

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXTENT TO WHICH
ACTIVITIES IN OLARE OROK CONSERVANCY,
NAROK DISTRICT, KENYA,
CONFORM TO 'ECOTOURISM'.**

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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This M.Sc. dissertation critically examines existing definitions of 'ecotourism'. A proposed definition of quint-model genuine ecotourism comprising environmental, economic, social, cultural and participatory components is then created, justified and visualised. This definition is subsequently used to investigate the extent to which activities in Olare Orok Conservancy (OOC), which is located in Koiyaki Group Ranch, Narok District, Kenya, conform to each of the five components, and thus ecotourism.

This research suggests that OOC does largely conform to the proposed definition, but not perfectly. This raises the question as to whether any tourism venture will perfectly fit this idealistic definition, and therefore, at what stage of conformation a venture should be classified as ecotourism. It is suggested that holistic eco-rating schemes can play a major role in classifying ventures, and it is suggested that OOC should qualify as ecotourism, attaining perhaps four out of five stars.

Throughout this research, suggestions regarding how to improve OOC's conformation to ecotourism are made, some of which have already been adopted. The conservancy model generally, and Olare Orok specifically, are just in their infancy, thus it is suggested that in time their conformation and eco-rating may continue to improve, moving them yet closer to the suggested idealistic definition of ecotourism.

Despite the small scale of the case study, this research has national and global implications. It proposes a new holistic definition of ecotourism and creates an innovative way to visualise ecotourism ventures. It is argued that the newly formed Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC) should adopt this proposed definition as the backbone for its global eco-rating accreditation scheme in order to ensure a holistic approach.

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Acronyms

OOO	Olare Orok Conservancy
MMNR	Masai Mara National Reserve
STSC	Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
ESOK	Ecotourism Society of Kenya
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NEMA	National Environment Management Agency
NCC	Narok County Council
AFP	Agence France-Presse
UN	United Nations
WTTERC	World Travel & Tourism Environment Research Centre
LO	Landowner (in OOC)
nonLO	Non-Landowner (in OOC)
KPSGA	Kenya Professional Safari Guide Association
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Thesis

“Around the world, ecotourism has been hailed as a panacea: a way to fund conservation and scientific research, protect fragile and pristine ecosystems, benefit rural communities, promote development in poor countries, enhance ecological and cultural sensitivity, instill environmental awareness and a social conscience in the travel industry, satisfy and educate the discriminate tourist, and, some claim, build world peace” (Honey, 2008, pp. 4).

Honey (2008) highlights how ecotourism is optimistically viewed by some as the universal cure, who suggest that it can address environmental, economic, cultural and social woes; however, there is ambivalence regarding what ecotourism actually is.

The aims of this study are: to critically discuss literature pertaining to definitions of ecotourism; propose a quint-modal¹ definition, comprising environmental, economic, social, cultural and participatory components, and; determine the extent to which activities in Olare Orok Conservancy (OOC) conform to the criteria in this definition. This investigation will be achieved using primary data that was collected holistically, including: participatory techniques in focus groups; focal observations and; interviews with key stakeholders. Finally, this research will be reflected upon and then the cumulated extent to which activities in OOC conform to the formulated definition of ecotourism will be discussed and determined.

This study is of vital importance because tourism represents one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (Chambers, 2000), and ecotourism is the fastest growing sector of this industry (Honey, 2008). The opening quotation by Honey (2008) highlights the unenviable reputation that ecotourism has, yet there is no universally agreed definition of ecotourism (Russell and Wallace, 2004). As a result of this confusion, it has become a catch all phrase that is so expansive that it can be used just as a marketing tool or label, and thus is on the verge of being rendered meaningless (Duffy, 2006, Sharpley, 2006).

1.2 Background

The study area, evolution of ecotourism, changes in conservation, the conservancy model and the creation of OOC will now be discussed in order to provide the necessary spatial and historical context to ground this investigation.

¹ A term coined to describe the five components that make up the proposed definition of ecotourism

1.2.1 Study Area

Kenya was selected to host this study because it is the *mzee* (elder) of ecotourism (Honey, 2008), while OOC was chosen as the study site because of the extreme fragility of area (Drummond, 1995). This is not just environmental but also economical, social and cultural, in addition the local people have traditionally been excluded from any tourism decision making (Reid et al., 2003, Norton-Griffiths et al., 2008, Lamprey and Reid, 2004); consequently, the quint-modal definition² under consideration is of critical importance to this area. As a result, it is vital to assess whether ecotourism is addressing all five of these issues in this area and thus conforming to ecotourism. Olare Orok Conservancy, is located in Koiyaki Group Ranch³ (figure 3), Narok District (figure 2) which borders the Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR) in south-west Kenya (figure 1).

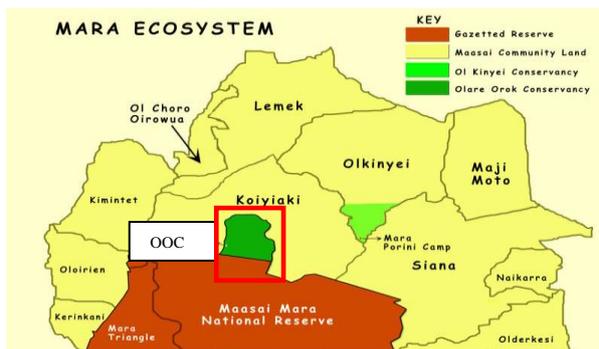


Figure 1 Location of Olare Orok Conservancy
Image adapted from Kaelo (2009b)



Figure 2 Location of Koiyaki Group Ranch in Narok District
Image from Thompson and Homewood (2002 pp. 113)

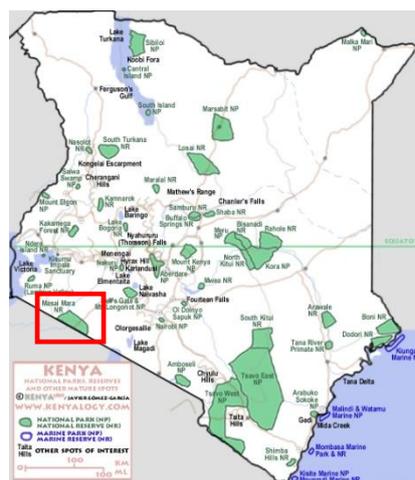


Figure 3 Location of MMNR
Image from Kenyaology (2006)

² The quint-modal definition comprises environmental, economical, social, cultural and participatory components

³ Koiyaki covers an area of 877km² and in 2002 was home to approximately 8500 inhabitants (Thompson and Homewood, 2002).

The Masai Mara is famous for the annual wildebeest migration and receives more visitors than any other wildlife area in East Africa, including 50% of all tourists visiting Kenya (Honey, 2008). Beyond the MMNR is a vast area of Maasai⁴ community land, four times larger than the reserve (AFP, 2008), which forms an important part of the Mara ecosystem, a vital dispersal area for wildlife (Mwalulu, 2008). Wildlife and pastoral people have lived side-by-side in the Mara ecosystem of south-western Kenya for at least 2000 years but recent changes in human population and land use are jeopardising this co-existence (Lamprey and Reid, 2004, Porini, 2008). In an attempt to combat this, conservancies are being created on the community lands surrounding the reserve.

1.2.2 Evolution of Ecotourism

It has long been recognised by the international community that positive engagement between tourism and communities in developing countries is possible in a way that other forms of human land use are not (Eltringham, 1984, Scheyvens, 2002). Despite this, conventional tourism has been heavily criticised due to financial leakage (Russell, 2007) and cultural dilution (Burns, 2001, Smith and Duffy, 2003), as well as on political, environmental and social grounds (Duffy, 2002). Injunctions towards more sustainable forms of development now characterise all manifestos (Hughes, 1995); in tourism this is marked by the phenomenon of ecotourism which first entered the lexicon in the late 1970s (Willis, 2005, Duffy, 2006). Honey and Stewart (2002) believe that the confusion over ecotourism's definition is partly due to its schizophrenic historical roots as ecotourism developed for five reasons:

1. Citizens and governments in developing countries were becoming disillusioned with the economic leakage of tourist dollars and the negative social and environmental impacts of mass tourism;
2. Scientific, conservation, and other NGO⁵s were increasingly alarmed by the loss of habitat and species;
3. A proportion of the travelling public began seeking less crowded and more unspoiled natural areas;

⁴ Maasai has double 'a' at the beginning when the people or culture are being referred to, whilst the reserve title just has one 'a' at the beginning.

⁵ Non Governmental Organisations

4. The World Bank and other lending and aid institutes that had invested heavily in tourism resorts came to view mass tourism as a poor development strategy;
5. The travel and tourism industry came to view protection of the physical environment, its income base, as in its own self interest and also began to see that there was a growing market for 'green' tourism.

Due to the lack of a universally agreed definition of ecotourism it is very difficult to calculate the size of the slice of the tourism pie which ecotourism enjoys. However, in 2004 the UN's World Tourism Organisation estimated that ecotourism was growing three times faster than the tourism industry as a whole (Solomon, 2005).

1.2.3 Changes in Conservation

The last two decades have seen an evolution of conservation strategies from largely protectionist "fortress conservation" efforts⁶, which bred deep resentment by those excluded from lands of religious and economic value (Honey, 2008), to those which encourage participation of the local people (Anderson and Grove, 1987, Kiss, 1990, West and Brechin, 1991). This paradigm shift dovetailed with economic development theories holding that the road out of poverty must begin at, not simply trickle down to, the local community level (Honey, 2008); and arose from the recognition that in many parts of the world the conservation of biodiversity is unattainable without the support of the local people (MacKinnon et al., 1986, McNeely, 1989, Adams and McShane, 1992). In the 1970s Kenya became the first country to try to address this by putting several reserves, including the MMNR, under control of the local county council which took over revenue collection (Honey, 2008). Despite good intentions, today the Mara has become a symbol of mismanagement, overdevelopment and public graft because the millions earned annually are siphoned off by a few avaricious leaders (Honey, 2008). This has resulted in limited evidence of development projects, wildlife populations in serious decline⁷, and consequently the loss of local people's support (Honey, 2008). This failure highlights the importance, and necessity of a new transparent community conservation strategy, of which the conservancy model is an example.

⁶ For a detailed discussion on fortress conservation see Brockington (2002) and Hulme and Murphree (2001)

⁷ As reported recently by Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (2009), Morgan (2009) and Gathura (2009)

1.2.4 Conservancy Model

As discussed, preserving wildlife in ways that exclude humans (fortress conservation) no longer enjoy hegemony globally, or in Africa, as it has been supplanted by a counter-narrative termed “community conservation” (Hulme and Murphree, 2001). Conservancies are an example of this community conservation and can be defined as:

“any number of properties joined into a single complex in order to ensure better management, conservation and utilisation of some or all of the natural resources within that area” (Price Waterhouse, 1994, pp. 17).

The impact of conservancies on the broader conservation and community landscape are manifold: firstly, they greatly increase the area conserved for wildlife; secondly, they spread the benefits from wildlife tourism to local communities; thirdly, the growth of such initiatives and recovery of local wildlife populations have created an entirely new tourism destination and ecotourism product; lastly, it gives the region political lobbying clout (Honey, 2008).

1.2.5 The Creation of OOC

An understanding of the development of wildlife policy and changes in land tenure are crucial in order to comprehend the historical restricted ability of Maasai to benefit from wildlife revenues on the Maasai group ranches (Sorlie, 2008). This will now be discussed in relation to OOC, beginning with a timeline displaying changes to land tenure (figure 4).

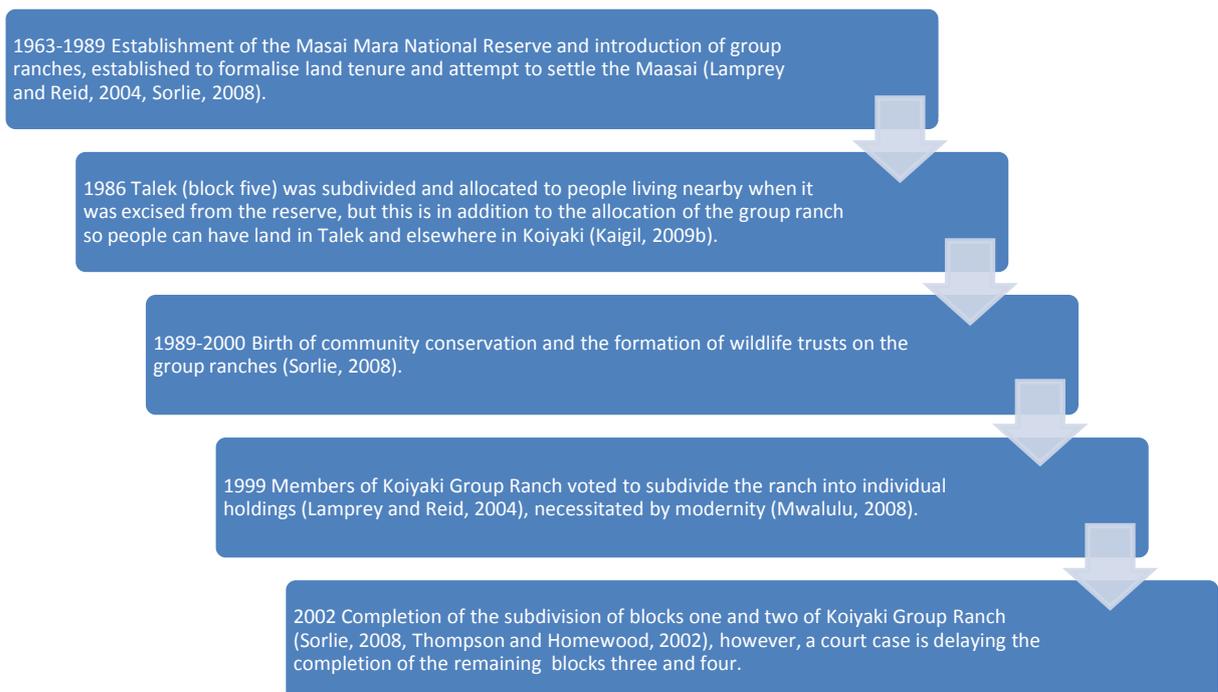


Figure 4 Land Tenure Timeline

Changes in wildlife policy during the preceding land tenure system (figure 4) encouraged the group ranches to successfully challenge Narok County Council (NCC), who were plagued with corruption, for shares of tourism revenues and the right to collect gate fees from visitors staying on their land (Sorlie, 2008, Honey, 2008). This victory resulted in the creation of Olchorro Oiroua Wildlife Management and Conservation Association in 1994, and consequently Koiyaki-Lemek Wildlife Trust. However, the power that the management committees of these organisations wielded contributed to the widening gap between elites and ordinary group ranch members (Sorlie, 2008, Honey, 2008). Land subdivision led to the fragmentation of these wildlife trusts, however it enabled the rise of conservancies (Sorlie, 2008).

