

From Nature Tourism to Ecotourism? The Case of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania

Susan Charnley

This paper examines what is needed to transform nature tourism to protected areas into ecotourism, having genuine social benefits and serving as a tool for sustainable community development. It draws on the case of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania's most visited protected area, and a multiple land use zone inhabited by the pastoral Maasai peoples. I argue that for ecotourism to promote sustainable development in communities that are its supposed beneficiaries, three fundamental conditions must be met. First, opportunities to capture the economic benefits of tourism must be structured in a way that is culturally appropriate, and therefore accessible to the target population. Second, for communities to benefit from ecotourism, they need secure land tenure over the area in which it takes place, as well as the ability to make land use decisions for that area. Third, tourism benefits to local communities must be more than economic; they must promote deeper social and political justice goals that, if left unaddressed, restrict peoples' ability to enjoy the economic benefits of tourism. Without these elements, the conservation outcomes of ecotourism are likely to be less favorable.

Key words: ecotourism, sustainable development, Maasai, Ngorongoro

Introduction

In recent years, ecotourism has been promoted as an alternative, low impact form of tourism to natural areas. In contrast to mass tourism, ecotourism is viewed as both a conservation and development tool because it provides conservation benefits and economic benefits. In theory, by distributing some of the benefits of tourism to local people, they will have incentive to protect those natural areas that draw tourists, be more likely to support the presence of protected areas in their midst that otherwise restrict their access to land and resources, and embrace behaviors and attitudes that support conservation.

The focus of this paper is on whether ecotourism truly has the potential to be an effective tool for sustainable development in communities located in close proximity to protected areas that are tourist destinations. Protected areas typically promote nature tourism—travel to unspoiled, natural places where people can experience and enjoy nature. In contrast, ecotourism is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people” (Epler Wood 2002:9). While there are no internationally agreed

upon criteria or standards for ecotourism, some common features include: travel to natural areas that are often remote and usually protected; active contributions to conservation; economic benefits and political empowerment for local communities; respect for local culture and support for human rights; education about the environment, society, and culture at the destination; and, minimal impact on the environment and local people (Honey and Stewart 2002).

I use the case of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) in northern Tanzania to examine what it takes to transform nature tourism to protected areas into genuine ecotourism. Although efforts have been made to promote conservation benefits in association with nature tourism in the NCA, little attention has been given to the potential role of tourism in contributing to sustainable development there (one exception is DeLuca 2002).

The NCA is a place where ecotourism could very well flourish. The dramatic beauty of the natural landscape, abundance and diversity of African wildlife species, and rich archaeological resources combine to make the Area's scientific, ecological, and cultural resources exceptional. Added to this, the NCA has a unique protected area status in Tanzania as a “multiple land use” zone. Unlike national parks, where human settlement and consumptive resource uses are prohibited, the NCA is home to some 52,000 residents (MNRT and NCAA 2001), the vast majority of whom are the pastoral Maasai peoples, together with roughly 300,000 head of cattle, sheep, and goats (MNRT and NCAA 1996). These features combined to warrant the NCA's listing as a World Heritage Site in 1979, and as an International Biosphere Reserve in 1981.

Susan Charnley is a Research Social Scientist at the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station in Portland, Oregon. I would like to thank the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University for providing the financial support for this project. I am also very grateful to Bruce Byers, William H. Durham, Martha Honey, and four anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

At the same time, the NCA receives the most tourist visits in Tanzania, and generates the greatest amount of foreign exchange within Tanzania's tourism sector (Shivji and Kapinga 1998:5). In 2001, nearly 40 percent of all foreign tourists to Tanzania visited the NCA (NCAA 2002). The official vision for the NCA is to be a place where pastoralism, conservation, tourism, and infrastructure development co-exist, and both environmental conservation and human development are possible (NCAA n.d.a). Managing for ecotourism is a primary goal of Tanzania's National Tourism Policy and Integrated Tourism Management Strategy, and the NCA's General Management Plan.

Part I of this paper provides the historical backdrop for tourism development in the NCA. Part II describes the nature of tourism in the NCA today. Part III discusses the social impacts of tourism on Maasai residents of the NCA. Part IV describes the current role of the Maasai in NCA tourism. Part V discusses how to transform nature tourism into ecotourism, making it a tool for sustainable community development. My focus is on the socioeconomic dimensions of ecotourism (see Charnley 2003 for a discussion of the conservation issues associated with ecotourism in the NCA).

The research on which this paper is based was originally carried out for the purpose of preparing a case study of ecotourism in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area to be used in a course on sustainable tourism offered by the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University. The Business School directed me to base the case study on existing literature and three days of supplemental interviews in the field with key stakeholders. I spent eight days in January 2003 conducting semi-structured interviews in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and in Arusha with people representing a cross-section of lodges, tourism operators, the NCAA, and NCA Maasai organizations. I interviewed a total of 14 people using both English and Kiswahili. I felt that the effort I invested in synthesizing the literature and thinking about the issue of ecotourism in the NCA; the minimal treatment of this topic in the substantial anthropological literature from the NCA; and the need for a broader critical discussion of the role of ecotourism in conservation and development in the anthropological literature warranted a publication on the topic. However, my methodology was limited by the original scope and purpose of the study. My observations are therefore based largely on a synthesis of the existing literature, supplemented by a rapid rural appraisal conducted in the field. My hope is that this initial summary will stimulate more in depth future research on this topic.

Part I: The NCA and its Management History

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area covers an area of 8,292 sq. km. in northern Tanzania (Figure 1) (MNRT and NCAA 1996). It forms a part of the greater Serengeti-Mara ecosystem which, as defined by the annual migrations of some 3 million ungulates, spans roughly 25,000 km. sq. in northern Tanzania and southwestern Kenya, and is one of the

most important wildlife regions in the world (Homewood and Rodgers 1991:8). Together with the adjacent Serengeti National Park, the NCA has the world's highest density of large mammal species (MNRT and NCAA 1996). The NCA also contains the Ngorongoro Crater, the most famous feature within the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Ngorongoro Crater is the largest unbroken caldera in the world, and is one of the best places in Africa to view wildlife (WHSPAPT 2002). In addition, the NCA contains two of the world's richest paleontological and archaeological sites (the Laetoli site and Olduvai Gorge), which span a period of 3.5 million years in human evolution (Homewood and Rodgers 1991:31).

