouts and private investor guards who can hand them over to the CBO and the police. Private investor guards might seize their livestock and either leave it unattended for predators or push it across the border to Tarangire National Park in order to criminalise the herders in the eyes of the Tanzanian National Park Authority (TANAPA). "They [investor and village game scouts] deny us to graze on our land [WMA], they attack our children and push our livestock to Tarangire [National Park] to be eaten by lions." (interview with female villager, 2014). People are generally more afraid to be caught by private investor guards who are sourced from different parts of the region unlike the village game scouts who have to be local villagers, which promotes restraint on the side of village game scouts and fosters confrontation on the side of private guards.

Yet, it is not merely a conflict over rules that are contested by livestock keepers when they knowingly risk severe punishment by entering the hunting block. Underlying is a conflict over land ownership. The investment contract gives the investor the right to use the area exclusively and throughout the year. In fact, the investor advertises the territory as a 'private wildlife concession' offering luxurious tourism on around 35 sq. km (estimation using Google Earth; for comparison: village land area of the adjacent community is ~ 33 sq. km) for 'only 10 guests', who can 'blend into the wilderness' (Chemchemsafari 2015). These claims to exclusive land ownership and nature that is untouched by human use are contested by pastoralists from adjacent WMA communities on the grounds that the land does not belong to the investor. "It is very shameful that we have to write a letter to apply for grazing land to a French guy [the Investor], we are like guests in our own land." (interview with member of local pastoralist association, 2014). The fact that a previous arrangement was preferred by the local communities even though the contract was made between other parties, shows that some arrangements are accepted and others are not. As long as access to 'our land' is granted, the question of land ownership can rest. Yet, it will erupt as soon as access is taken away. This is also evident from conflicts with a previous investor who operated in the hunting block before Burunge WMA was launched (Igoe and Croucher 2007). Back in 2005, villagers from all adjacent villages called for the replacement of the investor with someone who would cooperate with local communities in land-sharing (Ihucha 2005). Apparently not much changed until recently, as the conflict intensified under the WMA regime, this time with a different investor and hard-edged front lines. Already back then, the Babati District Game Officer sided with the old investor (Igoe and Croucher 2007), and he does so again with the current investor, this time supported by the Burunge CBO.

The village leaders perceive the CBO, not the investor, to have decision-making powers over the area that is used

by the investor; they blame the CBO, not the investor, for having negotiated an arrangement that is disadvantageous to the communities' access to land for dry season grazing. This is further supported by the fact, that according to the contract between the CBO, the investor 'agrees' not to allow livestock in the hunting block throughout the year. In addition to grazing restrictions, people living close to the hunting block are cut off from access to dry firewood and construction materials (poles and thatch). Being too far from alternative areas that allow access, villagers see themselves forced to enter the hunting block illegally, risking fines and excessive punishment. Members of the new village keep requesting to change the rules of access to the hunting block to ease the situation ever since the new investor took over the hunting block in 2013. Their pleas have been rejected by the CBO. To the contrary, five village leaders were imprisoned and sued in court for trespassing and herding livestock in the hunting block (Criminal Case 182/2014, Resident's Magistrate Court of Manyara). The fact that the investor is not the land 'owner' as wrongfully stated in the court documents, but only an investor on village land, does not allow him to sue villagers in a 'criminal offence' for trespassing through village land (Edward Lekaita pers. comm. 2016). Likely for that reason the charges were eventually dropped (Defendants and lawyer pers. comm. 2015).

As of 2015, after a series of violent confrontations between local herders and the investor's guards, the investor realised that insisting on exclusive access to the hunting block will only produce more conflicts with local communities. Therefore, the investor is changing the strategy towards more negotiations and room for concessions (Bluwstein, in preparation). Remarkably, it was not the CBO leadership but the investor who realised that only negotiations can solve the hard-edged conflicts with local herders.