The principle of land allocation on Koiyaki was for all members to get an equal share of land close to where they lived⁸ (Kaigil, 2009b), however, this has not come fully to fruition (Kaelo, 2009e). For example, many prominent people, officials and politicians have too large parcels⁹ or multiple parcels¹⁰, some people under 18 have been allocated land¹¹, and some people who were not on the group register have been allocated land¹² (Kaigil, 2009b, Lamprey and Reid, 2004, Thompson and Homewood, 2002, Honey, 2008). Local elites also secured access to water or favoured grazing (Thompson and Homewood, 2002, Lamprey and Reid, 2004, Honey, 2008, Kaigil, 2009b) and the plots with tourism facilities, earning themselves a bed night fee, in OOC's case of \$8 per person per night on top of rent (Kaelo, 2009e).

Conservancies are comprised of neighbouring land plots pooled together to create conservation areas for which tour operators are charged to use (Sorlie, 2008). Concurrent to the emergence of OOC, tourism operators were looking for more exclusive wildlife viewing areas as unchecked tourism development had led to severe congestion in the MMNR, drastically reducing its aesthetic value (Feyo, 2008, cited in Sorlie, 2008).

⁸ Some people have been given split parcels in an attempt to get some of their allocation near to where they live (Kaelo, 2009e)

⁹ Chief Sayialel has 1400 acres (Kaigil, 2009b)

¹⁰ Some people have two allocated plots if they registered twice with two names (Kaelo, 2009e).

¹¹ Especially the children of officials and prominent people

¹² Including the former warden of the Maasai Mara, John Nanguran

Olare Orok Conservancy¹³ is the brain-child of Kipeen ole Sayialel, an ex-chief of Koiyaki, who took it upon himself to visit every *boma*¹⁴ in the area convincing the other landowners¹⁵ of the need to directly benefit from tourism (Sorlie, 2008, Sayialel, 2009). Once community members had agreed, Sayialel approached Ron Beaton¹⁶ and Dickson Kaelo¹⁷ for help. Through Ron's contacts in the industry the landowners were put in contact with Jake Grieves-Cook, managing director of Porini Camps, who had experience setting up a conservancy near Amboseli National Park, and was immediately interested in the idea (Sorlie, 2008).

Ron and Dickson sought to create a business model that would protect the local communities from fluctuations in the industry, the result of which was an agreement whereby the tourism partners lease land from the landowners and guarantee a fixed income, regardless of the number of tourists (Sorlie, 2008, Kaelo, 2009e). Another difference at OOC is that revenue would be collected and distributed by a financial company so there would be no sitting fees for members of the landowner committee, preventing the elites from siphoning the rents (Sorlie, 2008, O'Meara, 2009). In addition, this model is not donor reliant and subsequently is self sufficient.

Having convinced the landowners that they cannot survive on cattle alone and that the conservancy would provide a steady income and jobs for the local community, residents agreed to move out of the conservancy¹⁸ (Sorlie, 2008). The first negotiated agreement was made in May 2006, for 18 months with a payment of 1500KES¹⁹²⁰/ha/yr, which was

¹³ OOC is located in block two of Koiyaki Group Ranch

¹⁴ In Maasai land the terms *boma* and *manyatta* are both used to describe a village or community made up of several huts enclosed by a fence, *boma* is used throughout central and eastern Africa whereas *manyatta* is specific to the Maasai circular village design

¹⁵ Throughout this research, where the term landowner is used it refers to those who own land in OOC, and the term non-landowner refers to those who do not own land in OOC, even though they may own land elsewhere

¹⁶ Ron is a former lodge-owner who had recently bought land in the area for his retirement, after 30 years in the tourism industry, close to Koiyaki Guiding School which he has spear-headed, (Beaton, 2009a, Sorlie, 2008).

¹⁷ Dickson worked for the International Livestock Research Institute and was a former manager of the Koiyaki-Lemek Wildlife Trust.

¹⁸ Residents moved to the outskirts, returned home (especially the Tanzanian immigrants) or moved further afield to places like Narok and Maji Moto (Kaelo, 2009d)

¹⁹ All currency conversions are from www.xe.com on 13th August 2009, using an exchange rate of 1KES=0.013USD and rounded to two significant figures

²⁰ \$20

succeeded by a five year contract and a rent of 2000²¹KES/ha/yr (Beaton, 2009b). The conservancy gradually took shape²², tripling in size as other landowners came to see the benefits, however, some still refuse to sign as they are unhappy that some community leaders are benefiting more by owning larger parcels and owning the land where the camps are erected, thus being paid extra (Sorlie, 2008). It is unfair to blame OOC for these discrepancies, as it is corruption in the land division process that is responsible for allocating elites larger parcels and plots where there are, or are likely to be, camps. However, it will be argued later that the camp landowners should get no more income than the other landowners and that this is an inequality that OOC is responsible for.

Ten landowners pulled out of OOC to create Nyumbu wildlife viewing area, located around Nyumbu Camp. Through this agreement the landowners get \$40 per client per day, although landowners are only paid if clients spend the whole day game viewing on their land and therefore on average only receive one payment for a three day visit (Tira, 2009). During the tourism slump, caused by the post-election violence, payments were reduced to almost nothing, resulting in four of the defected landowners reverting to OOC (Kaelo, 2009c). During this period, OOC was probably the only solvent conservancy in the Mara as all of the camps were closed but, due to the business model, the tourist partners honoured their rental payments which are independent of tourist numbers (Sorlie, 2008).

The OOC tourist partners are the owners of the camps, Porini (Porini Lion Camp), Kicheche (Kicheche Bush Camp), Great Plains Conservation and Ajay Patel (who jointly own Mara Plains Camp) and most recently Virgin (who are currently waiting for NEMA²³ approval to build a camp but still contributing their share of rental payments). Although Olare Camp is located within OOC it has not previously been a tourist partner, and thus not allowed to conduct game drives in the conservancy. It has recently been taken over and the new management are making big changes to the camp so that it can join the OOC tourist partners, but to date no contracts have been signed. Nyumbo Camp is located on the conservancy border, and as previously explained is not a member of OOC and has its own wildlife viewing area. Figure 5 displays the locations of all camps in or bordering OOC, including those who are not tourist partners.

²¹ \$26

²² OOC has a sister conservancy, Emotorogi which has the same tourist partners but its own land committee

²³ National Environment Management Agency

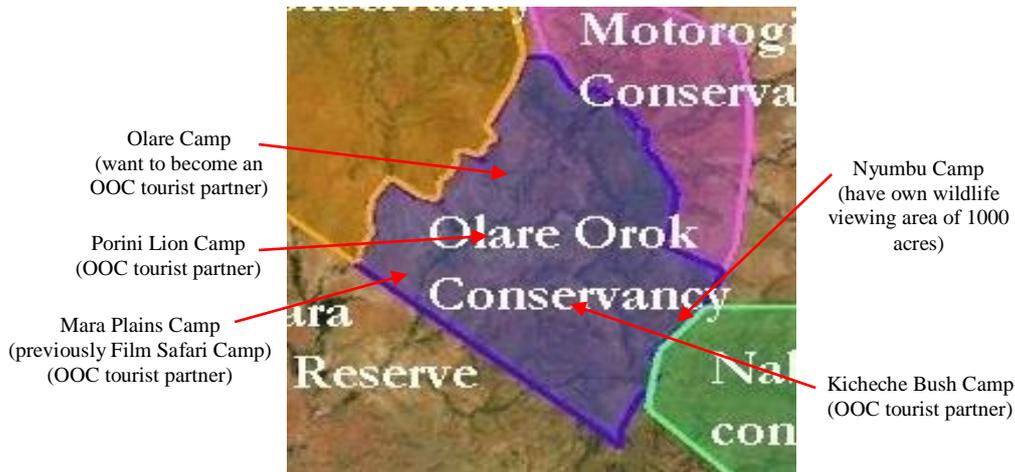


Figure 5 Locations of Camps. Image adapted from Kaelo (2009b)

Lamprey and Reid (2004) feared that land privatisation may result in increased cultivation²⁴, fencing, the exclusion of wildlife (especially wildlife corridors²⁵), and thus the decline of tourism as a revenue generator. Likewise, Reid et al. (1999) were concerned that it may also accelerate the modernisation of the traditional culture. It is suggested, however, that land privatisation enabled the creation of conservancies, which are one of the few diversification²⁶ options that is compatible with pastoralism.

Since the creation of the initial conservancies in the area, more have quickly started to appear, as shown in figure 6. Koiyaki Conservancy was established in 2009 and there are plans to create another conservancy bordering OOC to the east called Naboisho (Kaelo, 2009e). Naboisho will be a different conservancy, not an extension of OOC because there are different issues to deal with (the land is not yet allocated) and there are different investors (Basecamp and Olseki) who are the existing camps in the proposed conservancy (Kaelo, 2009e).

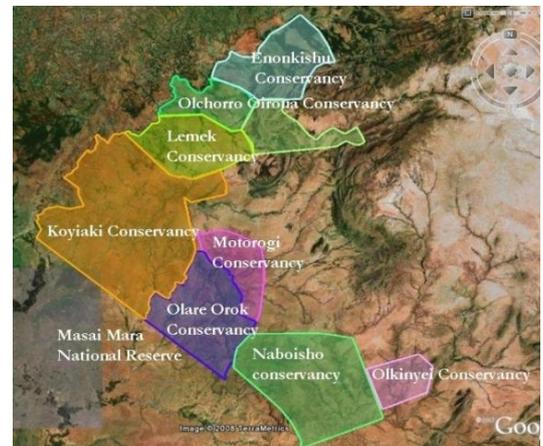


Figure 6 Current and Proposed Conservancies in Koiyaki Group Ranch
Image from Kaelo (2009b)

²⁴ Wheat farming, in particular, has spread rapidly around the Mara since the 1980s (Honey, 2008)

²⁵ The Loita plains wildebeest migration population has declined by 80% (Ottichilo, 2000)

²⁶ Diversification is essential because of climate change, population pressure and changes to land tenure preventing nomadicism (Galvin, 2008)

2 Literature Review

Before it can be investigated whether activities in OOC conform to ecotourism, alternative tourisms require differentiation and the conflicting and contrasting definitions of ecotourism need to be critical examined; the definition that OOC will be investigated against will then be highlighted, justified and visualised.

2.1 Alternative Tourisms

Because ecotourism can be whatever anyone wants it to be, it is diverted or co-opted by different stakeholders for their own purposes (Sitikarn, 2004). Consequently, there is much confusion over the definition, even in research, resulting in ‘nature,’ ‘community-based,’ ‘responsible,’ ‘sustainable,’ or ‘green’ tourism all being used as synonyms to ecotourism, and, by 2000, new terms such as ‘pro-poor tourism,’ ‘eco-cultural’ and ‘geo-tourism’ were confusing the issue (Honey, 2008, Tuohino and Hynonen, 2001). Table 1, provides definitions from literature for these prominent alternative tourisms, and will be followed by an attempt to distinguish between them.

Table 1 Definitions of Alternative Tourisms

Terminology	Definition	Reference	Component
Sustainable Tourism	Concerned with the long-term effect on the environment and local people	Russell (2007)	Environment Economic
	Concerned with the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism	The Quebec Declaration (2002; cited in Honey, 2008)	Social Cultural Location
	Suited as a goal for all types of destinations, not just nature based ones	WTO (2001, cited in Honey and Stewart, 2002).	
Responsible Tourism	Concerned with the nature of the relationship between tourists and host destination, bringing actions of tourists into the frame	Russell (2007)	Action of Tourists
Ethical Tourism	Incorporates an ethical concern for the likely social and cultural impacts	Weeden (2002)	Social Cultural
Green Tourism	Environmentally-friendly tourism	UK Energy Saving (2008)	Environment
Pro-Poor Tourism	Increased net benefits for poor people	Pro-Poor Tourism (2005)	Economic Culture
	Culturally sensitive and economically beneficial to local communities	Honey and Stewart (2002).	
Eco-Cultural Tourism	Location with both environmental and cultural draws for tourists	Russell and Wallace (2004)	Location
Geo-Tourism	Sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place, including the environment, culture, aesthetics and heritage	National Geographic (2008)	Environment Culture
Nature Tourism	Tourism which uses natural resources in a wild or undeveloped form	Goodwin (1996); Honey (2008)	Location Environment
	Activities likely to be more passive in their confrontation of the environment , however, the environment may be disrupted and damaged	Reid (1999)	
Community-based Tourism	Local communities have a high degree of control over, and involvement in, the development and management of tourism activities, and a significant proportion of economic benefits accrue to them	Lui (1994); Cater (1993) Manyara and Jones (2007); WWF International (2001)	Participation Economic

Making distinctions between alternative tourisms is reminiscent of detangling an intertwined ball of wool; however, an attempt will now be made.

Firstly, both nature tourism and eco-cultural tourism describe necessary conditions at the location in which the tourism is taking place, but do not state any requirements of what should be done at these locations. Also, Tuohino and Hynonen (2001) recognise the distinction that sustainable tourism reflects concern but not necessarily action, and it is suggested that this is also true of ethical tourism. Ecotourism embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, regarding concern for the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism, but goes a stage further by acting upon them (The Quebec Declaration in Ecotourism, 2002; cited in Honey, 2008). Other alternative tourisms highlighted in table

1²⁷ describe action taken by tourism to reduce its resultant impact(s), for example, these may be environmental, economic, social, cultural, or to ensure local participation, however, independently none of these alternative tourisms are sufficiently comprehensive for a genuine definition of ecotourism. Ecotourism is not listed in table 1 because its definition is far too contested and varied to summarise in one row of a table; it will now be discussed at length.

2.2 Defining Ecotourism

In literature there are numerous different definitions of ecotourism, indeed some authors including Blamey (1997), Hvenegaard (1994) and Honey (2008) believe there are different forms or conflicting crosscurrents within ecotourism. These can be named genuine and lite or deep and shallow, but such categorisations seek to expose the difference between genuine, responsible forms of ecotourism and situations in which ecotourism is greenwashed, being simply a facade, possibly for marketing purposes (Scheyvens, 2002). It is genuine or deep ecotourism that is under investigation in this research, as it is the only hope if ecotourism is to fulfil its revolutionary potential (Honey and Stewart, 2002). It will be argued that genuine ecotourism is actually the culmination of many of the alternative tourisms previously discussed, or conversely they are individual components of ecotourism. Before this argument is justified, existing definitions in literature will be critically examined.