Livestock herders are believed to have inhabited the NCA for the past 2,000 years (Homewood and Rodgers 1991:31). The most recent group of pastoralists to occupy the Area are the Maasai, who arrived around the 1830s (McCabe 2003:103). The Maasai currently comprise over 97 percent of the population of the NCA (Mwilili 2001). Although the Maasai are known as pastoralists, they have a history of practicing both livestock herding and cultivation for subsistence, with the role of cultivation shifting in response to the health and abundance of livestock (Lane 1996). Today, cultivation is an integral component of the Maasai livelihood strategy within the NCA (McCabe 2003).

Tourism in Tanzania began as an industry geared towards westerners who wanted to observe or hunt wildlife (Neumann 1995:363).¹ A steady stream of wealthy white hunters went to Tanzania to hunt big game throughout the early 1900s (MNRT 1998). Hunters, as well as people interested in archaeology and film-making visited the Ngorongoro Crater and the surrounding area during this period. The first tourism development in the Ngorongoro area took place in 1934 with the construction of a road to the Crater, and a small hunting lodge on its rim (Honey 1999:226). By the end of the 1930s, sport hunting was widespread in the Ngorongoro-Serengeti region, threatening wildlife populations (Arhem 1985:31).

Table 1 summarizes the history of the NCA's status as a protected area. This history is detailed elsewhere (see Arhem 1985, 1986; Neumann 2000; Shivji and Kapinga 1998). The 1959 Ordinance that created the Ngorongoro Conservation Area also created the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), responsible for overseeing and managing the NCA. Subsequent legislation led to the current management structure, which consists of a ten-person Board of Directors and a Conservator (MNRT and NCAA 1996). According to its General Management Plan, the purpose of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area is to maintain a multiple land use system that achieves a balance between people and nature, conserve biodiversity and ecological integrity, protect water catchments, safeguard and promote the rights of the NCA's indigenous residents, encourage responsible tourism, provide opportunities for interpretation, education, and research, and support the values that led to the World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve designations (MNRT and NCAA 1996).

Figure 1. The Ngorongoro Conservation Area (from Shivji and Kapinga 1998)

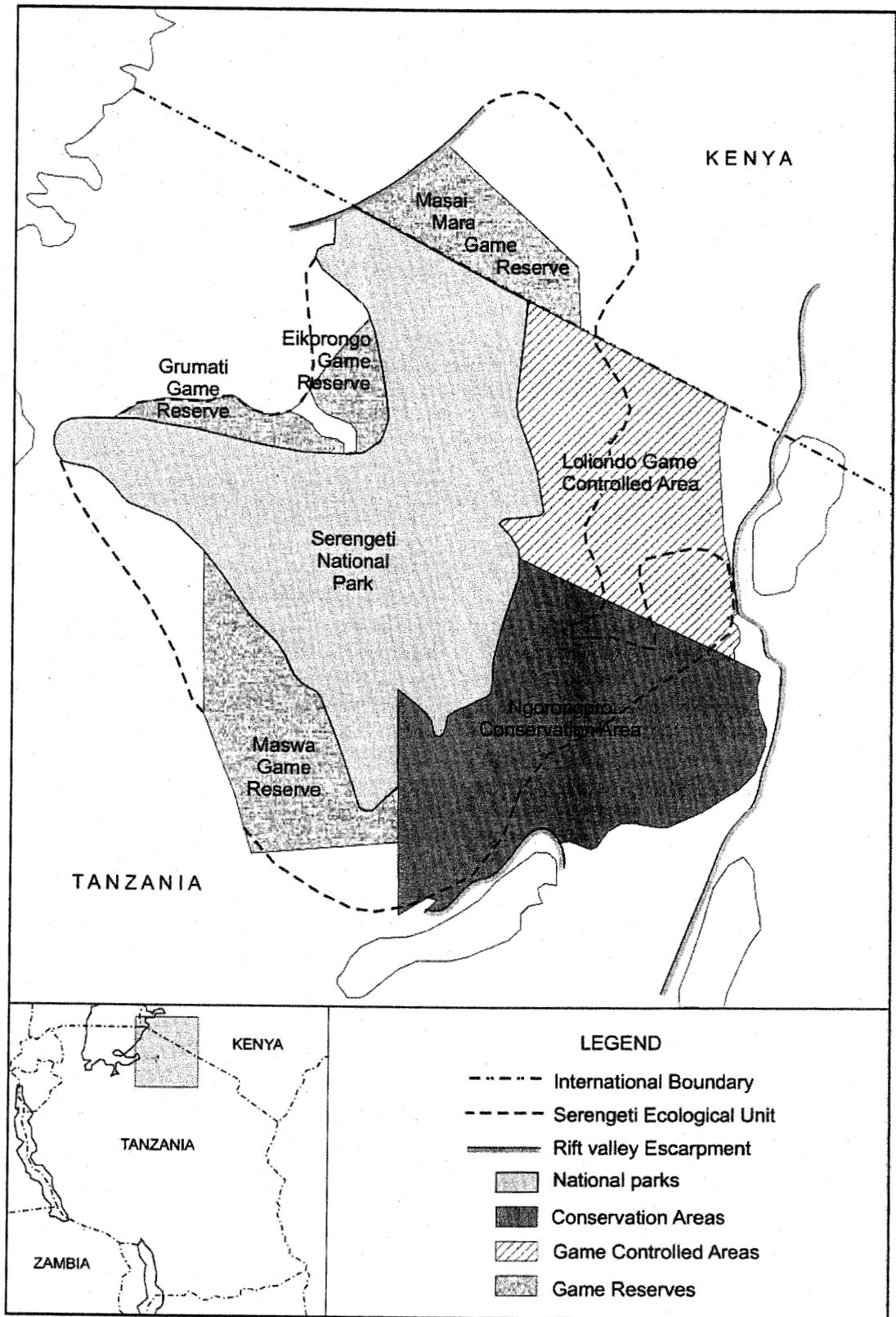


Table 1. History of Protected Area Status, Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Year	Action	Impact on Peoples' Rights
1928	Ngorongoro Crater designated a Closed Game Reserve	Hunting and agriculture outlawed; local people continue to live and conduct customary land use practices there
1929	Serengeti Game Reserve established	Hunting for sport controlled through permit system; local people continue to live and conduct customary land use practices there
1940	Game Ordinance creates the Serengeti National Park, which includes the area that is now the NCA ¹	Rights of Maasai to live, graze, and cultivate within park boundaries protected
1959	Ngorongoro Conservation Area Ordinance enacted, dividing the Serengeti National Park into two parts: the present day Serengeti National Park, and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area	Serengeti: local people and their land use activities banned; Maasai relinquish all customary rights Ngorongoro: Multiple land use management goals allow Maasai to live and pursue customary land use activities within NCA boundaries

¹Delays in delineating formal boundaries and in enforcing the legislation meant that the Serengeti National Park was not effectively established until 1951.