When conservation competes with rice cultivation

The two communities next to Lake Manyara became independent years ago. After secession from an old village (at the time of WMA establishment) parts of WMA land in these new villages were taken for rice cultivation by local farmers and fishermen, non-resident land owners, and amongst others, district officials. In addition, some villagers established settlements inside the WMA. Both communities are dependent on agriculture and have little wildlife to offer, which does not make the villages interesting for tourism. The two communities surrendered a relatively small part of village land to the WMA, subsequently benefiting from WMA revenues that are generated in other villages. The CBO did not succeed in enforcing the rules given the terrain (wetlands), and the fact, that some of the farmers are district officials. "I am just a mouse against the elephants" (member of village government, 2015). "The VEO[2] cannot stop his bosses from farming on WMA land" (member of Village Natural Resource Council, 2015).

In July 2014, the CBO decided to stop paying both villages parts of their share of WMA revenues, putting pressure on the villages. One of the villages asked the CBO to change the WMA boundaries to release the land that is used for settlements from being part of WMA, because they cannot resettle people without force and they lack village funds to compensate them. Both village governments are also trying to clear the WMA from farming, but feel powerless to make its villagers follow WMA rules and the CBO cannot effectively enforce them. People keep coming back to cultivate rice, that is simply more attractive to many, while the WMA revenues provide indirect benefits that cannot compete with a cash crop. The CBO insists on compliance with WMA rules, disregards requests to change the boundaries and cuts off the revenues.

Local struggles over autonomy in dealing with tourism investors

According to virtually all respondents across all Burunge villages, one of the villages was forced to join Burunge WMA through manipulation and forgery of official documents (pers. comm. with the implicated individual, 2014, also see Igoe and Croucher 2007). This village is not interested in being part of a conservation model that redistributes tourism revenues from villages that are rich in wildlife to villages without any wildlife. Because the CBO and the District Game Officer insist that all communities joined the WMA voluntarily, the village is not allowed to directly collect revenues from a lodge that operates on its WMA territory. The village government refuses to accept its accumulated WMA share of almost USD 70,000 since 2006-2007 as a form of protest against being part of the WMA, arguing that they do not need the WMA to conserve wildlife; the community has been doing it for years before the WMA was established, having had a village land-use plan that includes a conservation area. The village wants to leave the WMA and to reinstate a direct contract with the tourist lodge that was forced by Burunge CBO to pay the WMA instead of the village. The following statement attests to the widely perceived injustice of imposed equal benefit sharing. "Imagine you have hundred cows, your neighbour has one, he asks you to enter into joint venture with him and share milk equally, will you accept?" (interview with member of Ngoley village government, 2014).

The Wildlife Regulations of 2012 (URT 2012) make the District Natural Resource Advisory Board an arbitrator to resolve WMA conflicts, rendering impartial conflict resolution impossible if members of the Board (such as the District Game Officer) are part of the very conflict they are supposed to help resolving. This is exactly the case in this village. Leaving a WMA is effectively impossible and the avenue for conflict resolution at the WMA level is blocked through the involvement a District Game Officer who was, by all accounts, the mastermind behind the coercive inclusion of the village into the WMA over 10 years ago. Having exhausted all political options for conflict resolution, the village government went to court to sue the CBO for the foregone revenues, demanding to be paid out what was directly agreed with the investor in 2006

(more than USD 300,000 by the end of 2015, own estimation). As of July 2016, the court has ruled in favour of this village, potentially creating a legal precedent for other WMA villages across Tanzania interested in pulling out of a WMA.

'If this is a community project, then who is the community?'

The question was raised by a Kakoi villager in a conversation about Burunge WMA. It reflects a general discontent with the WMA. The various conflicts and perceived injustices have led to a number of violent incidents in Burunge WMA in the past few years. Local people were incited to destroy WMA infrastructure. Several village game scouts have been beaten up by a group of Barabaig residents when a Barabaig woman was apprehended by a WMA village game scout for cutting a tree inside the WMA. During the dry season in 2014, Warusha residents collectively decided to enter the hunting block with their livestock and their spears seeking direct confrontation with the security forces, which led to an injured guard of the hunting block operator. Several legal cases have been pursued by WMA actors and village governments to safeguard the territorial integrity of Burunge WMA against its own residents. Many of the people whom we talked to and who are not affiliated with the CBO, insisted that CBO members either do not represent them, or are powerless to do what their constituencies expects them to do. "These people become part of CBO once they are elected. They stop caring about us, they only think about their stomachs" (Member of Kakoi village government, interview 2014).