Broad definitions, such as those used by Boo (1990), Lindberg (1991), Wheat (1994) and the World Travel and Tourism Environment Research Centre (WTTERC, 1993) describe ecotourism simply as tourism with the specific motive of enjoying wildlife or undeveloped natural areas, making no distinction between nature tourism and ecotourism. Others, including Ziffer (1989), Scace et al. (1992), Buckley (1994) and Goodwin (1996), adapt this slightly by suggesting that this tourism to nature should benefit conservation in order to be called ecotourism. Taking this a stage further, Goodwin (1996) and Duffy (2002) suggest that as well as creating money for conservation, ecotourism should be economically beneficial for the local people.

²⁷ Including green tourism, pro-poor tourism, geo-tourism and community-based tourism

Two more holistic approaches are put forward by Ceballos-Lascuráin (1996) and Honey (2008). Ceballos-Lascuráin is credited for coining the term 'ecotourism' in 1983 and suggests that:

"ecotourism is environmentally responsible, enlightening travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations"(Ceballos-Lascuráin et al., 1996, pp. 15).

Similarly, Honey (2008, pp. 33) believes that:

"ecotourism is travel to fragile, pristine and usually protect areas that strives to be low impact and (often) small scale. It helps educate the traveller, provides funds for conservation, directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights".

Both of these definitions note that ecotourism should take place in nature, promote conservation, economically benefit the local community, and be low impact however, neither of these definitions are ideal. Although Ceballos-Lascuráin's definition has been officially adopted by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), it states that there should be a local involvement and low visitor impact, yet it does not detail the required level of involvement from the local population, or what it should have a low visitor impact on. For example, there is no mention of a requirement to actively limit negative social and cultural impacts, which is deemed vital by (Duffy, 2002). Honey's (2008) definition moves a step closer to the judged ideal by noting that action is required to limit cultural impacts, however, it also fails to specify what 'low impact' involves. Neither of these definitions mention any social component; it is argued that ecotourism should not break down social cohesion, and if possible it should increase it, as advocated by Scheyvens (1999).

Garrod's (2003) acknowledges that there is no universally agreed definition of ecotourism, but argues that common aspects include conservation, economic benefits for the local people, as well as environmental and socio-cultural sustainability. However, this definition lacks location specification and there is no requirement for local participation. Cater (1993) adds an additional dimension by arguing that to be sustainable, ecotourism should meet the needs of the host population in both the short and long term, in other words the benefits should be sustainable.

2.2.1 Eco-rating Awards

There are a growing number of ecotourism awards that receive considerable press coverage (Honey and Stewart, 2002). The 2002 Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism acknowledged the importance of certification calling on governments to use internationally approved guidelines to develop certification schemes for ecotourism (cited in Honey, 2008).

The process to create a global accreditation body began in 2000 with the creation of “The Mohonk Agreement”, a document containing a proposed framework for sustainable and ecotourism certification programs and endorsed a proposal that the Rainforest Alliance take the lead. This enormous effort to launch the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC) is currently on the cusp of reality (Honey, 2008). STSC is not a new global sustainable tourism certification system; rather, it is a global accreditation system that lends credibility to all existing and future national certification systems that meet minimum standard, based on international baseline criteria (Rainforest Alliance, 2009).

There has been a growing consensus that the development of a domestic eco-rating certification system will help to curb both destructive and unjust practices, and thus could demonstrate to the rest of the world that Kenya is dealing with its problems (Gona et al., 2000). Ecotourism Kenya (formerly ESOK²⁸), led by Judy Kepher-Gona, launched Kenya’s, and Africa’s, first national eco-rating scheme in 2003, with the aim to provide the industry with a scale at which to measure performance (Honey, 2008). This certification program receives applications from companies, carries out detailed audits using a range of environmental, social and economic criteria, and then awards rankings of bronze, silver and gold, based on actual performance (Ecotourism Kenya, 2009b).

As this eco-rating scheme assesses ecotourism facilities in Kenya, their questionnaire was analysed in order to assess what they deem to be the most important aspects of ecotourism.

Despite Ecotourism Kenya’s eco-rating scheme, stating that:

“eco-rating refers to a systematic approach for verifying a tourism organization’s environmental, economic and socio-cultural performance when evaluated against an agreed set of criteria”
(Ecotourism Kenya, 2009b, pp. 1),

their questionnaire²⁹ (ESOK, 2006) used to grade the applicants, reveals a less holistic approach. It is compiled of 11 pages of questions regarding the environment, 2 for both

²⁸ Ecotourism Society of Kenya

²⁹ The same questionnaire is used for all the three levels with a score of 40% and above qualifying for bronze, 60% silver and 80% gold (Ecotourism Kenya, 2009a) and is available upon request from the author

social and economic issues and non for cultural components. This analysis reveals a clear bias towards environmental considerations, over any cultural, social and economic components; this mirrors the analysis of current ecotourism definitions in the literature, undertaken in the previous section, which found an over-focus on the environment and under-focus on social and cultural components.

2.3 Proposed Definition of Ecotourism

As discussed, there is a broad range of ecotourism definitions in the literature and as a result the term is commonly misused and manipulated (Scheyvens, 2002). It is argued that before it can be investigated whether OOC conforms to ecotourism, the criteria against which it will be tested require clarification. This contradicts Buckley (1994), who claims that a precise definition is not needed. There is a growing understanding that the resource base on which tourism depends must be protected if these sites are to last over the long term (Reid, 1999). It is argued that this resource base should be quint-modal, being environmental, economic, social, cultural and participatory, as they are five critically interconnected³⁰ jigsaw pieces. Without one of these pieces the ecotourism jigsaw is incomplete.

It is argued that a precise definition of genuine ecotourism needs to combine several of the alternative tourisms previously discussed, with existing definitions from literature, and a few additions. This definition should include:

- the location suggested by nature tourism³¹;
- the concern raised by sustainable and ethical tourisms;
- the tourist action and accountability associated with responsible tourism;
- the environmental sustainability and finance for conservation allied with green tourism and geo-tourism;
- significant economic benefits, including employment, for the local people, as necessitated by community-based tourism and pro-poor tourism;
- inclusive, genuine participation leading to empowerment, as required in community-based tourism;
- cultural appropriateness advocated by Honey's (2008) definition;

³⁰ Despite this, for the purpose of this research they will be investigated independently, but for this reason a degree of repetition is unavoidable

³¹ That suggested by eco-cultural tourism is also viable, but not necessary

- efforts to maintain and enhance social cohesion as advocated by Scheyvens (1999);
- a sustainable approach whereby all of these steps are tackled with both the long and short term in mind, as highlighted by Cater (1993) and Garrod (2003).

Consequently, the proposed definition of ecotourism is:

Tourism in natural (often protected) areas which is conscious of, and acts to reduce, its impact in both the short and long term through inclusive genuine participation by being environmentally sustainable and providing finance for conservation, creating significant economic benefits for the local people, being culturally appropriate and conserving societal cohesion.

There are also other important components which are allied to ecotourism, but are not deemed necessary for the term to be used; these include:

- building environmental awareness through education;
- being community owned.

Dr. Salman Hussain (2009) questioned whether practices should be called ecotourism if commercial partners are involved, as they make profits. Dickson Kaelo and James Muntet (2009) responded that ideally OOC's local community would set up and run their own camps; however, they do not currently have the financial or human capital to do this. They argued that community ownership is not a requirement of ecotourism because the local community can still economically benefit substantially through commercial ventures, which are also much more likely to succeed (Kaelo and Muntet, 2009).

Russell and Wallace (2004) argue that the term 'eco-cultural tourism' should be used instead of ecotourism because it allows a focus on both the environment and the culture. As it is argued here that true ecotourism requires environmental, economic, social, cultural and participatory components, if this theory is extrapolated for the proposed definition it suggests that a term such as participatory eco-eco-socio-cultural tourism would be correct! As this is certainly not catchy or practical it is strongly argued that although the term ecotourism only mentions the environment by name, it can, and should represent this quint-modal multifaceted definition.

It is recognised that in reality it is not as black and white as being able to say that something is ecotourism or it isn't, as there are different degrees with which a venture can

conform to the definition (see figures 8-11). This study will assess the extent to which OOC conforms to the idealistic proposed definition, the five components of which will now be justified.

2.3.1 Environmental Sustainability

There is no debate as to whether ecotourism requires an environmental component because, as discussed, being environmentally sustainable and providing finances for conservation is the very backbone of even the most limited definitions.

2.3.2 Significant Economic Benefits for Local People

A fundamental principle of ecotourism development must be to direct a good share of the benefits emanating from the project to the local area and to keep leakage of those benefits to a minimum (Reid, 1999). To be sustainable in the long term ecotourism should provide meaningful jobs for the local people, however this needs to be in-keeping with the interests of the community (Ashley et al., 2000).

It is recognised that defining ‘local people’ can be very complex (Naguran, 1999). This study has chosen to take a broader scope than just OOC landowners by also questioning neighbouring residents; however, this is not to say that those beyond this area are not local or deserving of benefits. Likewise, Gona (2009) questioned exactly what significant income is, and who defines it. Should it be a percentage of earnings, or as Gona (2009) suggests, moving from scrapping a living to being comfortable – although this still leaves definition problems. For the purposes of this investigation, neighbours are classified as those within a 30 minute walk from the conservancy, and economic benefits of ten percent or higher will be deemed significant.

2.3.3 Maintain Societal Cohesion

‘Cohesion’ refers to a sense of common identity and interest which serves to bring people together for collaborative action, and leads them to collectively differentiate themselves from others (Barrow and Murphree, 2001). There is a danger that the development of ecotourism will create tensions and increase inequalities within host communities and thus breakdown social cohesion (Russell, 2007, Smith and Duffy, 2003), consequently, steps should be taken to prevent this from happening and indeed increase societal cohesion if at all possible.

2.3.4 Cultural Appropriateness

“Culture is the method by which people understand themselves and view their world” (Reid et al., 1999, pp. 68).

Ecotourism often involves seeking out the most pristine, unchartered and unpenetrated areas on earth which are often home to isolated and fragile human civilisations and cultures (Honey, 2008). Therefore, a fundamental characteristic of ecotourism should be that the culture is not damaged, and if possible should be rejuvenated (WWF International, 2001).

Ecotourism in the Mara should assist the Maasai to develop and grow as they wish to, not impose an alternate lifestyle on them (Reid et al., 1999), however, in practice this is difficult. Visiting tourists, particularly those from developed countries, bring with them different behaviours and expectations, some of which are seen by the local people as desirable for themselves (Reid et al., 1999). It stands to reason that the traditional culture of the Maasai will change at a rapid pace, as the local people want to become more civilised (focus group 5). Tourism has the potential to influence change in either direction (Reid et al., 1999). If handled properly, it could be of great benefit to the Maasai by rejuvenating the parts of their culture which they do not want to lose and providing them with income; alternatively, it could provide the vehicle which dilutes and destroys a very proud and symbolic culture (Reid et al., 1999). For these reasons, it is argued that ecotourism should be culturally appropriate.

2.3.5 Participation

Steifel and Wolfe (1994) and Mirovitskaya and Ascher (2001) define participation as people achieving a greater capacity to advance their own interests and control their own livelihoods; through which the typical low levels of influence of politically and economically marginal populations are increased. Yet it is not participation *per se*, but the nature of this participation which is critical (Cater, 1995). ‘Participation’ is used as an umbrella term to refer to the involvement of local people; however, this participation varies dramatically in nature and scope (Willis, 2005). Too often, participation has been construed simply as ‘getting more citizen input,’ usually of a passive type, rather than inclusively empowering the local people. It is argued that inclusive ‘genuine’ participation is required in order for a venture to be labelled ecotourism, and for the purposes of this research will be defined as that which involves all (including women and non-landowners), occurs throughout the project cycle and which hands over some decision making, control

and power to the local people. There are both moral and practical reasons for requiring participation, some of which are highlighted in table 2.

Table 2 Reasons for Participation

Reason	Effect of Participation	Reference
Moral Issue	It is imperative that those who depend on the resources used are given a full say in their utilisation	Brandon (1993) Cater (1994)
Human Needs	Participation enhances diversity, effectiveness and equity in meeting human needs	Pimbert (2004)
Environmental Sustainability	Participation enhances diversity, effectiveness and equity in sustaining the environment	Pimbert (2004)
Comprehensive Planning	Participation increases the likelihood that the end product is planned more comprehensively	Reid (1999)
Project Sustainability	Participation is a means of obtaining and applying local and 'folk' knowledge that is valuable for project sustainability	Garrod (2003) Pimbert (2004)
	Participation results in the project being more likely to have greater local community support and lasting commitment which increases the likelihood of project success and sustainability	Reid (1999) Beeton (1998) Brandon (1993)
Rectifying Problems	The local community represents a valuable resource for identifying and rectifying planning and management problems	Garrod (2003)
Better, cheaper Management	Participation creates a sense of responsibility, increases management legitimacy and levels of compliance, hence lowering management costs	Mburu (2002)
Sharing Benefits	By involving local communities, indigenous people can share in the benefits of ecotourism	Kutay (1993, cited in Honey, 2008)
Empowerment	Participation has the potential to empower local people by increasing incomes and employment and developing skills and institutions.	Ashley and Garland (1994)

2.3.6 Visualising Ecotourism

This section will discuss and suggest various ways in which the proposed definition of ecotourism can be visualised or imagined.

Firstly, figure 7 is an attempt to visualise how all of the five components of the definition are vital in achieving ecotourism. It is argued that it is only when they all overlap that ventures can be defined as ecotourism.

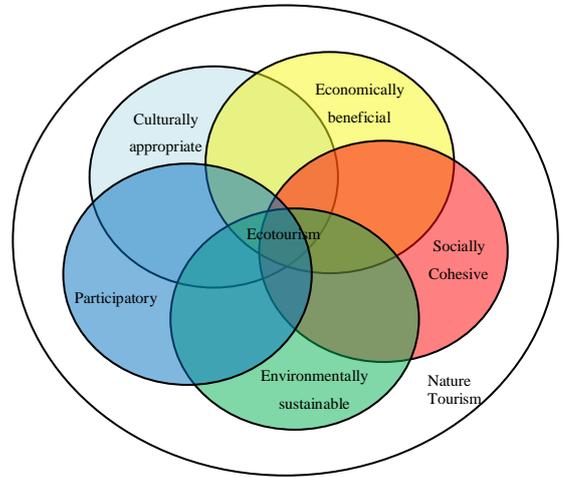


Figure 7 Diagrammatic Representation of Ecotourism
Adapted from Buckley (1994)

It is suggested that ecotourism is not binary (figure 8). It is not black and white as you cannot say that something is or is not ecotourism as there are various stages.



Figure 8 Binary Visualisation

Nor can ecotourism be viewed as rungs on a ladder (figure 9) as there are unlimited degrees of conformation; therefore, it could be between rungs.



Figure 9 Ladder Visualisation (image from clip-art)

Therefore, ecotourism could be visualised as a slope (figure 10) with mass tourism at the bottom and ecotourism at the top, with infinite stages in between.