Part II: The Nature of Tourism in the NCA Today

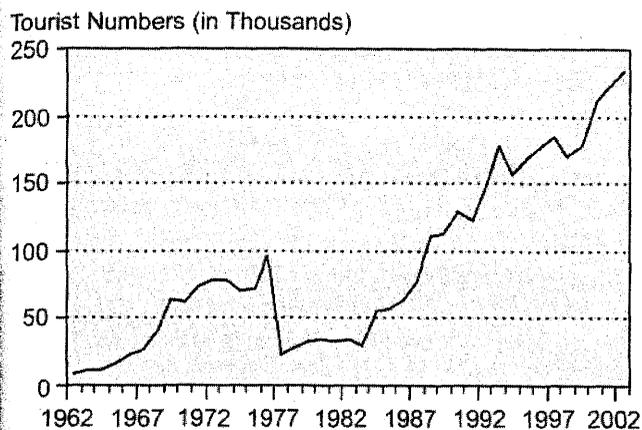
The typical tourist to the NCA today is a foreigner who visits the area as part of a 10 to 12 day safari route along the "northern safari circuit" (a string of protected areas in northern Tanzania) (CHL 2002a). He or she will spend on average two nights in the NCA and visit the Ngorongoro Crater for one half to one full day. Most likely, she/he will be there during one of the two peak visitor seasons, in either July and August (the dry season), or late December through March (the rainy season) (MNRT and NCAA 1996). This visitor will come to the NCA with one of the 122 licensed tour companies that are registered to operate there. The experience will be a driving one; the day will be spent in a land rover, van, or other safari vehicle together with an average of four other people, driving dirt roads on the Crater floor and observing animals, snapping photos, and picnicking in one of the designated picnic areas (TATO n.d.). The tourist will likely stay in one of the four lodges currently operating on the Ngorongoro Crater rim, which together accommodate some 570 people (Charnley 2003:7-8). After visiting the Crater, the tourist will likely depart the NCA to continue on to another national park or game reserve, having explored very little of the remaining 96 percent of the land area that lies within its boundaries.

Inevitably, the visitor to the NCA will encounter the resident Maasai, considered to be another tourist attraction. The Maasai are frequently seen taking their herds of cattle down to the Crater floor to drink water, grazing animals on

the plains and in the highlands, and walking along the NCA's main roads. Maasai bomas (settlements) can be seen scattered throughout the highlands.² There are 16 Maasai villages contained within six wards in the NCA. Most visitors do not visit these villages however. Instead, they may stop in at one of three "cultural bomas" (described in detail in DeLuca 2002). These bomas provide an official interface between the tourist and the resident Maasai. The bomas are constructed to look like typical Maasai homesteads. Here, the visitor can meet Maasai warriors and women, watch them perform traditional dances, tour a typical hut made from sticks and cow dung, learn about the Maasai way of life and culture, take pictures, and purchase Maasai handicrafts.

The less typical visitor to the NCA seeks another type of experience. This visitor is inclined to camp in one of the NCA campsites, or at a privately owned and operated campsite just outside NCA boundaries. Rather than spend the entire trip inside a vehicle on the Crater floor, he/she hikes in other parts of the NCA (accompanied by an official armed ranger or guide). He or she is more likely to have direct contact with Maasai residents. Such visitors are on the increase, creating demand for a new kind of tourist experience in the NCA: the walking safari. Walking safaris take one on foot through forests, craters, mountains, and plains over routes that can take from part of a day to several weeks to traverse (NCAA n.d.b). Walking safaris of more than a day generally involve camping in the bush or in a Maasai village, accompanied by local Maasai guides (as well as an outside tour operator), and Maasai donkeys to carry loads.

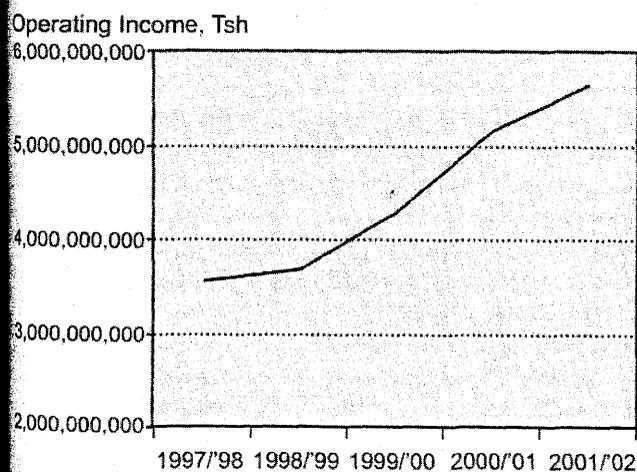
Figure 2. Tourist Numbers in the NCA, by Year, 1962-2002



Source: Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority Tourism Office Statistics.

Funding for NCA operations comes almost entirely from tourism-related revenues. Foreign tourists pay a \$30/day entrance fee (\$5/day for children), plus a \$15/day vehicle fee for descending into the Ngorongoro Crater. This money supports both wildlife conservation and pastoral development initiatives. The only other source of support is that which donors contribute for specific projects. Figure 2 shows that the number of tourists visiting the NCA has risen steadily since the mid-1980s. The NCA's annual budget has risen accordingly (Figure 3), standing at nearly six billion TSh

Figure 3. NCA Operating Income¹



¹Tanzanian Shillings (Tsh) 1,010 = US\$1.00.

Source: Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority Budget Officer, January 9, 2003.

(US\$ 6 million) in 2002.³ These trends are expected to continue. The main access road to the NCA (from Arusha) was recently paved, with funding from The World Bank. It is now possible to go to the NCA as a day trip from Arusha, where most northern circuit safaris originate. This controversial development is expected to increase substantially the number of tourists that visit the NCA, and could exacerbate existing pressures relating to settlement, tourism, and conservation on the NCA Maasai.