We can barely recognise the participating villages when we look for the 'C' in CBNRM or CBC, rather it seems to us that at best it is the CBO that is the actual 'community', if we follow the framing of a WMA as community-based natural resource management. This fits well with our analysis of actors and powers in WMA governance. The CBO is positioned to make rules that govern people's access to land and natural resources, and the CBO is vested with authority and powers to enforce the rules and to withstand pressure from below to modify them, while the central government is–supported by the facilitators from the District and NGOs–making sure that the rules are following the logic of conservation corridors first, and rural development second. The effects on people's livelihoods begin to emerge. Being an area where human and livestock population have been on the rise for years, communities most squeezed by conservation territories and exposed to an intensifying human-wildlife conflict (especially in Kakoi) are increasingly looking for opportunities to rent farmland and graze livestock outside of Burunge WMA. Despite the promise of rural development through WMA membership, tourism-based revenues cannot be sufficiently captured by the communities to represent viable options for alternative livelihood strategies. Instead, sesame has become a popular cash crop in response to intensifying crop damage by wildlife, which makes the cultivation of corn–a key staple food–a risky endeavour, and has the potential to transform food security strategies for those who ostensibly become dependent on markets instead of subsistence farming.

CONCLUSION

With this article we have shown how WMA governance distributes rights to land and resources to different actors and regulates access in a way that villagers feel disempowered to hold their representatives at the CBO to account. We have also argued that the prevalent conservation bias acts as a backdrop to WMA governance, inhibiting genuine participation in decisions over management goals and access to land and natural resources. Consequently, the general management plan hardly reflects local needs and conditions, leading to or exacerbating pre-existing conflicts over land and access to natural resources that the rural population relies on to sustain livelihoods. This situation is aggravated by an inflexible, in other words 'austere', conservation regime of fixed boundaries, rules and restrictions. It is no coincidence that as of 2016, AWF has been effectively de-funded by its main donor United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Babati District Game Officer has been demoted from his position. After two decades of conservation through coercion and 'decentralized despotism' (Igoe, 2006) their actions have produced a legacy of conflicts for years to come.

If our case is framed as a 'successful' WMA, what can we expect from other 'less' successful examples? Using a prominent community-based scheme, we have demonstrated how decentralisation is constrained to the level of a CBO that is weakly accountable to its constituencies, while recentralisation over some of the key resources to the central government or the CBO took place where village governments were previously in control. It remains to be seen how WMAs with more homogenous livelihoods and land-use practices fare in terms of the communities' ability to negotiate a regime of rules over access to land and resources that works for the majority of people. There are some positive examples from Northern Tanzanian WMAs that are more internally united and have a more supportive relationship with their CBO (Enduimet WMA, Makame WMA, personal observations). Our case shows that inter- and intra-communal differences can easily yield into full-blown conflicts if several villages are coerced into a WMA regime that is perceived unfair without the possibility to pull out.

If the promise of community-based conservation is to be taken seriously—i.e., natural and financial resource management 'by' communities instead of 'an austere quasi-fortress model' (Vaccaro et al. 2013) on village land; attention to power and accountability relations is needed during the process of WMA establishment and the making of the regime of rules over access to land and resources. If community-based management is to embody community ownership of the WMA, a claim widely advertised by facilitating NGOs and government representatives, the needs of the villagers must be reflected in the land-use and management plans. With our analysis we have tried to point to some of the key

obstacles preventing a genuinely devolved community-based management, highlighting continuous central government control of key resources and the problematic role of facilitating NGOs, district authorities, and tourism investors. While we are not promoting a particular kind of policy for wildlife conservation, we do hope that our study can problematise some of the key aspects of Tanzania's land, wildlife and conservation policies that reproduce past inequalities for rural populations.

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NOTES

1. One such instance is a Special Issue in *Biological Conservation*, Vol. 189, September 2015, 'Detecting and Understanding Non-Compliance with Conservation Rules' where the entire issue does not consider the question of legitimacy of conservation rules.
2. Village Executive Officers are not elected village officials, but are put in power by the government to share village government duties with the Village Chairman who is elected by the villagers.

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