Figure 10 Slope Visualisation

Taking this a stage further, if the quint-modal nature is considered it is suggested that the slope becomes three-dimensional, with 5 sides – a pentagonal pyramid (figure 11). With this three-dimensional image, the exact location of an ecotourism venture could be plotted, allowing each component to achieve a different degree of conformation.

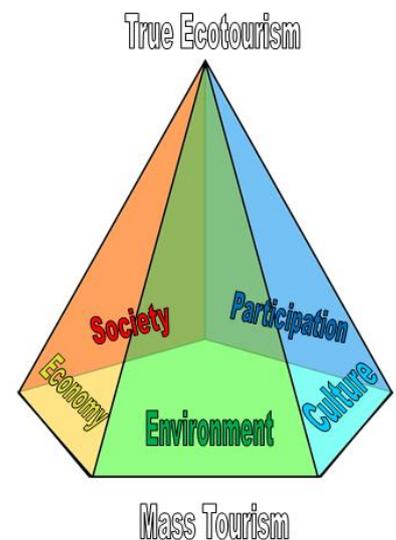


Figure 11 Pentagonal Pyramidal
Diagrammatic Representation of Ecotourism

Having discussed and justified the criteria that OOC will be measured against, the following section highlights the research questions that are required in order to assess whether OOC conforms to the proposed definition of ecotourism.

2.4 Research Questions

ENVIRONMENT

1. To what extent do activities in OOC affect the environment?
 - a) Has the environment in and around OOC improved or become more degraded?
 - b) Is OOC financing conservation?
 - c) Have local attitudes towards conservation changed?
 - d) Are there adequate regulations that are adhered to?
 - e) Are OOC's accommodation facilities eco-friendly?

ECONOMIC

2. To what extent do activities in OOC economically benefit the local people?
 - a) Are conservancies a viable economic diversification?
 - b) Does OOC create considerable local employment?
 - c) Does OOC contribute significantly to local household income?
 - d) Is it economically efficient?
 - e) Has the wellbeing of the local people improved?
 - f) Is OOC the most economically beneficial land use?

SOCIAL

3. To what extent do activities in OOC affect societal cohesion?
 - a) What is the general impact of OOC on society?
 - b) Are there any tensions between the different stakeholders?
 - c) Has community cohesion changed?

CULTURAL

4. To what extent do activities in OOC affect local Maasai culture?
 - a) What is Maasai culture?
 - b) Are ecotourism and Maasai culture compatible?
 - c) How does mass tourism affect Maasai culture?
 - d) How is OOC affecting local Maasai culture?
 - e) Should we morally change the culture?

PARTICIPATION

5. To what extent are activities in OOC participatory?
 - a) What degree of participation do OOC landowners have?
 - b) Is this participation inclusive?

3 Methodology

3.1 Alternative Methods

Before the methods were finalised, several alternatives were considered. Questionnaires were dismissed for three reasons: firstly, questionnaires conducted for my previous thesis (Courtney, 2008) in this area achieved a very low return rate (7.9%); secondly, language complications; thirdly, and most importantly, it would exclude the high number of illiterate people. Ethnography was also decided against because of the limited time period available to collate the primary research.

3.2 Methods Used

The five methods used to collect this holistic primary research, which will subsequently be discussed, were: focus groups, focal observations, semi-structured interviews, results seminar and feedback sessions, and an analysis of an eco-rating questionnaire.

3.2.1 Focus Groups

Focus group participants included OOC landowners, their wives, as well as those who don't own land in OOC (who will subsequently be called non-landowners), and their wives. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling. The head of the village was asked to randomly select eight to ten people who met the necessary criteria, for example female and non-landowners. The ten focus group sessions³² were located in the four villages neighbouring³³ OOC, and in Sekenani where a significant number of OOC landowners live, see figure 12.

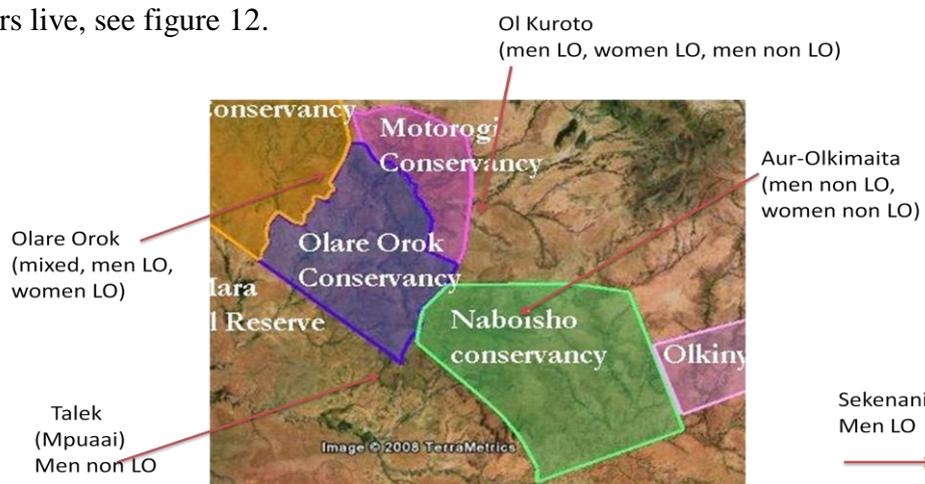


Figure 12 Locations of Focus Group Sessions. Adapted from Kaelo (2009b)

³² For a full list of focus group sessions details see appendix 1

³³ As defined earlier, within 30 minutes walk from the conservancy

Focus group sessions were used to gauge the thoughts and opinions of the local people and were comprised of both activities and direct questions. Activities included participatory mapping, ranking exercises, ‘the money bean’ and photograph analysis whilst the direct questions probed the impact of OOC on their lives.

Participatory mapping involved the group drawing a map of their local area. Once this map was drawn, the group were asked to estimate the number of people, cattle and shoats³⁴ in each *boma* (so that ratios of people to cattle and shoats could be calculated) as well as noting where OOC landowners and employees live and where any improvements have occurred as a result of OOC. It was noted that the older group members rarely participated in the actual map drawing; perhaps because they are uncomfortable holding a pencil or drawing, however, they always took part in the activity, directing the younger members who were doing the drawing (see figure 20).

‘The money bean’ activity was created in order to analyse incomes and outgoings. Flash cards were made for each income and outgoing which were labelled in both Maasai and English, accompanied by a picture³⁵. The income flash cards were laid on the ground and the participants were given a small bag of kidney beans. Each bean represented 1000KES (approximately \$13) and the group were



Figure 13 Money Bean Exercise (Photo: C. Courtney)

asked to put the corresponding number of beans on each card for the average income received each month. The bag of beans was taken away and the income beans were grouped together. The income flash cards were then replaced by the outgoing flash cards and the participants were asked to distribute the pile of beans (figure 13), which they had estimated to be their monthly income, revealing where the income was spent. Questions were asked about where the income from OOC specifically goes and whether this is how they want to spend the money, or if they would like to see changes in their expenditure.

³⁴ Shoats is a local collective term used to describe sheep and goats

³⁵ When it was windy we were unable to use the flash cards and so just had to write the incomes and expenditures on a large sheet

For the photograph analysis activities, participants were shown six photographs (figures 14-19) that had been blown up and laminated. The participants were then asked whether they had positive or negative feelings towards the picture, and why. Focus group members loved this activity and spent a long time examining the pictures.



Figure 14 Cattle inside OOC
(Photo: C. Courtney)



Figure 15 Camp in OOC
(Photo: C. Courtney)



Figure 16 Safari Vehicle in OOC
(Photo: C. Courtney)



Figure 17 Maasai Dancers at a Camp
(Photo: C. Courtney)



Figure 18 Lionesses in OOC
(Photo: C. Courtney)



Figure 19 Elephants in OOC
(Photo: C. Courtney)

3.2.2 Focus Group Reflections

Focus groups were chosen as the main methodology because the activities bridged of both language (although a translator was always present) and educational barriers (by eliminating written interaction and translating questions into Maasai) and they increased the total number of participants in comparison to interviews.

The first ‘trial’ focus group consisted of a mix of men and women and unveiled that women would not take part in activities whilst men were present (see figure 20). Consequently, for the subsequent nine focus groups separate sessions were run for men and women. It was also expected that age groups may need to be separated as it was feared that younger people may not speak openly in front of their elders due to the socio-cultural age dynamics, as suggested by Stewart et al., (2007), however, the first focus group alleviated these fears.



Figure 20 Participatory Mapping in Mixed Focus Group
(Photo: C. Courtney)

This method worked very well and the sessions were enjoyable to conduct, the women especially appreciated their thoughts and opinions being sought because they said that previous researchers had only communicated with the men. The only problem encountered in the focus group sessions was the ranking exercise. It was hoped that the participants could use a numerical scale to rank happiness, wellbeing, cultural identity, self esteem and their opinion of conservation both before the creation of OOC and now, however, they were unable to translate their thoughts and feelings to numbers. After several failed attempts it was decided to just discuss these changes verbally.

In hindsight, several other reflections have been made upon this method and it is possible that the following points may have distorted results. Participants may have answered questions posed with an answer that they thought was desired in the hope of getting a payment, although it was made clear at the beginning that there would be no payments, just tea and sugar given in appreciation for their time. Another important factor is peer pressure. It is recognised that people may not have answered all questions truthfully in

front of their peers, for example, they may not have told me if they were saving their rent money because then their friends and family would all ask them for money. In the future this could be addressed by conducting some one-on-one interviews with a random sample of the focus group participants to triangulate the results.

During the research period it was noted that if male focus groups were held in the mornings there was less of a chance of finding them drunk. Also, it was found that it was advantageous to run the male focus group in each village first so that the men knew the questions and format, and thus felt more comfortable with their wives taking part. Consequently, the men did not interrupt the women during their focus groups.

It was anticipated that focus group participants would be selected via stratified random sampling from their villages. It was explained to the head of the village, who selected the group members, that a random mix of families, ages and seniority were desired, however the representativeness of the samples cannot be guaranteed as it is more likely that the groups were made up of those who fitted the necessary criteria (e.g. female non-landowner) and were free at the time of the session. The landowner focus groups are also not representative of all OOC landowners because the majority of landowners do not live in the immediate area yet participants were selected from the villages in proximity to OOC. A session was run in Sekenani (25km away) in order to address this issue, with the aim of identifying any differences in responses between local landowners and those who live further away.

3.2.3 Focal Observations

As the name suggests, focal observations entail observing situations and noting anything significant to the research. In this instance, the following were noted: whether participants wore traditional or modern dress, Maasai beads, and had the traditional ear piercings; it whether their houses were the traditional dung constructions or had corrugated iron roofs; and any environmental degradation including track proliferation.

3.2.4 Semi Structured Interviews

Twenty-five interviews were conducted with key stakeholders³⁶ in OOC. These semi-structured interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 5 hours in length as the questions posed to

³⁶ For a full list of interview details see appendix 2

each stakeholder were individualised. These interviews were conducted either in Maasai, using my translator, or in English.

3.2.5 Interview Reflections

There are implications with using a translator in focus groups, and especially interviews. It is possible that some fine detail from conversations conducted in Maasai may have been lost in translation³⁷. However, the interviews were a vital to attain specific information and viewpoints from key informants and my translator (James Kaigil) appeared to fill me in on as much detail as possible. James is a local Maasai and well known by many of the participants. He was selected for the job because he has experience of being a research assistant and is not an OOC landowner so has no vested interest in this research topic. His male presence in female focus groups may have impacted upon the women's responses, but this was not apparent in the sessions. Another reflection is that as some of the interviewees knew me through my previous research, interviews may have been diverted. In this sense, semi-structured interviews were advantageous as they prevented this from occurring, keeping the discussion in track.

3.2.6 Results Seminar and Feedback Sessions

At the end of the two month fieldwork period, two results seminars were arranged (one in the Mara and one in Nairobi) to discuss the research findings, and how they could be acted upon. Twenty-eight people attended these seminars, including camp owners, landowners, consultants, the secretary of the landowner committee and the Chairman of Kenya Tourism Board. These seminars were received very warmly and action was promised towards some of the recommendations made in this study, for example, women are now permitted to attend the landowner committee meetings. Although these seminars were only accessible to those who speak English, preparations are being made to translate and distribute a summary of this research to all participants, and the wider community, as it is strongly believed that this is a vital component of sustainable research.

3.2.7 Eco-rating Questionnaire Analysis

The final method used is desk-based. Ecotourism Kenya, the body responsible for rating ecotourism facilities nationally, provides camps and lodges with a questionnaire to assess

³⁷ Before undertaking primary research for future studies I will spend 9 months becoming fluent in Swahili and Maasai

whether they deserve a bronze, silver or gold award. This questionnaire was analysed to unveil the criteria that they consider important for ecotourism, and the weighting of this.

3.3 General Methodological Reflections

Reflections specific to focus group and interviews have already been discussed, however, there are also some general methodological reflections, notably how participants³⁸ saw me and ethical considerations.

It is possible that how the focus group and interview participants saw me may have affected the results, there are four main rationale for this:

1. Being connected to key stakeholders in the area, including those who set up the conservancy, may have affected the responses which the participants gave.
2. As a women, female participants may have opened up to me more than they would have done to a male researcher. It is recognised that female researchers can suffer an identity crisis in countries where research is not the traditional role of women (Olson, 2009). In order to reinforce my femininity dresses or skirts were always worn for interviews and focus group sessions.
3. Men may have felt threatened by a young female researcher as Kaigil (2009c) revealed that local men like women to be subordinate to themselves.
4. Being caucasian, a degree of animosity may have been present as a result of how white, especially British, people have treated Maasai both historically and recently through tourism exploitation.

As with all research, and especially that involving discussions with stakeholders, it is essential that ethics are recognised and considered carefully. This was studied thoroughly for the project proposal phase of this study, and ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research and write-up stages.

The five chapters that follow, environment, economy, society, culture and participation, assess the impact that OOC is having on each of the five components of the proposed quint-model ecotourism definition.

³⁸ If not specified, the term participants refers to all those who took part in the focus groups and interviews

4 Environment

In order to achieve the suggested definition of ecotourism, activities in OOC should be environmentally sustainable and finance conservation. In order to investigate this, the extent to which activities in OOC affect the environment will be examined through the following five questions:

1. Has the environment in and around OOC improved or become more degraded?
2. Is OOC financing conservation?
3. Have local attitudes towards conservation changed?
4. Are there adequate regulations, including those for tourism, and cattle grazing, that are adhered to?
5. Are OOC's accommodation facilities eco-friendly?

4.1 In and Around OOC

There was a consensus amongst the majority of participants that OOC is having a positive impact on the environment inside the conservancy, yet a negative impact outside the conservancy borders. This is the result of people relocating out of the conservancy, which increased both population and cattle pressures surrounding the conservancy, where many OOC residents moved to.