Part III: Social Impacts of Tourism on the NCA Maasai

The impact of tourism on the Maasai of Ngorongoro cannot be understood without first considering how the Maasai have been affected by the establishment of a protected area—albeit one dedicated to multiple land use—in a place that constituted their customary territory and grazing lands. This has been the topic of a fair amount of research, detailed elsewhere (Arhem 1985, 1986; Homewood and Rodgers 1991; McCabe 1997, 2002, 2003; McCabe, Perkin, and Schofield 1992; Shivji and Kapinga 1998). Tourism had a significant impact on the Maasai in that it was a prime motivating factor for establishing the NCA initially. Tourism interests have also heavily influenced NCAA management policy.

Although the NCA management charter calls for safeguarding and promoting the interests of Maasai residents, the NCAA enacted regulations throughout the 1960s and 1970s that were increasingly pro-conservation, in part driven by the desire to promote tourism. As a result, the Maasai have found it increasingly difficult to subsist. For example, several of the best pastures within the NCA were closed to grazing and settlement (McCabe 2002:70-71). Fire, traditionally used as a tool for pasture improvement, controlling bush encroachment, and reducing tick populations (which harbor and transmit many livestock diseases) was prohibited (Chausi 1996). Perhaps most significant for the Maasai, crop cultivation in the NCA was banned in 1975. Added to these policies have been ecological changes and livestock diseases unfavorable for Maasai pastoralism (described in Johnsen 2000:153-156; McCabe 1997, 2002:69-70).

The implications of these problems for the Maasai become clear when one considers the fact that since 1954, livestock population numbers within the NCA have essentially remained stable, while human populations have increased due to both natural fertility and immigration (see McCabe 2003:105). The human population of the NCA was 10,663 in 1954 (McCabe, Perkin, and Schofield 1992), and grew to 52,000 by 1999 (MNRT and NCAA 2001:2). This means that a growing number of people have been dependent on a constant level of livestock production. The average number of livestock units per capita in the NCA dropped from 14.2 in 1966 to 3.4 in 1994 (Potkanski 1999), and to 2.8 in 1998 (Galvin et al. 2002:43). The minimum number of livestock required to support a subsistence-oriented pastoral production system is estimated to be six tropical livestock units per

person.⁴ Based on this figure, 87% of Maasai households in the NCA fell below the minimum in 1998 (Galvin et al. 2002:43).⁵

In the absence of cultivation, these households must purchase grain to fulfill their caloric requirements. Money to purchase grain comes primarily from the sale of livestock, further reducing household herds. The results are profound: growing poverty, a shift from cattle to small stock production, a breakdown in social systems of livestock sharing and exchange, and increasing incidence and severity of malnutrition (Arhem 1985:99; Galvin et al. 2002; McCabe, Perkin, and Schofield 1992).

The controversy over the ban on cultivation, and the problems it generated for the Maasai, led to a temporary lifting of the ban in 1992. Yet despite evidence that Maasai cultivation practices are ecologically sustainable and do not threaten wildlife populations (Boone et al. 2002:145-146; McCabe 2003:109), the NCAA is currently seeking a solution that would require the Maasai to cultivate outside NCA boundaries.

Compared to their Maasai neighbors residing outside the NCA to the north, the NCA Maasai have higher malnutrition, smaller livestock holdings, and smaller crop acreage (Galvin et al. 2002). This relative impoverishment is largely attributable to constraints on land use practices imposed by NCAA conservation policies, though wildlife-livestock disease interactions and population growth also contribute to the problem (Galvin et al. 2002; Johnsen 2000; McCabe 2002). According to Odhiambo (2002), resident Maasai believe that the NCAA is more interested in the welfare of wildlife than in their own welfare, putting conservation and tourism interests first, and viewing them as a hindrance to achieving conservation goals. As the Ngorongoro case demonstrates, nature tourism may have conservation benefits, but these often come at the cost of the socioeconomic well-being of local residents.

Outside the policy arena, tourism in the NCA has had other direct impacts on the Maasai, many of which have been negative (detailed in DeLuca 2002; Mwilili 2001; Ufunguo 2002). These include increased prostitution between Maasai girls and women, and tour guides; idling along the main roads of the NCA, dressed in traditional attire, waiting for tourists to stop and take pictures in exchange for money and other goods, or outright begging; the sale of cultural artifacts; and cultural commodification. Tourism has also exacerbated social conflict in communities, as people compete to take advantage of the economic benefits it offers.

In sum, the creation of a protected area in their homeland, together with land use restrictions favoring conservation and tourism interests, demonstrably undermined Maasai well-being and imposed serious limitations on their ability to subsist through the early 1990s. These hardships were not adequately counter-balanced by assistance from the NCAA to meet pastoral development objectives; nor were they mitigated by tourism benefits. In theory, a portion of the tourism revenues collected by the NCAA are reinvested in projects and infrastructure that benefit the Maasai. In practice, veterinary services were neglected, livestock drugs were scarce, water

supplies were inadequate, cattle dips were dysfunctional, livestock marketing facilities were lacking, and social services to support health, education, and food security were inadequate (Arhem 1985, 1986; Johnsen 2000; Odhiambo 2002; Perkin 1995).

More recently, efforts have been made to redress this situation. In 1992, the ban on cultivation was lifted, leading to improvements in living conditions for the Maasai (McCabe 2002:72). The ERETO Project—started in 1998 and funded by the Danish Agency for Development Assistance—aims to help alleviate poverty by assisting Maasai families having three livestock units per capita or less in rebuilding their herds, using the traditional Maasai system of livestock sharing as a model. The project also provides veterinary services. In addition, some efforts have been made to increase Maasai involvement in tourism.

Part IV: The Current Role of the Maasai in NCA Tourism

What role have the Maasai played in tourism in the NCA since the mid-1990s, and is tourism helping to alleviate the problems they face? To date, their role remains minor. As mentioned earlier, a portion of the money generated by tourism to the NCA is allocated to support pastoralist development initiatives. Currently, some TSh 550 million per year (roughly equivalent to US \$550,000) are given to the Maasai Pastoral Council (described in the next section) by the NCAA, which decides how to spend the money on projects to benefit Maasai residents (the Conservator must approve these plans). This figure represents about ten percent of the total annual NCA budget.⁶ This is an important source of revenue, and has been used to build education facilities and pastoral infrastructure, and to sponsor students to study outside the NCA. Similarly, the Tanzania National Parks Authority uses 7.5% of its annual budget to support community-initiated projects around national parks in Tanzania through its Community Conservation Service (Bergin 2001). However, the Pastoral Council believes that the 10% it receives is insufficient, and that it should receive half of all tourism revenues.⁷ The Maasai have little power to influence how much of the NCA budget is allocated to further pastoralist development objectives.