There is a vast visual difference between the protected environment inside OOC and the unprotected land outside. In places grasses inside OOC exceed 1 metre in height (figure 21), compared to barely millimetres outside (figure 22). Trees and shrubs inside OOC have also spurted in the absence of firewood collectors (figure 21).



Figure 21 Hyena in Long Grass in front of Shrubs and Trees inside OOC
(Photo: C. Courtney)



Figure 22 Short Grass outside OOC
(Photo: C. Courtney)

The only negative point inside OOC, noted through focal observations, is that infrastructure, especially roads and bridges, require attention. This would prevent the propagation of track proliferation, which is beginning to emerge (figure 23) and a few bridges would also enable the camps to stay open the whole year, including the rainy seasons³⁹.



Figure 23 The Beginning of Track Proliferation inside OOC (Photo: C. Courtney)

During the last few months there has been national (Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, 2009, Gathura, 2009) and international (Morgan, 2009) media coverage regarding the wildlife loss in the Masai Mara; which is predominantly the result of land use change, and human population increase (Honey, 2008). Several of these reports, (including Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, 2009, Gathura, 2009) actually pick out OOC as one of the few areas in the Mara where wildlife is stable, and is therefore seen as the glimmer of hope for the Mara. It is unfortunate that there is no information available regarding the environmental changes since the creation of OOC, especially regarding wildlife increases.

4.2 Financing Conservation

Protected areas only cover 8% of Kenya (Honey, 2008), highlighting the importance of conservation beyond these regions. OOC has increased the land available for wildlife by setting aside an additional 22,000 acres for conservation. OOC is managed independently and is financed by the tourist partners, to the value of 600,000KES or \$7900 per month. The difference between financing conservation in OOC and the reserve is that money for management goes directly from the tourist partners to the contracted conservancy agency and does not go through Narok Country Council – as a result none is siphoned off through corruption.

³⁹ The two rainy seasons are April to May and November

4.3 Conservation Attitudes

According to Lusigi (1981), for the African, national parks and reserves have forced him from his home, confrontations with the game laws have sent many to prison, and when this is combined with negligible economic benefits, his negative attitudes towards wildlife and its conservation are understandable. However, the photograph analysis conducted in the focus group sessions suggests that this income is improving local attitudes towards conservation as perceptions of wildlife and conservation were considerably higher in OOC landowners than non-landowners. This is probably because collectively, OOC landowners receive 1.5million⁴⁰ KES monthly which equates to approximately \$20,000. This finding concurs with Reid et al. (1999) who argue that it is only when life of the local people is improved, and this improvement is clearly connected to tourism, that attitudes towards conservation will improve. Conservancy members⁴¹ now see the wildlife as a resource which belongs to them and so they protect them and want to see more wildlife, whereas those who border the national reserve and get no revenue from tourism see little reason not to spear or poison their cattle's predators (AFP, 2008). Focus group participants also recognise the vast improvements in vegetation and grass cover inside the conservancy which is a valuable source of famine relief for livestock during drought.

4.4 Regulations

4.4.1 Tourism Regulations

In the majority of discerning tourist cases, the visitors' perception of 'wild Africa' has gone; instead they see hordes of vehicles surrounding animals, and their anticipated experience of enjoyment in the wild is replaced with something more akin to a zoo (Drummond, 1995). OOC, however, diverges from this 'norm', most notably because of its bed ratio, with only one bed per 350acres permitted, and thus only 63 tourists permitted in the conservancy at any one time. It is also suggested that adequate regulations are in place to prevent game drives from damaging the environment and diminishing the enjoyment of natural safaris. It was not possible to observe game drives as the conservancy was closed during the research period, therefore, this claim is made through observing the relatively

⁴⁰ 66.7 (per acre) x 22,000acre

⁴¹ Conservancy members refers to OOC landowners

undamaged environment, analysing the written code of conduct and discussing the situation with the safari guides.

Game drive regulations in OOC's code of conduct⁴² (Olpurkel, 2007) differs from those in the reserve (see table 3), the main difference being that regulations in the conservancy appear to be adhered to, unlike those in the reserve⁴³. It is expected that this is predominantly the result of driver qualifications as the majority of OOC guides are from Koiyaki Guiding School and according to OOC's lease⁴⁴ agreement (Raffman Dhanji Elms & Virdee Advocates, 2007) all must have at least bronze KPSGA⁴⁵ certification; Courtney (2008) found that there was a significant relationship between driver qualifications, knowing regulations and adhering to them.

Table 3 OOC and Reserve Regulations

OOO Regulation (Olpurkel, 2007):	MMNR Regulation (Friends of Conservation, 2004); (MMNR, 2006)	MMNR Reality (Courtney, 2008)
Vehicles must be camouflaged and 4x4s	No requirement	-
Drivers qualified (minimum bronze KPSGA) and not allowed to drink	No requirement	-
Off road driving permitted for game viewing if efforts are taken to minimise environmental damage	No off road driving permitted	Off road driving is common occurrence as tracks are not clearly marked. Track proliferation is a real problem
Viewing from a respectful distance, cubs can only be viewed if mother is present	Keep a distance of 20m	Regulation commonly broken, especially at cat viewings
Guides must educate tourists about responsible behaviour	No regulation	-
No more than three vehicles in close proximity to an animal, only one may have engine running	No more than five vehicles at an animal at once	Regulation commonly broken, especially at cat viewings
Night game drives are permitted under strict regulations	Night game drives not permitted	-
Walking safaris permitted inside allocated areas with two trained, armed guides	Walking safaris not permitted	-

⁴² Available upon request from the author

⁴³ See Courtney (2008) for a detailed review of regulation violations in the MMNR

⁴⁴ Available upon request from the author

⁴⁵ Kenya Professional Safari Guide Association

4.4.2 Cattle Grazing Regulations

Reid et al. (2003) notes that livestock numbers between 1976 and 1996 fluctuated depending upon rainfall, but that there was not a linear increase. Despite this, with land privatisation, increased agriculture and urbanisation, and the creation of conservancies, the land available for pastoral use is greatly decreasing, thus increasing livestock population density.

Cattle are critical socially, economically and culturally for the Maasai, and therefore, it is essential for OOC to do whatever it can sustainably do, to ease the consequences of drought on pastoralists. Cattle grazing can also be ecologically beneficial by cutting the grass, providing a climate friendly alternative to savannah fires (as discussed by Liedloff et al., 2001). Also, wildlife is actually attracted to people and cattle. According to Reid et al. (2003) conservation policy that excludes low-moderate levels of traditional pastoral use may inadvertently impoverish the very lands it was instituted to protect. The majority of animals prefer to be near people and livestock (Reid et al., 2003), because grazed grass provides nutrient rich grass shoots (figure 24) and good visibility of dangers for ungulates, and predators naturally follow their prey (Zipko, 1994).



Figure 24 Nutritious Grass Shoots (Photo: C. Courtney)

Despite these benefits, some Maasai and conservationists see livestock and wild ungulates as grazing competition (Homewood and Rodgers, 1991). In addition to this, cattle grazing severely affect cats, especially lions, as herders attack and often kill the animals that attack their cattle, consequently prides are forced out of cattle grazing areas. Subsequently, it is suggested that human populations, and their livestock, need to be relocated away from sensitive species which are the backbone of tourism (Homewood and Rodgers, 1991, Grieves-Cook, 2009). Thus, any grazing in OOC needs to be strictly managed.

Having addressed the pros and cons of permitting cattle to graze in the conservancy, the question is raised whether it can be true ecotourism if cattle are permanently excluded from

the conservancy. Currently, cattle are only permitted into OOC during drought⁴⁶; however the increasing concentration of cattle is putting pressure on the OOC management⁴⁷ to open their doors for cattle all year round. It is argued however, that the current lease agreement is a good compromise between no grazing and permanent grazing.

Approximately ninety-five percent of focus group participants agree as they only want to graze in OOC during drought, citing *ole ker*⁴⁸ as the best thing about the conservancy.

However, during the times that it is open to graze, the local people want to be able to graze the whole conservancy freely, instead of being constrained to allocated areas as they are presently. Currently, when permitted to graze, all cattle and their herders are restricted in one area, accompanied by OOC scouts, then moved to another area once there is insufficient grass (O'Meara, 2009). Nevertheless, it was discovered that when the reasons behind the intensive rotational grazing system are explained⁴⁹ local herders agree with it.

It has been argued that it is important for cattle to be able to graze in OOC during extreme drought so that this livelihood can be sustained; however, OOC is unable to support the current number of cattle, even just during droughts. Consequently, priorities for grazing during drought somehow need to be allocated. Some argue that it should be exclusive to OOC landowners, as it is their land, but it is suggested that before the remaining blocks of Koiyaki Group Ranch are allocated the situation is more complex. This is because OOC landowners are currently living and grazing for free on the land that the non-landowners are waiting to be allocated and, therefore, should not be excluded from grazing in OOC⁵⁰.

Lamprey and Reid (2004) and Doherty (1979) believe that revenues from tourism may be used to purchase more cattle, leading to a chronic overstocking problem and viscous unsustainable cycle; indeed OOC changed from paying quarterly to monthly in order to try to discourage landowners from spending rent on purchasing cattle (Kaelo, 2009a). The participatory mapping activities ease these concerns as they suggest that there is no significant difference between the ratio of people:cattle:shoats between OOC landowner

⁴⁶ It is the management committee that decides when it is drought and grazing is permitted

⁴⁷ OOC management refers to the tourist partners, the chairman and secretary of the landowner committee, conservancy consultants and the contracted conservancy managers

⁴⁸ *Ole ker* is the accumulation of grass that occurs when there is no grazing

⁴⁹ Most notably that it limits the impact of grazing on the big cats (O'Meara, 2009)

⁵⁰ For more details regarding these suggestions see appendix 3

*maboma*⁵¹ (1:5:10) and non-landowner *maboma* (1:6:10). It also suggests that OOC employee bomas have less shoats per person (1:6:4), although *maboma* where those who are OOC landowners and employees live have considerably more livestock (1:14:14). This may be because individually the monthly rent or employment wages are insufficient to purchase cattle, however, combined they are ample. This suggests that buying cattle (or selling less) is still an expenditure priority.

4.5 Accommodation Facilities

Pre-construction, camps must pass NEMA's environmental impact assessment requirements, and conform to their environmental management and co-ordination act regulations, which are regularly checked by environmental audits. As a result, all camps pass and continually adhere to national environmental standards, and in addition OOC have set their own higher standards, including:

- A carrying capacity⁵² of one tourist per 350 hectares;
- Camps being completely removable (Raffman Dhanji Elms & Virdee Advocates, 2007);
- Operators strictly managing all deliveries (Olpurkel, 2007);
- Firewood being sourced from outside the conservancy (Olpurkel, 2007);
- Having their own agreed water source or getting water from outside OOC (Olpurkel, 2007);
- Creating and maintaining fire breaks around their camps and being prepared to assist with fire fighting (Olpurkel, 2007);
- Making every effort to reduce their noise pollution (Olpurkel, 2007);
- Ensuring lights from the camp are not visible from other camps (Olpurkel, 2007);
- Returning all recyclable waste to Nairobi whilst collecting biodegradable waste in sealed, lockable pits (Olpurkel, 2007);
- Containing septic waste with no access to the outer environment (Olpurkel, 2007).

As a result of these additional self imposed regulations, OOC's camps are built and run on environmentally sound principles (Mwalulu, 2008); Mara Porini Camp is even one of just

⁵¹ *Maboma* is the plural of *boma*

⁵² The notion of recreational carrying capacity was used to try and determine the number of visitors a protected area could sustainably accommodate (Manning, 2007)

six facilities nationally to be awarded a silver eco-rating award from Ecotourism Kenya (Porini, 2008).

4.6 Summary

The decision as to whether OOC conforms to the environmental requirement of the proposed definition of ecotourism is dependent upon the scale investigated. This research suggests that the environment inside OOC is environmentally sustainable as both flora and fauna appear to have improved, conservation is being financed, there are adequate tourism and cattle regulations, camps are eco-friendly, and attitudes towards conservation have improved. The doubt sets in if the land outside the conservancy is included in the investigation as local residents have reported through the focus group sessions that OOC has increased population and cattle pressures around the conservancy border which is resulting in environmental degradation.

In conclusion, the conservancy itself is environmentally sustainable, but if a broader overview is taken, including the land outside the conservancy, this research suggests that OOC conforms to the environmental component of the definition to a large extent but not perfectly.

5 Economy

For OOC to conform to ecotourism the extent to which activities in OOC are economically beneficial to the local people needs to be investigated. This will be done by investigating:

1. Are conservancies a viable economic diversification?
2. Does OOC create considerable local employment?
3. Does OOC contribute significantly to local household income?
4. Is it economically efficient?
5. Has the wellbeing of the local people improved?
6. Is OOC the most economically beneficial land use?

5.1 Economic Diversification

The Maasai are one of the fastest growing populations in the world, and since the land cannot sustain the equivalent growth in cattle, both livestock per capita and income from livestock are decreasing (Zipko, 1994, Kaigil, 2009c). Mara Maasai only have 25-30% of the livestock necessary for a pastoral lifestyle (Reid et al., 2003, Lamprey and Reid, 2004), and climate change is being blamed for the increasing frequency of drought in the area, hence, they are rapidly diversifying (Thompson and Homewood, 2002). According to Chief Mukuni, whose village is located near the Victoria Falls in Zambia,

“there are three crops grown in my area: maize, cattle and tourism. Two of these are affected by drought but tourism is not” (Zambia National Tourism Board, 1998).

In the Mara, tourism is an obvious diversification option and is one of the few sources of sustenance which complements, rather than displaces, existing activities (Tao and Wall, 2009). In the study area, tourism and pastoralism (unlike tourism and agriculture) are not mutually exclusive (Lamprey and Reid, 2004). However, it is advocated that workshops discussing alternative income generating activities and business skills would be of great benefit to the whole community, and even more valuable to those OOC members who have been saving some of their rent but do not know what to do with it.

5.2 Employment

In addition to the leasing of land, it is argued that OOC provides considerable opportunities for local employment as there is an agreement that at least 75% of OOC's employees should be local (Upstone, 2009), a figure which is being achieved and exceeded⁵³.

⁵³ Partly as the result of Koiyaki Guiding School which trains local Maasai as safari guides

Although there is no definition of ‘considerable’ local employment, 75% of employees being local is thought to be considerable. In addition to the quantity of employment, wages are considerably higher than elsewhere in the Mara. For example at Porini Lion Camp, the lowest take home pay, after government deduction, is over \$160 per month which is significant considering the majority of Kenyans earn less than \$1 per day (Porini, 2008).

Focus group participants supported claims made by Bachmann (1988) and Sindiga (1994) that they are rarely employed in semi-skilled, supervisory or management positions. Accusations that tourism jobs available to local people are menial have led to comments that tourism is a ‘final form of colonialism’ where indigenous people are exploited by outsiders (Middleton, 1992, pp. 53). While this may seem unfair, there are rational explanations for this occurring, as international standards must be met and thus trained personnel are required, who are often not available locally (Sindiga, 1999). Also, managers claim that mixed tribe work forces improve work ethic and increase productivity (Hart, 2009).

There is also the question of employment and gender in Mara tourism as most workers are men (Elkan, 1975). It is suggested that Maasai culture is probably responsible for this, in the same way as the Muslim culture precludes women from serving in tourism (Sindiga, 1996). As more women become educated and desire employment in tourism⁵⁴, it is suggested that the culture may modify and female employees may become more common.

5.3 Income

5.3.1 OOC Landowners

The total cash flowing to OOC landowners is 1.5millionKES/month, which equates to \$20,000 monthly or \$240,000 annually. Those who have been allocated land in OOC currently receive rental payments of 10,000KES/month⁵⁵ (\$130), if their full 150acre parcel is in OOC, yet the results of the money bean exercises do not display this differential. Their results show that the average monthly income from the OOC landowner focus groups is 60,400KES, compared to 63,750KES for the non-landowner focus groups. There are two possible explanations for this anomaly. As OOC landowners are getting

⁵⁴ As shown by the presence of female students at Koiyaki Guiding School

⁵⁵ This is due to increase imminently

money from the conservancy they may sell fewer cows, increasing the size of their herd but not their total income. Alternatively, participants may have offered incorrect figures in the exercise as non-landowners may not have wanted to appear poorer, and landowners may not want to appear wealthier; although it was anticipated that separate landowner and non-landowner focus groups should have prevented such inconsistencies. Using the average figures given in these bean exercise, OOC rent accounts for 16.4% of landowner income. As it has been stated that a percentage of ten or greater will be classified as ‘significant’ for this study, the results confirm that the OOC rent is significantly beneficial for the landowners – although, as the validity of this study is under question this economic analysis should be taken with ‘a pinch of salt’.

One of the main revelations made by this study is that the wives of landowners claim that the men often come back from collecting the rent from the bank in Narok⁵⁶ with very little or even no money left (focus groups 2 and 5). Male landowners (focus groups 3 and 4) claim that when they are in Narok they are attracted to buy lots of things that they do not normally buy, as they have money in their pocket, they also claim that friends know that they are in town collecting their OOC rent and demand drinks. It is feared that this situation is perpetuating an already alcoholism prone culture (Honey, 2008), and that prostitution may also become problematic in Narok. Once back from Narok, landowners revealed that they are spending the remnants of their OOC rental payments on buying cattle (or selling less), vet bills and alcohol, yet they claim that they want to spend the money on food, medicine and education. It is suggested that this discrepancy is the result of landowners not realising that there is a limited amount of money and that a choice must be made between spending it on one thing or another.

Ron Beaton (2009b) and James Kaigil (2009a) both suggest that some landowners are spending their rent more wisely, for example, buying land in Narok or setting up businesses, however such examples seem to be the exception, not the rule. Although no-one admitted in the focus group sessions that they are saving their rent, Dickson Kaelo (2009e) informed me that some people have approached him saying “I now have 300,000KES in the bank, how should I invest it?” Kaelo (2009e) estimates that 10-20% of landowners are saving some of their rent. The reason that this was not mentioned in the

⁵⁶ The tourist partners insisted that the rent has to go into a bank and Narok is the nearest town, and bank, which is a three hour bus ride away

focus groups may be because they did not want to admit it in front of their friends and family who would then come asking for money.

Some OOC landowners receive considerably more income than the others. Those who own land where the camps are located, who are ‘co-incidentally’ powerful members of the local community, receive a bed night fee of \$8 for each client staying on their land. This inequality is making the rich richer. It is strongly argued that this arrangement is very unfair and that that camp landowners should not get any more revenue than other members because:

- Currently everyone wants to have a camp on their land;
- The lease agreement (Raffman Dhanji Elms & Virdee Advocates, 2007) states that the land will be given back in the same condition as it was received;
- Their land is no more valuable to the tourists than someone else’s land that may be lion prideland.

It is thought that this situation has resulted from both corruption in the land allocation process, whereby sites with existing camps are assigned to elites, and the powerful persuading camp owners to locate on their land. When both landowner and non-landowner focus group participants were questioned about this situation the majority said the bed night fee was fair as it is just luck if there is a camp on the land that you are allocated. Yet, when they thought about who owned the plots with camps they concluded that it was not down to luck and so they do not deserve more money. The majority of focus group participants would like to see this bed night fee used for community projects around OOC instead, while some would like to see it halved between projects and rent increases, nevertheless, the camp landowners will have to agree to this first⁵⁷. In addition to the income received through rent, the land within OOC is also increasing in value at a rate higher than the local average (Rakwa, 2009).

5.3.2 Non-landowners

Currently, non-landowners only benefit economically from the conservancy through employment and projects as they do not receive any rental payments. Most of the local

⁵⁷ One of these camps landowners has threatened that he will excise his land from OOC if he does not get the bed night fee – as his land is on the OOC/MMNR border it is a real threat and apparently he has had offers. His argument is that there was a camp there before OOC and he was getting rent so he still should with OOC there (Beaton, 2009c)

OOC landowners who participated in the focus groups live and graze on non-landowner friends' or family's land, if they do not own land elsewhere, and they currently do not pay any rent for this privilege. It is suggested that OOC rental payments need to be increased to such an extent that landowners can pay rent to the non-landowners for land to live and graze on, which will consequently spread the economic benefits of OOC.

Initially it appeared unfair that those who are allocated land surrounding OOC receive no rent even though both animals and tourism use their land, so it was considered whether they should be given lower monthly rent. It was realised however, that the conservancies need to be commercially viable and must delimit the area for which they pay rent somehow. Also, with the increase in number of conservancies in the area most sides of OOC are now, or will be, covered (see figure 25). Even the small areas that are not part of a conservancy have the potential to gain from OOC through community projects and leasing their land for OOC landowners to live on, also, management have also said that they could join OOC if they are willing to relocate.



Figure 25 OOC's Neighbouring Conservancies
Figure adapted from Kaelo (2009b)

5.4 Economic Efficiency

The Masai Mara is one of the best examples of wasted economic potential, however, it is these tourism revenues which provide the incentive for the growth of private and community wildlife conservancies (Honey, 2008). It is hoped that these conservancies, including OOC, can be a more economically efficient than the siphoning NCC. One way in which the economic benefits of OOC could be made more efficient is finding an alternative to members having to collect their rent from a bank in Narok, addressing the revelation made by the landowner's wives. Ideally a satellite bank could be set up in Talek; if this is not possible M-Pesa⁵⁸ should be seriously considered.

⁵⁸ M-Pesa is a scheme by which money can electronically stored on mobile phones and then withdrawn at one of the many M-Pesa points nationwide

5.5 Wellbeing

Community projects are one means by which OOC is improving the wellbeing of local people, both landowners and non-landowners. To date, boreholes have been created in Mpuuahi and Ol Kuroto, as well as classrooms at the primary school in Ol Kuroto, and there are more projects in the pipeline.

Porini advertise that the local community members' lives have been greatly improved by OOC now that they are directly benefiting economically from their unique natural resources and now do not have to rely on livestock as their sole income source (Porini, 2008). Currently, the OOC landowners do benefit economically, but whether their lives and the lives of non-landowners have improved is, at the very least, questionable. It is suggested, however, that there are ways in which OOC can improve wellbeing in the whole community, for example, by running workshops that educate local people how to budget and manage their finances (see appendix 4 for more detail). In addition, ideally, the rental payments should be given to the wives of the landowners as Lama (2000) argues that generally women are more careful and responsible about managing money, using it for family needs rather than personal use, whereas men often use 'extra' income from tourism for drinking. It is recognised that this is problematic in this circumstance as the land is in the man's name and he may have several wives. The female focus group participants strongly believe that they would use the rent 'better' (for food and education) and that this would prevent the men from drinking away the money. They also state that they would share it evenly between the co-wives but they doubt that the men would permit this to happen. It is hoped that workshops could also educate the men to the benefits of their wives managing the family finances.

5.6 Best Land Use?

There are contradictions as to whether the conservancy rental payments are the most economically beneficial land use option for Olare Orok. Porini (2008) advertise that the income per hectare from OOC, \$26/ha/yr, exceeds that achievable in this area from small scale cultivation, yet Norton-Griffiths et al. (2008) calculate that for the average rainfall in this area agricultural rents could reach \$230/ha/yr. The discrepancy between this high potential rent and OOC's rental payments is partially explained by Thompson et al. (in press, cited in Thompson and Homewood, 2002) who reveals that large scale cultivation is

not possible near the MMNR due to the poor road access, distance to markets, existing farming infrastructure and local elites tourism interests. Kaelo (2009a) suggests that conservancy rent should equate to the amount available from agriculture minus the environmental degradation caused by agriculture minus the income from grazing in OOC minus the maintenance of culture through pastoral livelihoods. Therefore, although agriculture may be the most economically beneficial land use, the poor land quality in some areas and the lack of agricultural infrastructure, on top of the complete dissolution of cultural livelihood, produces a strong argument that ecotourism may be the 'best' land option available.

5.7 Summary

As discussed, OOC provides considerable local employment and is significantly economically beneficial for the landowners. Despite these achievements, it is extremely disappointing that there are inequalities present resulting from elites who own the camp sites benefiting significantly more. It is strongly argued that to closely conform to this component of the stated definition these discriminations need to be removed. In addition, non-landowners are only currently benefiting through employment and community projects, although it is hoped that once the remaining land in the area is allocated OOC landowners will begin paying rent for the land that they are living and grazing on which will disperse a proportion their economic benefits among a greater number of households, including those belonging to non-landowners.

6 Society

For ecotourism to conform to the proposed definition it needs to have a positive impact on society and maintain, but preferably increase, societal cohesion. In order to investigate this, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What is the general impact of OOC on society?
2. Are there any tensions between the different stakeholders?
3. Has community cohesion changed?

6.1 General Impact

Mismanaged ecosystems do not just lead to a loss of wildlife, they also unravel Maasai tribesmen's social fabric (AFP, 2008), thus, OOC can play an important role in maintaining Maasai societies through the protection of their ecosystem. As discussed, ecotourism is one means by which the Maasai can diversify in a way that is compatible with their traditional lifestyle, pastoralism, however, it is reported that ecotourism in OOC may be having a negative impact upon local Maasai society.

Dickson Kaelo (2009c) notes how tourism can impact upon traditional family life in two ways: it can draw young people away from pastoral life; and it can draw parents away, resulting in young children having to take on more domestic chores and tend to the animals. Whilst tourism is economically beneficial for employees, it is considered a social demon by some; consequently, if a man gets a job in the Mara he is unlikely to bring his family with him due to the belief that tourism is a bad influence, especially on children who start begging for sweets from the tourists (Kaelo, 2009d). Whilst these criticisms are based on mass tourism, it is expected that ecotourism, and OOC may have the same effects. In addition, OOC has changed the local social structure as non-elites now benefit economically and the young are beginning to control power rather than the elders. It is not the roll of this research to judge whether such changes are positive or negative, although it should be noted that the poor now benefit more equitably.

Having addressed some of the negative social consequences of tourism generally, and OOC specifically, the direct impacts of OOC on tensions between stakeholders and community cohesion will now be discussed.

6.2 Tensions between Stakeholders

Only one participant, in focus group four, expressed frustration towards OOC management, suggesting that the majority are happy with the current circumstances and do not feel there are any major tensions between stakeholders. However, one issue expressed by some interviewees (including Hart, 2009, Beaton, 2009b, Grieves-Cook, 2009, Monsen, 2009) is disappointment with the current contracted conservancy management, Working Wildlife, as it is felt that their resources are too stretched⁵⁹.

One slight tension noticed involves employment. Local people appreciate that OOC has a much higher percentage of local employment (75%) than elsewhere in the Mara⁶⁰, however, they would like the tourist partners to employ more locals in higher paid jobs. The response of camp owners and managers (Hart, 2009, Omondi, 2009, Grieves-Cook, 2009) to this is that local people are failing to realise the high level of education that is required for such positions⁶¹.

Scheyvens (2002) notes that tourism development can have significant negative impacts on society due to its heterogeneous nature, with the various fractions that make up communities being based on a complex interplay of class, gender and ethnic factions. Consequently, she suggests that certain families or individuals are able to lay claim to privileges because of their 'status' (Scheyvens, 2002). It is proposed that this is not a major issue for OOC because its structure forces all landowners to be treated equally and receive equitable shares of the benefits despite their status. The only exception to this equity is the bed night fee, as previously discussed.

6.3 Community Cohesion

According to Scheyvens (1999) ecotourism leads to social empowerment if it:

“maintains or enhances the local community’s equilibrium. Community cohesion is improved as individuals and families work together to build a successful ecotourism venture. Some funds raised are used for community development purposes, e.g. to build schools or improve roads.”

It is suggested that OOC has increased societal cohesion between landowners, despite persistent disagreements over cattle and the bed night fee, as they are working together

⁵⁹ During the research period, Working Wildlife’s contract ceased and their duties are now managed by Rob and Sarah O’Meara, previous part owners of Film Safari Camp (now Mara Plains Camp).

⁶⁰ Sindiyo cited in Honey (2008) estimates that only 39% of the tourism workforce in the Mara are Maasai, and most of the upper-level managers are non-Maasai

⁶¹ See appendix 5 for a suggested solution to this

towards a common goal. Conversely, despite the whole society benefiting from community projects, it is suggested that OOC has actually decreased societal cohesion among the community as a whole. This is because it has created inequalities⁶² between those who own land and are receiving a significant monthly rent from it and those who are still waiting to be allocated their plot. It should however be highlighted that this is not the fault of OOC as they have no power over the land allocation process. It is hoped that once the remaining land is allocated, and the proposed neighbouring conservancies are created that this inequality will lessen.

Focus groups 3, 5, 6 and 10 suggested that more community projects around the conservancy would ease such tensions, reducing jealousy and acting as compensation for local residents who suffer human-wildlife conflicts⁶³ as a result of OOC. Community projects in the area are not only run by OOC, as traveller philanthropy is playing an increasingly important role, a point which Duffy (2002) fails to mention. Whilst travellers' philanthropy is focused on the support of community based projects in and around tourism destinations, many travellers also desire to take holidays that go that one step further with tourists paying to go and donate their time, effort and hard work as volunteers (Honey, 2008). It is proposed that voluntourism has immense potential in the area, and as a result of this research talks are currently being held between African Impact (a voluntourism organisation) and Koiyaki Guiding School regarding the possible creation of voluntourism in and around OOC.