Another way of benefiting from tourism is through employment by the NCAA, lodges, and tour operators. Few Maasai have jobs with these employers. NCAA policy gives Maasai residents first priority in hiring if they have the needed skills. However, the NCAA feels that most Maasai lack such skills, as many do not study beyond primary school.

Where lodges are concerned, the most common jobs held by Maasai are guard jobs. Lodge operators observe that guard jobs are particularly attractive to young Maasai men because they are accustomed to guarding livestock herds. Other lodge jobs are either viewed as undesirable, or present scheduling problems. For their part, some lodge operators feel that the Maasai are unreliable employees because they come and go as they must to tend to their livestock herds, their

first priority. To date, the vast majority of lodge employees are non-Maasai originating from communities outside of the NCA. By comparison, across the border in Kenya's Maasai Mara Game Reserve where the Maasai wield a great deal of political control, a large percentage of hotel and park staff are Maasai (Honey 1999:242). This suggests that there is a lack of political commitment on the part of the NCAA to ensure that a percentage of public and private sector tourism jobs go to the resident Maasai, and to establish or sponsor them for training programs that would provide the skills needed to compete for tourism jobs. Although the NCA General Management Plan expresses a commitment to taking such actions (MNRT and NCAA 1996:81), the NCAA has yet to do so.

Tourist lodges do provide a local market for Maasai livestock products. Lodges buy meat and milk from the Maasai for feeding staff (but not tourists, whose food must meet higher health and quality standards). However, given their economic circumstances, many Maasai may not have surpluses to sell.

Some youths perform cultural dances for tourists, and others—women in particular—make and sell crafts. These activities provide a small amount of supplemental income to those who participate.

The NCAA and some lodges do provide educational assistance and training opportunities to the Maasai so that they can develop the skills to become more employable within the NCA. Some lodges also support infrastructure development for the Maasai. The Conservation Corporation Africa for example has built two classrooms in the NCA. The Seronera Lodge is also building classrooms and housing for teachers.

The most common form of tourism in the NCA is the driving safari, yet drivers and tour guides within the NCA are rarely Maasai. This seems ironic, as Maasai residents surely have in-depth knowledge of the local landscape and natural history that tourists would benefit from. The few Maasai guides that do exist are quite popular with tourists, due to their extensive knowledge about local wildlife (Johnsen 2000:169). English language and driving skills limit opportunities in this arena, though these are remediable.

More recently, the Maasai have become involved as guides in walking safaris (described in detail in DeLuca 2002). Walking safari development in the NCA is a joint venture between the NCAA, Maasai communities, and a small group of tour operators, with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. The NCAA's motivation for promoting walking safaris is primarily an ecological one. Tourism is having negative ecological impacts within the Ngorongoro Crater stemming from excessive vehicular traffic on the Crater floor (Charnley 2003:11-12). One strategy for reducing the number of vehicles in the Crater is to encourage visitation in other parts of the NCA by diversifying tourism offerings. The NCAA recently developed a Walking Safari Management Plan with this goal in mind (MNRT and NCAA 2001). Currently, some 25 young Maasai men work as walking safari guides (DeLuca 2002).

Another attempt to capture tourist revenues was to establish three cultural bomas in the mid-1990s (described in Part II). These bomas were set up to provide a place where the Maasai could educate visitors about their lifestyle, culture, and land use practices; as places where tourists could arrange walking safaris with Maasai guides and donkeys; and as a means of generating income for the Maasai (DeLuca 2002:198-199). The boma entrance fee paid by tourists is split between the Maasai who work at the boma (men and women of all ages who are chosen by their villages, and rotate through), and ward governments which use it for community projects. Unfortunately, the Maasai are not benefiting as much as they should from the bomas due to corrupt practices on the part of some tour operators, who pocket most of the boma entrance fees paid by tourists.

According to DeLuca (2002:252), the Maasai would like to play a greater role in tourism in the NCA. They view tourism as a local income earning opportunity that provides an alternative to urban migration, and can supplement pastoral and agricultural livelihood strategies. How can they expand their role; and, can tourism in the NCA do more than provide economic benefits to the few Maasai who are employed in the tourism sector?

Part V: From Nature Tourism to Ecotourism in the NCA: Ways Forward

To be an effective tool for sustainable development, nature tourism as it currently exists in the NCA—with some conservation benefits, limited social benefits, and numerous social disadvantages—must become genuine ecotourism, which includes real social benefits for communities. Yet too often, these benefits are conceptualized solely in economic terms. The same is true of community-based conservation programs that seek to provide local communities with a share of the benefits associated with conservation initiatives (see Schroeder 2003).

It is evident from the literature and from the people I interviewed that although Maasai residents of the NCA want increased economic benefits from tourism, they also want secure land rights, secure access to pastoral resources, the right to cultivate, greater investment in pastoral development, a strong participatory role in NCA management and planning, and power in NCAA decision-making processes. These goals are interdependent. While it is unrealistic to expect ecotourism to deliver on all social, economic, and political goals, how can it provide for a broad set of benefits?

I argue that for ecotourism to promote sustainable development in communities that are its supposed beneficiaries, three fundamental conditions must be met. First, opportunities to capture the economic benefits of tourism must be structured in a way that is culturally appropriate, and therefore accessible to the target population. Second, for communities to benefit from ecotourism, they need secure land tenure over the area in which it takes place, as well as the ability to make land use decisions for that area. Third, tourism benefits to local communities must be more than economic; they must

promote deeper social and political justice goals that, if left unaddressed, restrict peoples' ability to enjoy the economic benefits of tourism. I suggest ways of meeting these conditions in the NCA case below.

A number of the studies cited in this paper have documented the NCAA's resistance to date to adopting policies that benefit the Maasai. The reasons for this are complex, and inquiry into them is beyond the scope of this paper. Most likely, they include pressure from national and international conservation organizations that do not support the multiple land use concept; a belief that grazing and cultivation are incompatible with wildlife conservation, and a fear that by allowing these activities, the conservation and tourism objectives of the NCA will be undermined; and a fundamental lack of communication and trust between the NCAA, Maasai, and other NCA stakeholder groups (McCabe 2002:74-75). Such barriers may make it difficult to implement ecotourism in the NCA along the lines I suggest. Nevertheless, I point out incentives for doing so that could help to overcome existing barriers.

Culturally Appropriate Tourism Opportunities

One way for the Maasai to increase their participation in NCA tourism would be to increase their education and training so that they can compete for tourism jobs. Doing so would entail acquiring language skills (Kiswahili and English), attending secondary school or beyond, and at least partially altering their customary lifestyles. This inevitably sets up a tension between the desire to "modernize" in order to get a job, and the desire to maintain their cultural identity as Maasai. One way of reducing this tension is to develop culturally appropriate ways for the Maasai to directly participate in, and receive economic benefits from, tourism while minimizing its sociocultural impacts on them.

Cultural considerations relating to ecotourism development often focus on how to prevent undesirable changes in the culture, lifestyles, and behavior of local people (Stronza 2001), or on problems associated with the commodification of culture (Wearing 2001). Alternatively, they focus on how ecotourism can promote cultural survival, or vice versa (Stonich 2000:176). The point stressed here is that opportunities to benefit economically from ecotourism should be structured in ways that are culturally appropriate, so that local people are more able and likely to take advantage of them, and the conflicting desires to engage with tourism while maintaining one's identity are minimized. As Belsky (2000) demonstrates, ecotourism development that is insensitive to the cultural framework of community residents will produce few benefits for local people.

Cultural bomas and walking safaris (described in Part IV) are examples of tourism development that is culturally compatible with the Maasai way of life, offering them jobs that build on their existing skills and providing opportunities for more direct participation in tourism activities. Both allow for relatively flexible schedules, enabling participants to continue engaging in pastoralism and cultivation (DeLuca

2002:214,232). Both draw on the Maasais' existing body of knowledge regarding their culture, local plants and animals, and the Ngorongoro landscape, which they share with tourists. Guiding tourists on walking safaris is similar to herding livestock, requiring the same skill set—the ability to walk long distances for long periods of time, the ability to detect and avoid predators, the ability to find drinking water, a good sense of direction, and familiarity with the local landscape (DeLuca 2002:216-232).

The question of how to prevent corruption and distribute ecotourism revenue for community benefit is a difficult one. Cultural bomas are supposed to redistribute a portion of their tourist revenues to benefit the broader Maasai community (the other portion is divided among the Maasai who work at the boma). Walking safaris could do the same. Each of the six NCA wards plans to establish a tourism committee responsible for overseeing the location, management, and maintenance of walking safari campsites, and for interacting with tourists (MNRT and NCAA 2001). These committees will also monitor the environmental impacts of tourist activities. It is unclear who will receive and control the revenue generated from walking safaris under the new plan. According to Maasai interviewees, most Maasai would like these revenues to be paid directly to Ward governments (rather than to the NCAA), with Ward Development Committees deciding how to spend the money.⁸ Ensuring that the money generated by walking safaris goes directly to the Maasai is critical for engaging their participation and providing them with benefits.

Land Rights

Paramount among Maasai concerns is the issue of land titling. Outside of protected areas in Tanzania, the 1975 Villages and Ujamaa Villages Act and the 1999 Village Land Act apply. These Acts provide for establishing villages with demarcated boundaries, and village certificates or land titles. Each village has a Council that serves as a local government having the responsibility to manage land within village boundaries. In contrast, all land within the Ngorongoro Conservation Area is "reserved land", to be managed by the NCAA (URT 1999:49-50). This means that the NCA Maasai have no village land titles, and no authority to manage land and resource use within their villages. In light of the history of land alienation for protected areas in Tanzania, and the priority given to conservation and tourism in NCA policymaking, the Maasai fear that without land titles, they could one day be forced to move out of the NCA (Lane 1996:18; Shivji and Kapinga 1998).

The NCA Maasai are not alone in their plight. Insecure land tenure is a common problem faced by African pastoralists and by indigenous peoples more globally. Tourism has often threatened or undermined local peoples' land rights (Epler Wood 2002; Wearing 2001:402), and Tanzania's pastoralists provide a case in point (Neumann 1995).

A lack of land titles and associated control over land management decisionmaking make it difficult for the Maasai to invest in ecotourism. Several authors agree that for

ecotourism development to be successful, the stakeholders involved must agree upon the legal status of land rights on the land to be used (Epler Wood 2002; Fennell 1999; Hinch 2001: 354). Communities can engage in successful ecotourism projects in the absence of legal authority over their land and natural resources. However, this outcome depends on a number of other favorable conditions being in place, with lack of community control over land and resources acting as a major constraint to success (Murphree 2001).

Some Maasai villages outside the NCA that do have land titles are collaborating with tour operators to establish tourism operations that provide them with substantive benefits. For example, one company called Dorobo Safaris has an agreement with three Maasai villages located to the northwest of the NCA (Dorobo Safaris 1997; Dorobo Tours & Safaris and Oliver's Camp 1996). Five-year, legally binding contracts between Dorobo and each village government give Dorobo access to some 250 sq. kms. of contiguous village lands. There, Dorobo has exclusive control over tourist activities, and offers wilderness experiences and walking safaris to clients. Dorobo may not develop any infrastructure apart from campsites and access tracks. Villages retain rights to use the area for seasonal grazing activities. Dorobo makes annual payments to the village governments, and pays fees for each visitor night. Thus villages receive financial benefits from tourism, providing incentive to conserve wildlife and natural resources.

In addition, Dorobo Safaris has established a separate non-profit organization, The Dorobo Fund for Tanzania. The goals of the Dorobo Fund are to promote sustainable natural resource management, to support indigenous cultures, and to protect wilderness, which furthers the first two goals (Dorobo Safaris 1997). Dorobo Safaris and their clients are the main contributors to the fund. The money is used to provide leadership education for children and adults, to support community building and political empowerment, and to promote resource protection and community-based natural resource management. This is one example of the growing "traveler's philanthropy" movement.

While Dorobo has tried to set up similar arrangements with Maasai communities inside the NCA, they have been unable to partner directly with the NCA Maasai due to their lack of land titles and political jurisdiction over village lands. The company has tried working through the NCAA, but this entails a complex bureaucratic and political process which has been a deterrent for them and other tour operators. Instead, they work with communities outside the NCA where they can be more successful. This represents a real disadvantage to the NCA Maasai, limiting their ability to benefit from tourism-related activities.