6.4 Summary

In conclusion, tourism in the Mara has a mixed affect on society, but OOC's impact appears to be more positive than most. There are a few tensions between OOC stakeholders, including the bed night fee and local employment in managerial positions, yet overall it is suggested that OOC is having a positive effect on the societal cohesion of landowners. The cohesion of the local community as a whole, however, is less positive because of the formation of inequalities, although this is not the fault, or responsibility of OOC. Consequently, OOC conforms partially to the cultural component of the stated definition of ecotourism, as it has increased societal cohesion between landowners, but not

⁶² Inequalities are alien to the traditional Maasai communal living

⁶³ For example, injury or death to humans or livestock as the result of wildlife

absolutely when the community as a whole is considered. Non-landowners propose that more projects, which benefit all society, will ease these tensions; resulting in a greater extent of conformation to the societal component of ecotourism.

7 Culture

This chapter will investigate whether activities in OOC are culturally appropriate, which is a necessity of conforming to the proposed definition of ecotourism. This will be achieved by examining the following questions:

1. What is Maasai culture?
2. Are ecotourism and Maasai culture compatible?
3. How does mass tourism affect Maasai culture?
4. How is OOC affecting local Maasai culture?
5. Should we morally change the culture?

7.1 Maasai Culture

The Maasai are a tribe who live in south-western Kenya and north-western Tanzania (Fedders and Salvadori, 1998). They are a pastoral tribe, while a few have turned to cultivation, the overwhelming majority remain firmly attached to their age old tradition of animal husbandry (Fedders and Salvadori, 1998). Maasai society traditionally judges a man's wealth by the number of cattle he owns (Amin et al., 1997) as Maasai are completely dependent on cows for their occupation, income and daily nourishment - milk and blood mixed together forming *saroi* (Author Unknown, 2000).

What is applicable to the Maasai is that life is a celebration; from birth up to – but not including – death; each significant change in each individual life, which inevitably affects the whole community, is a cause and welcome excuse for celebration (Fedders and Salvadori, 1998). Focus group participants noted that cattle and ceremonies are the two parts of their culture that they really don't want to lose.

The Maasai are especially famous for their ability to jump extremely high and their blood red attire. Traditionally their clothing was made from animal skins dyed red with the red soils, and then during colonial times they changed to the brightly coloured material *shuka*⁶⁴ (Kaelo, 2009e). Focus group participants explained that over the last ten years the Maasai have increasingly turned to western clothes due to their availability in the market and their desire to 'fit in', especially in towns and cities.

⁶⁴ These are made in China and India

One part of the culture which differs greatly from the west is relationships and sexual behaviour; as the Maasai are polygamous it is common for one man to have up to 12 wives. Also, pre-pubescent girls may sleep with their junior warrior boyfriends and married women may, and are often encouraged to, sleep with any man in her husband's age-set (Fedders and Salvadori, 1998)⁶⁵. As such, there is no complex over the question of a physical paternity, a child is a child and loved as such. (Fedders and Salvadori, 1998).

7.2 Compatibility

Many Maasai still live a semi-nomadic lifestyle, travelling considerable distances to feed and water their cattle, the accumulation of which still demonstrates wealth and status for the majority (Reid et al., 1999). As a result, traditional Maasai culture has the potential to be greatly affected by the introduction of the market economy, as represented through tourism (Reid et al., 1999). Despite this, Willis (2005) notes that ecotourism is one of the few means of income generation over which group members can have control that is compatible with tribal cultures and has the ability to prevent the eradication of indigenous cultural practices.

As OOC has only been operational for just over three years it is not yet possible to fully assess the impact that OOC will have on Maasai culture. Consequently, it is important to highlight the wider impacts that mass tourism in the Mara are having on the culture and the similar effects could potentially result from OOC. This will be followed by a discussion of initially how OOC appears to be affecting Maasai culture.

7.3 Mass Tourism and Maasai Culture

Communities with unique cultural traditions are often part of the tourist attraction themselves, whether they want to be or not (Reid et al., 1999), thus mass tourism in Maasailand has both positive and negative impacts on the culture. Negative impacts are diluting the traditional culture leading to a homogenisation with western cultures, whilst cultural rejuvenation is the result of the realisation by local people that tourists want to see their culture, and that they can make money from it. Positive (green) and negative (red) cultural impacts resulting from mass tourism in the Mara are highlighted in tables 4 and 5.

⁶⁵ Such behaviour is fuelling the spread of HIV/AIDS in the area (Cook, 2007)

Table 4 Mass Tourism Cultural Impacts

Issue	Cause	Impact
Fewer people wearing <i>mashuka</i> in favour of western clothes	Tourists are role models and fashion icons for the local people	Increasing proportion of the society, especially those who interact with the tourists, wearing Manchester United shirts and Nike shorts
	Tourists donate western clothes	
	Those who wear western clothes look down on those who wear <i>mashuka</i> ⁶⁶ as uneducated and primitive ⁶⁷	
Emergence of cultural <i>manyattas</i>	Tourists want to see and photograph traditional villages, people and activities	Integration of a cultural component into wildlife safaris (Honey, 2008)
		Important source of income for Maasai women (Honey, 2008)
		Preserves and maintains traditional practices
		Most villages are not professionally run, many are corrupt ⁶⁸
		Personalities change, becoming aggressive towards tourists in order to compete with other sellers (focus group 5)
		Increase in school dropout rates (Kaigil, 2009c)
Maasai dancing at camps or cultural <i>manyattas</i>	Tourist want to see and photograph the famous Maasai dancing	More people, especially youth, are encouraged to learn and maintain these traditions (focus groups and Nabaala, 2009)
		Enables local people to earn an income from their culture
		In many hotels the dancers are hotel employees who are asked dance for a very minimal fee not local residents (Honey, 2008).
Perpetuating alcoholism	It was witnessed during the research for Courtney (2008) that when camp workers receive their wages they go to the pub and drink, a lot	Younger people have the money and confidence to drink in public (Kaigil, 2009c), as a result, 60% of commercial premises in Talek today are pubs (Gona, 2009).
	Availability of alcohol has increased, especially in tourist areas	

⁶⁶ Plural of *shuka*

⁶⁷ A possible reason for this is that the school uniforms are western clothes so those who go to school then continue to wear western clothes.

⁶⁸ One Maasai leader, cited in Ole Kisimir (1998), called these cultural centres black holes of exploitation, since a lion's share of the entrance fees goes to a few big businessmen and to the safari drivers who get commissions from bringing tourists. Research carried out at the Mara's Sekenani gate found that over 90% was taken as commission by drivers (Stanley, 2006, cited in Honey, 2008)

Table 5 Mass Tourism Cultural Impacts Continued

Issue	Cause	Impact
Providing income	Tourism produces employment which provides income	Local people are able to make improvements to their houses, educate their children and buy different foods
		Despite improving wellbeing, these changes are not a part of traditional Maasai culture
		Creation of inequalities as the benefits are not distributed among all evenly, which may weaken communal cultural bonds
Sex tourism	The more wives a Maasai man has the higher in society he is lifted, however, as one man is unable to satisfy 10 wives, extra marital affairs are very common (Kaigil, 2009b). When this is combined with <i>wazungu</i> ⁶⁹ tourists wanting relationships of a sexual nature on holiday, sex tourism results	Little change to the culture as Maasai are polygamous and men are not restricted to just having relationships with their wives
		Male focus group participants at Sekenani (focus group 10) mentioned that they had heard how uncircumcised western girls were ‘more romantic’ in bed, and suggested that they wanted to have sex with tourists, consequently they also no longer believe female circumcision is essential ⁷⁰
Changing social relations	Previously, Maasai lived communally sharing all that they own, however Chief Sayialel (2009) notes that tourism is changing this, encouraging people to adopt a more selfish outlook	Focus group participants explained how modernisation generally, and tourism specifically, have reduced the amount of time for talking and telling stories, interrupting social relations.
		Local people partly blame tourism for the dying out of boys <i>moran</i> (warrior) time and girls ‘shading period’ which traditionally occur between circumcision and marriage.

Despite the impacts identified in tables 4 and 5, local people strongly believe that tourism has a smaller effect on culture than education or religion, and that it alone is partially responsible for rejuvenating it (Kaigil, 2009a). This rejuvenated culture does stray slightly from ‘strict tradition’, for example the cultural manyattas comprise of different families and the camp employees wear ceremonial *mashuka* every day (Kaigil, 2009a), but for the Maasai it is a strong preference over the dilution, and possible extinction of their culture.

7.4 OOC’s Effects

To date, OOC only appears to be having a minimal impact on local Maasai culture, but it is too early to be conclusive. There are ways in which OOC may be having a different cultural impact than mass tourism elsewhere in the Mara, notably identity preservation and the role of women, which will both now be discussed.

7.4.1 Preserving identity

Conservationists argue that this new conservancy model can help the Maasai, who are prone to social woes when thrust into an urban environment, to preserve their identity by

⁶⁹ White skinned people

⁷⁰ It cannot be determined whether this impact is positive or negative as female circumcision is frowned upon by the West yet it is an important part of Maasai culture

reclaiming their traditional lifestyle (AFP, 2008). As discussed, cattle are a vital part of Maasai cultural identity; mass tourism and pastoralism currently compete as cattle are totally excluded from the reserve, however, for true ecotourism that is culturally appropriate, this traditional livelihood needs to be maintained. Although cattle are not permitted to graze in OOC for the majority of the year, they can graze in the conservancy during times of drought, saving them from inevitable famines, maintaining the livelihood. Some of the tourist partners would like to see cattle banned altogether so that they can get the ‘best’ game viewing; however, it is argued that it is questionable as to whether this would actually improve game viewing (see page 33) and would certainly hamper OOC’s attempts to be cultural appropriate and thus ecotourism.

7.4.2 Role of Women

According to Reid et al. (1999), the traditional position of Maasai women is problematic as unless women leave the community and move to another location, they have little chance of being involved in the decision making process of the community or the family, simply by virtue of their traditional standing. For example, landowners’ wives are not permitted to attend any landowner committee meetings.

Great Plains Conservation⁷¹ (Year Unknown) advocate that whenever possible money should be paid into the women’s hands as it increase the chance of the community uplifting. This is not currently occurring in OOC, and the role of women in the conservancy is very limited. When questioned, Great Plains Conservation consultants described that this is their end goal but that it will take time to get there; their first step being to pay people directly, followed by the allocation of projects though a committee on which women are represented (Peterson and Peterson, 2009). Although giving the money to the women is likely to have huge nutritional and educational benefits (Lama, 2000), it is recognised that it is a generalisation and that there are significant problems with its application to OOC. Firstly, land is registered in the man’s name and would therefore require his permission for payment to go to his wife; secondly, the Maasai are a polygamous tribe, and therefore, there are issues associated with which wife to give the rent to, or how to divide it between them; thirdly, it is possible that giving the payments to the women may be too much of a socio-cultural change in households where only men

⁷¹ Part owner of Mara Plains Camp

have ever earned an income and managed its allocation, thus this change may result in domestic violence (Kaelo, 2009c). Currently, the only women who currently receive OOC rent are widows with young children or wives of drunks who, after persuasion, have agreed to the rent being managed by a wife. Male landowner focus group participants were not at all keen at the prospect of their wives managing the family finances and believed that it would cause conflict between their wives; however, the wives strongly argued that they would share it equally, even if only one wife received the payment. The male landowner participants also feared that the women would forget some uses, including cattle medicine, but the female landowner participants claim that they would allocate it more appropriately, as the men currently don't give high enough priority to food, health and education.

If a cultural *manyatta* or similar is established in the area it would be of great economic and cultural benefit by bringing a form of revenue into the community which women can access, as well as educating tourists about Maasai culture (Okello, 2005). In the meantime, a beadwork project with local women should be set up and an outlet opened at each camp where Maasai produce is sold at set prices with labels identifying the maker so that the payment can go directly back to her, as suggested by Grieves-Cook (2009). OOC's *manyatta* should improve on existing ones around the reserve by eliminating corruption and forceful selling, moving more towards an educational experience. Another suggestion by Jake Grieves-Cook (2009) is that money should be taken out of the equation altogether. Near another Porini camp in Amboseli, an agreement has been made with a neighbouring *manyatta* whereby guests are shown around whilst the culture and traditions are explained to them; Porini pays the *manyatta* directly and the revenue is distributed evenly between the women (Grieves-Cook, 2009)⁷².

7.5 Morals

Culture is a very difficult subject to study and influence, especially for a British person in Kenya. Kenyans have been dictated to for decades and it is strongly recognised that this study has no right to demand that the culture should change or conversely that the culture should be preserved, as culture is dynamic. WWF International (2001) highlight the difficulty of such moral dilemmas as they note that it is important to seek to work within existing social and community structures, yet in the same paragraph they go on to say that

⁷² For more detail on cultural suggestions see appendix 6

ecotourism can provide some good opportunities for the empowerment of women. This situation is morally problematic as the low status of the women is very frustrating to see, especially as a fellow woman, thus it seems clear that female empowerment is required. Yet, it must be recognised that the cultural implications of such interference may be dramatic.

The end target of any such intervention should be to improve wellbeing in a way which is appropriate to the culture. Consequently, opportunities to improve wellbeing and thus female empowerment should not be dismissed purely because they may modify the culture as any culture is permanently remoulding itself. As a result, this dissertation argues that opportunities should be provided, so that it is up to the local people to decide whether to take them up. For example, as a result of this research the chairman of the landowner committee, Chief Sayialel, has promised that from now on women will be permitted to attend landowner committee meetings and voice their opinions, should they desire.

7.6 Summary

Whilst literature highlights many negative consequences of mass tourism on traditional cultures (tables 4 and 5), Willis (2005) argues that Maasai culture can be compatible with ecotourism. It is difficult to judge at this stage the full cultural effects that OOC is having upon Maasai culture, however, the early signs suggest that OOC is a more culturally appropriate form of tourism than the mass tourism found elsewhere in the Mara. This suggests that the cultural component of ecotourism conforms to the stated definition to a large extent. If OOC continue to act in a culturally appropriate manner, provide opportunities to improve wellbeing and develop the suggestions that have resulted from this research⁷³, it is hoped that the Maasai will be able to ride the waves of cultural fluidity, retaining the aspects of their culture that they do not want to lose.