Another example comes from the Loliondo area, just north of the NCA, where the Conservation Corporation Africa (CCA) made a land deal with a local Maasai community (Conservation Corporation Africa 2003). The CCA leased 3,000 acres of land from the community where it established a luxurious lodge and cottages. CCA maintains exclusive use of the leased area for patrons and safari operations. The

remaining 22,000 acres of village land are shared by the Camp for safari operations, and the Maasai who graze livestock there. Not only does the community receive income from the lease; the CCA also contributes funds to the community from its non-profit arm, the Africa Foundation, for development projects. To date these projects include construction of a health clinic, establishing a handicrafts market, and starting up a wild honey industry. A joint committee having Maasai and CCA representatives manages the concession.

While such projects may have short-comings and be controversial in some regards, Schroeder (2003) finds that these kinds of projects go further in distributing economic, social, and political benefits to local communities than other models of wildlife revenue sharing in Tanzania. To date it has not been possible for the Maasai of the NCA to establish such arrangements. Because Maasai villages inside the NCA have no land titles, they have no land to lease, and no authority to establish businesses on their land. All lodges that operate within the NCA lease their land from the NCAA.⁹ Nor do Maasai villages have authority to negotiate directly with tour operators. Here again, Maasai living in the NCA are in a structural position that makes it difficult for them to benefit from tourism. Land titles alone do not ensure the success of such partnerships (Rutten 2002 provides a case in point). However, lacking land titles, options for community involvement in ecotourism development are more limited.¹⁰

Many believe it to be unlikely that the NCA Maasai will ever obtain land titles. Nevertheless, they do have "customary rights of occupancy" within the NCA, which constitute legal land rights (The Village Land Act, 1999, Cap. 413).¹¹ The Village Land Act, 1999 states that a customary right of occupancy has equal status to a "granted right of occupancy". The Land Act of 1999 provides for the leasing of a granted right of occupancy to any person. These provisions should provide a legal basis for allowing the Maasai to lease ward or village land within the NCA to tour operators should they so desire, as is happening in villages outside the NCA. This would enable the Maasai to use the land rights conferred upon them through customary rights of occupancy to leverage tourism benefits in the absence of village land titles. Even so, the NCAA has statutory power to regulate land and its uses within the NCA, which reduces the ability of the Maasai to enjoy the land rights they hold (Shivji and Kapinga 1998:29-30). This problem must be redressed through political empowerment.

Political Empowerment

Lack of Maasai political power within the NCA underlies several of the other barriers to successful ecotourism development there. It limits their influence over the amount of NCA tourism revenues that are allocated to them for pastoralist development initiatives. It limits their ability to obtain jobs and training in the tourism sector, and to develop culturally appropriate opportunities for participation. It prevents them from effectively addressing problems of corruption that limit the tourism benefits they do receive. It is also a barrier to

setting up direct partnerships with tour operators to develop ecotourism ventures. Finally, it prevents them from having an effective voice in land management planning and decision-making, which has a major impact on their well-being.

Political empowerment can be the most difficult part of the ecotourism endeavor, and is therefore often avoided by partners and foreign operators (Honey 1999). Although equitable power relations are key to successful ecotourism operations, attempts to redistribute power between stakeholders are likely to be contested (Stonich 2000:20,176).

The issue of Maasai participation in decision-making within the NCA has long been a contentious one. Under the NCA management charter, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority wields jurisdiction over the territory of the NCA, and over NCA residents, functioning in many ways as a local government (Shivji and Kapinga 1998:20-23). When the NCAA was created in 1959, there was no legal requirement to include Maasai as members of the Authority (Shivji and Kapinga 1998:55). Nevertheless, there were five Maasai members of the original Authority. This number was soon reduced to one, and then to zero. The situation persisted throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with the NCAA acting in a way that was characterized by top down decision-making.

This issue received increasing attention starting in 1990, largely due to pressure from non-governmental organizations and donor agencies whose assistance in part hinged on a more participatory approach to providing development assistance (Shivji and Kapinga 1998). The result was the creation of a Maasai Pastoral Council in 1994. The Council has 41 members, 18 of whom are chosen by Ward residents, and the rest of whom are members by virtue of holding other political offices. The purpose of the Pastoral Council is to provide a forum for discussion between the NCAA and the Maasai, and to bring issues of Maasai concern to the attention of the NCAA Board of Directors.¹² However, as an advisory body, the Pastoral Council has no decision-making power. Moreover, many Maasai feel that the Council does not adequately or effectively represent their interests, does not promote Maasai participation in decision-making, and does not advocate for Maasai interests and rights (ERETO 2002; Odhiambo 2002). The work of Lane (1996) demonstrates that the Maasai continue to feel they have no real voice in management decisions within the NCA.

It is unlikely that the NCAA will adopt a broader power-sharing arrangement with the Maasai and include them in land management and policy decisionmaking unless they see it as in their interest to do so.¹³ I believe this incentive already exists, due to the current demand for cultural tourism experiences. Tourists are increasingly looking to interact with people and their cultures at their destination points (CHL 2002b). Expanding cultural tourism is a main objective of Tanzania's National Tourism Policy (MNRT 1999:11). Consultants cite the development of cultural tourism as one of three key actions needed to make Tanzania a highly desirable and successful tourist destination (CHL 2002b). Recent donor support has been directed towards promoting cultural tourism in communities

near protected areas in northern Tanzania (SNV and TTB n.d.). The Maasai have been referred to as a major tourist attraction in the NCA, and as providing a "foundation for the area's tourism product" (CHL 2002a:18). Research indicates that nature tourists who unexpectedly encounter local people and their ways of life at their destinations often return home feeling that the cultural experience was the highlight of their trip (Ivker 2002).

These observations suggest that the Maasai and their cultural practices are an asset, rather than a threat, to the NCA where attracting tourists and their dollars is concerned. The ability of the Maasai to sustain a pastoral economy is key to enabling them to sustain their associated social and cultural institutions, which are integrally linked to the pastoral way of life. The NCAA and the Tanzanian government should therefore recognize it as being in their interest to support, rather than undermine, Maasai livelihood strategies and cultural integrity. One way to move in this direction is to include the Maasai in decisionmaking processes regarding land use planning and management in the NCA, and to support policies that are favorable to Maasai pastoralism and cultivation.

Additional incentive for increased power-sharing between the NCAA and the Maasai lies in the conservation benefits that could ensue. As Wunder (2000) and Stem et al. (2003) demonstrate, when tourism occurs in an area that also serves as a community's land use area, and that community receives substantial economic benefits from tourism, community members have incentive to maintain sustainable land use practices, and exhibit behavior that supports conservation. Maasai land use practices within the NCA are considered to be ecologically sustainable by researchers who have studied them (Arhem 1985:99; Homewood and Rodgers 1991:231-233; Homewood et al. 2001; McCabe 2003). Whether they would remain so with substantial population growth, improved veterinary services, and increasing cultivation is uncertain. However, if the Maasai were given a greater voice in NCA decision-making processes, a greater share of NCA tourism revenues, and more opportunities to participate in and benefit from tourism development, they would have an interest in supporting tourism activities. This would provide incentive for maintaining land use practices that are compatible with wildlife conservation, upon which tourism in the NCA depends.

Furthermore, the Maasai desire to cultivate within the NCA is driven by the fact that their livestock herds can no longer sustain their population numbers. If the Maasai received greater economic benefits from tourism, they could use some of this money to purchase food, livestock, and/or to invest in livestock infrastructure within the NCA. This might reduce their desire to cultivate—an outcome the NCAA would welcome. The NCAA would do well to recognize that policies to promote economic, political, and social justice for the Maasai would also further the conservation and tourism interests it is striving to protect. In the NCA, as elsewhere, effective environmental conservation goes hand in hand with social justice (Zerner 2000:14).

Conclusions

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania, is a clear case of the potential for nature tourism to evolve into ecotourism, providing substantial benefits for local people, and serving as a tool for sustainable development there and elsewhere where communities are located close to protected areas. However, the Ngorongoro case also points to several barriers that must be overcome in order for the socioeconomic benefits associated with ecotourism to be fully realized, and to help further its conservation goals.

First, there must be culturally appropriate opportunities for local residents to engage in ecotourism-related activities. Otherwise, local residents may not have the skills, flexibility, or desire to participate, which will limit the benefits they receive. If they do choose to participate in tourism in the absence of culturally compatible opportunities, local people may have to dramatically alter their way of life to do so, undermining rather than supporting local sociocultural systems (which is counter to the goals of ecotourism).

Second, both secure land tenure, and the power to make decisions about how the land one has tenure over is used, are key to successful ecotourism development. Without them, local residents may not have the incentive and/or the ability to invest in ecotourism partnerships and infrastructure development.

Third, ecotourism development must embrace a broader agenda than simply providing economic benefits to local residents. The Ngorongoro case demonstrates that political power is often a prerequisite for obtaining economic as well as other benefits from ecotourism. As with community-based wildlife conservation initiatives in Tanzania, ecotourism development should address social and political justice issues such as peoples' rights to land and livelihoods, and desires for democratic environmental decision-making processes.

In the absence of these three elements, ecotourism is not doomed to failure. Rather, without these fundamental features, ecotourism is likely to fall short of its promise to provide benefits—economic or otherwise—to local communities, and local communities may lack the incentive to participate in and support ecotourism development. Failing this, the conservation outcomes of ecotourism may be less favorable.

Notes

¹For a history of tourism development in Tanzania, see Honey 1999: 220-262.

²Maasai settlements were banned on the Crater floor in 1974, and are also banned at Olduvai Gorge.

³Some local Maasai state that annual tourism revenues are twice this figure, with official figures being under-reported to cover up money lost through corruption.

⁴One tropical livestock unit = 1 cattle or five goats or sheep (LEAD 2003).

⁵Another study (Potkanski 1999) found that 4.5 to 5 livestock units per capita are required to support household subsistence needs, and that only 22 percent of Maasai households in the NCA had herds large enough to meet subsistence needs as of 1994.

⁶Because the NCA is a prime tourist attraction in Tanzania, there are many competing interests in the tourism revenue it generates, and there is some amount of corruption associated with the distribution of tourism income. This undoubtedly limits the number of tourism dollars that trickle down to the Maasai.

⁷It would be possible to increase the Maasai share of tourism revenues without undermining other NCA programs. The financial impact on the NCAA of more equitably distributing money to the Maasai could be offset by increasing tourism income to the NCA. One option would be for the NCAA to charge tour operators an annual fee for the right to bring clients into the NCA. Currently, tour operators do not pay the NCAA (or any other national park in Tanzania) any money for the privilege of bringing clients to the area. Tour operators do pay an annual license fee to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism that allows them to operate in the country (Tour Agents Licensing Regulations 1998). Once licensed, they are free to take their clients anywhere. If tour operators paid the NCAA an annual fee that conferred the right to bring clients to the NCA, the NCAA would receive additional revenue, and there would be less "leakage" of tourism dollars away from the protected area itself. A second strategy for increasing tourism revenues to the NCA would be to alter the entrance fee structure. Instead of paying a daily fee while inside the NCA, tourists could pay one flat fee to visit the Area (say \$100), which would allow them to remain there for up to seven days. Although this is more than the average two-day visitor spends, it is less than the longer-term visitors pay. A flat fee would provide incentive for longer stays, meaning tourists would likely spend time in other parts of the NCA (away from the Crater), and perhaps go on walking safaris (which take more time). This in turn would increase benefits to Maasai walking safari operations.

⁸Perhaps the NCAA could collect the tourist entrance fees, and the Maasai could collect a separate fee levied for walking safaris in Maasai territory (analogous to the vehicle fee paid for descending into the Crater). This money could be used, for example, to train Maasai guides and teach them English language skills. Additional fees for services (ie. guides, donkeys and their handlers, camping, meals) would be paid directly to the Maasai who provide those services.

⁹While the NCAA currently leases land to private lodge operators, it does not hold any right of occupancy or other type of land allocation that entitles it to lease land long-term (Shivji and Kapinga 1998:29).

¹⁰Village demarcation and land titling may not be advisable in the NCA Maasai case. If Maasai villages are surveyed, demarcated, and titled, the NCAA might exert pressure to minimize the amount of land included within village boundaries. In addition, the NCAA might also try to restrict Maasai land use to village lands, causing them to lose the usufructory rights they currently hold throughout the NCA. As Shivji and Kapinga (1998:36) point out, the result would be a social and geographic compartmentalization of conservation and development activities.

¹¹The Maasai maintained "deemed rights of occupancy" in the NCA under the 1923 Land Ordinance (Shivji and Kapinga 1998:28).

¹²There are currently two Maasai representatives on the ten person NCAA Board of Directors—the Chairman of the Pastoral Council and the local Member of Parliament.

¹³It is not within the scope of this paper to recommend what such an arrangement would look like. It could take the form of a more representative Pastoral Council that had some decision-making authority.

It could include greater Maasai representation on the NCAA. It could mean delegating specific decision-making powers to traditional Maasai political leaders, institutions, and processes.

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