⁷³ See appendix 6 for detail on these suggestions

8 Participation

The final of the five points, that it has been argued are vital for a comprehensive definition of ecotourism, is participation. In order to investigate the extent to which OOC conforms to inclusive genuine participation, the following questions need to be addressed:

1. What degree of participation do OOC landowners have?
2. Is this participation inclusive?

8.1 Degree of Participation

Existing ecotourism literature is rather ambivalent on participation, with the majority of definitions downplaying or ignoring this issue, however, without genuine participation it could be argued that ecotourism is merely nature based tourism (Garrod, 2003, Reid, 1999). Duffy (2002) believes that the concept of ecotourism is participative and socially inclusive in nature, however, in reality the full and effective participation of local communities in the planning and management of ecotourism is only rarely a feature (Garrod, 2003, Reid, 1999). Additional reasons to incorporate participation into ecotourism include: empowerment (Hawkins and Khan, 1998); increased wellbeing (Scheyvens, 1999); economic benefits (Garrod, 2003); as well as the protection of environmental (Duffy, 2002) and social (Harrison, 1992) resource bases. Garrod (2003) and Scheyvens (2002) argue that participation should be a *sin qua non* of ecotourism, not the add on or optional extra that it is too often portrayed to be.

It is not the case that you participate or you do not as there are numerous degrees of participation that can occur, from coercion to ownership and control. Scheyvens (2002) believes that a useful tool for ascertaining the nature of participation in tourism ventures is Pretty's (1995) 'typology of participation' in which he identifies seven levels of participation (table 6).

Table 6 Pretty's (1995) Typologies of Participation

Typology	Characteristics of Each Type
1. <i>Passive Participation</i>	People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is a unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
2. <i>Participation in Information Giving</i>	People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.
3. <i>Participation by Consultation</i>	People participate by being consulted, and external agents listen to views. These external agents define both problems and solutions and may modify these in the light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
4. <i>Participation for Material Incentive</i>	People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash, or other material incentives. Much on-farm research falls in this category, as farmers provide the fields but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
5. <i>Functional Participation</i>	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organization. Such involvement does not tend to be at early stages of project cycles or planning, but rather after major decisions have been made. These instructions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.
6. <i>Interactive Participation</i>	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. <i>Self-Mobilization</i>	People participate by taking initiative independent of external institution to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilization and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distribution of wealth and power.

As the participation of OOC landowners is included from the outset through regular landowner committee meetings and the work of a community officer, the results of which feed into the management of the conservancy, it is suggested that OOC conforms to level 6, interactive participation, of Pretty's (1995) typology (table 6). Consequently, OOC is one of the rare examples, noted by Smith and Duffy (2003), whereby communities are given the chance to participate meaningfully in an ecotourism scheme. Tourism can often benefit only a narrow elite because of the political nature of decision-making which often cuts out communities and their interests (Smith and Duffy, 2003). Although it is argued that ecotourism should require an approach that goes beyond a tokenistic form of participation which is completely at odds with the Habermasian notion of an 'ideal speech situation' (Hall, 1994), as OOC successfully does. The degree of participation is inconsequential however, if such participation is not inclusive, especially with regard to the traditionally disadvantaged.

8.2 Inclusive Participation

Critics claim that one of the major problems associated with tourism development in the South is that it exacerbates existing, and creates new, economic and social divisions in the host communities (Smith and Duffy, 2003). The addition of community participation into

tourism from an early stage is one response to this, so long as it is inclusive (Reid et al., 1999, Smith and Duffy, 2003, Mburu, 2002). Indeed, widespread inclusive participation is key to achieving and sustaining the paradigm shift from top-down conservation management approaches to those that offset biases, decentralise, encourage diversity, put people before things, and put poor people first of all (Pimbert, 2004, Pimbert and Pretty, 1995, Rahman, 2004). The key word here is ‘inclusive’ as genuine participation must increase the typically low levels of influence of politically and economically marginal populations (Mirovitskaya and Ascher, 2001, Reid et al., 1999, Steifel and Wolfe, 1994), including the poor and women who are traditionally less likely to participate (Mburu, 2002).

As participation in OOC is currently restricted to landowners, women and non-landowners have no means by which to get their voices heard, therefore, this participation is not inclusive. Following suggestions made by this research project⁷⁴: the wives of landowners will now be permitted to attend the landowner committee meetings; OOC are looking into employing a female community officer to consult with the local women, and; it has been suggested that the community officers should also consult with local non-landowners, feeding any of their concerns back into the meetings. If these changes are implemented, the inclusiveness of OOC’s participation should improve dramatically.

8.3 Summary

Scheyvens (2002) concurs that participation is an essential part of ecotourism as without it local communities would be less able to benefit from, and take control over, ecotourism in their area. In turn enables them to reclaim their rightful place as the decision makers of their own resources (Scheyvens, 2002). In the justification for participation as a component of the proposed definition it was noted that for this thesis, inclusive ‘genuine’ participation will be classed as that which involves all (including women) occurs throughout the project cycle and hands over some decision making, control and power to the local people. As this chapter has discussed, the current participation of the landowners is genuine as it occurs from the outset and hands over some control, however, this is exclusive to landowners. Presently, female and non-landowner local residents are excluded from any form of real participation; therefore, OOC’s participation is currently only genuine, not inclusive.

⁷⁴ See appendix 7 for full participation suggestions

As a response to this issue being raised at the seminar and results sessions in the field, changes to this situation have commenced. If the suggestions made are adopted, it is expected that participation in OOC should become both genuine and inclusive and will, therefore, fully conform to this component of ecotourism.

9 Conclusion

This study commenced by providing the necessary background for the study, critically examining existing definitions of ecotourism in literature and then proposing its own definition. The main argument in this definition is that ecotourism is more than just tourism that is eco-friendly. It should stand for the best practice of sustainable nature tourism with regard to the environment, local economy, society, culture and be participatory. It is strongly suggested that the eco-rating schemes should incorporate all five of these components with equal weighting into their eco-rating criteria as they should all be of equal importance to ecotourism's definition. This was followed by five chapters: environment, economy, society, culture, and participation, in which the primary research findings for each component were discussed, concluding with the degree to which they conform to the proposed definition.

The aim of this section is to bring these five preceding chapters together in order to discuss and conclude the extent to which activities in OOC conform to ecotourism. It cannot be stressed sufficiently that all five components are equally important⁷⁵, extremely interconnected, and that although they have been discussed independently for the purposes of this dissertation, they should be studied and addressed in unison.

Kenya today has the unenviable reputation of being the Costa del Sol of the wildlife world – overgrazed, overrated and badly abused (Western, 1997, cited in Honey, 2008). Although this description remains all too applicable to Kenya's most famous national parks and reserves⁷⁶, hope is alive in an alternative model which has emerged in the privately controlled community ventures, including conservancies (Honey, 2008). These conservancies, where the local communities are directly deriving substantial benefits from ecotourism, are one way forward for conservation in Kenya, and one that can be duplicated in other parts of Africa, and globally.

The big question in this dissertation regards whether Olare Orok Conservancy conforms to quint-modal ecotourism and has revealed that:

- Environmentally – The inside of the conservancy is environmentally sustainable but the impacts outside are not;
- Economically – OOC is significantly benefiting its landowners, but only currently these benefits do not disperse to non-landowners;

⁷⁵ As noted by Lusigi (1981)

⁷⁶ Especially in the MMNR (Courtney, 2008)

- Socially – Overall, OOC has increased societal cohesion between landowners, but decreased that of the community as a whole by creating inequalities, yet this is not the fault of OOC and should improve once the remaining land is allocated;
- Culturally – OOC is certainly an improvement on mass tourism elsewhere in the Mara, as it is culturally appropriate and has the potential to be rejuvenatory;
- Participation - Landowners do enjoy genuine participation but when the research was conducted this was not inclusive as landowners wives and non-landowners had no voice.

Consequently, it is suggested that OOC does conform to the proposed definition of ecotourism to a large extent but not absolutely. In other words it is near the top of the pyramid (figure 26) but not on the summit. It is suggested that the following actions will take OOC closer to the top of the pyramid, and true ecotourism:

- The implementation of the suggestions made in this study
- Good, transparent management
- A long term lease, guaranteeing the future of OOC, with which everyone is satisfied.

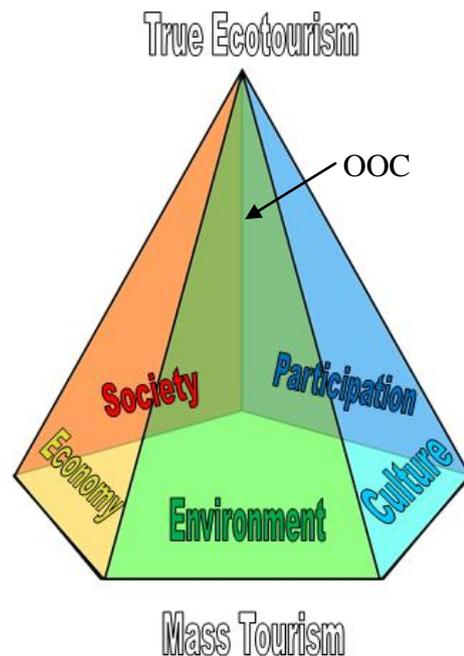


Figure 26 Location of OOC on the Pyramid

This research suggests that OOC is one of the best examples of ecotourism in comparison to those discussed in existing literature, yet it does not conform perfectly to the proposed definition. As a consequence, the question is raised as to whether any venture will truly conform to this definition. Resultantly, the required degree of conformation at which a venture should be declared as ecotourism needs to be decided. This is deemed beyond the realm of this Master of Science dissertation but it is here that a global eco-rating accreditation scheme, like that being undertaken by STSC, could come into its own by certifying eco-rating schemes that provide ventures with a star rating or similar⁷⁷. STSC should require that in the eco-rating process all five components are given equal importance so that the degree to which ventures conforms to the idealistic true ecotourism can be determined, and graded. It is

⁷⁷ Although it has been argued that ecotourism cannot be visualised as binary or steps on a ladder and should be viewed as a three-dimensional pyramid, it is acknowledged that in terms of rating ecotourism a cut off point at which a venture is classified as ecotourism and different categories or grades are required.

argued that OOC conforms sufficiently to be classified as ecotourism and should perhaps be awarded four out of five stars.

In Honey's (2008) assessment, although genuine ecotourism is indeed rare, often misdefined, and frequently imperfect, it is still in its adolescence, not on its deathbed. Whether ecotourism matures into its adulthood in the twenty-first century remains to be seen, but for this to be possible key stakeholders need to understand the major challenges and problems facing ecotourism (Honey, 2008). For this reason, in addition to assessing whether OOC conforms to ecotourism, this research project has aimed to highlight challenges, problems and possible solutions facing OOC. These have been discussed throughout this dissertation, however, the suggestions made by this thesis can be found in appendices 3-7. It is appreciated that for OOC to accept and act on these suggestions they would have to accept 'western intervention', from a British white female. Whilst this may cause problems in some circumstance, feelings gauged locally imply that there is great interest in these suggested improvements at all levels, with some already having been implemented.

10 Reflections

As methodological evaluations were discussed throughout chapter three, this section will reflect more generally upon the research as a whole, highlighting its benefits, limitations and possible areas for future studies.

10.1.1 Research Benefits

This dissertation has added to the existing debate in literature regarding the illusive definition of ecotourism by endorsing a new definition focusing on the equal importance of environmental sustainability, significant economic benefits for the local people, the conservation of social cohesion, cultural appropriateness and an inclusive genuine participatory approach. In addition, this study has created a new three-dimensional way in which ecotourism can be visualised.

This research conducted primary research, creating a detailed case study of Olare Orok Conservancy, in order to investigate whether it conforms to the proposed definition. This is of specific importance because case studies in this specific field of private wildlife conservation has been a major gap in the literature (Wells, 2003).

At the grassroots scale, this research has essentially evaluated OOC, providing the management with realistic improvements that they could make in order to move closer to true ecotourism. In addition, this research potentially has national, continental and global implications as it is proposed that the newly formed Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC) should adopt this holistic definition as the backbone for global eco-rating accreditation which would result in eco-rating schemes adopting this quint-modal approach.

10.1.2 Research Limitations

This study encountered two main limitations that restricted its results. Firstly, there was no data available on changes in biodiversity that have occurred since the creation of OOC which would have been very useful for quantifying environmental changes. However, as a result of this study, a possible voluntourism monitoring project in association with Impact Africa is under discussion which would assess the environment now, and at regular intervals into the future. Secondly, ideally, focal observations to determine whether game viewing regulations are being adhered to would have been conducted and tourists would have been interviewed, however, this was not possible as time restrictions meant that the research had to be undertaken during low season when the camps were closed.

10.1.3 Future Research

This study has discovered two tangents off this research that require further investigation. A discussion with Judy Kepher-Gona (2009) unearthed an interesting issue regarding community projects. She question the role and responsibility of the community in the sense that no number of community projects are ever enough for society. What is the responsibility of ecotourism and what is the responsibility of the community, where is the line drawn? The industry has been taught that schools, clinics and boreholes are their responsibility, but are they, and if so over how large an area are they responsible?

Another interesting point is raised by Boo (1990), who puts forward the thought that ecotourism development can be a process that can reaches a symbiosis between tourism, conservation and sustainable development, however, the link between ecotourism and such development is intensely contested, especially by Duffy (2002). My Ph.D. study commencing in September 2009 will take up this challenge by investigating whether this link exists, and thus whether ecotourism can be used as a tool for sustainable development, again focusing on Olare Orok Conservancy.

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See appendix 1 for focus groups details and appendix 2 for a full list of interviews that were conducted, the transcripts of which are available upon request.

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12 Appendices

Appendix 1 Focus Groups

Focus Group 1 – Mixed male (5) and female (5) landowners at Olare Orok (trial session)

15/04/2009 1.20pm

Focus Group 2 – Female landowners (8) at Olare Orok 16/04/2009 11am

Focus Group 3 – Male landowners (7) at Olare Orok 16/04/2009 2pm

Focus Group 4 – Male landowners (7) at Ol Kuroto 19/04/2009 12.10pm

Focus Group 5 – Female landowners (7) at Ol Kuroto 20/04/2009 11am

Focus Group 6 – Male non-landowners (6) at Ol Kuroto 21/04/2009 12pm

Focus Group 7 – Male on-landowners (11) at Talek (Mpuuai) 24/04/2009 2pm

Focus Group 8 – Male non-landowners (8) at Eor-Olкимaita 25/04/2009 10.50am

Focus Group 9 – Female non-landowners (15) at Eor-Olкимaita 1/05/2009 11.45am

Focus Group 10 – Male landowners (6) at Sekenani 2/05/2009 11.30am

Appendix 2 Interviews Conducted

1. Interview with Chief Sayialel (old chief of study area) 29/04/2009 2.30pm at Magi Moto – interview translated from Maasai to English by Dickson Kaelo.
2. Interview with David Rakwa (community officer of OOC and secretary of landowners committee) 25/04/2009 11am at Riverside Camp, Talek – interview translated from Maasai to English by James Kaigil.
3. Interview with Dickson Kaelo (one of the founders of OOC, a previous manager and Basecamp project co-ordinator). 05/05/2009 10am at Koiyaki Guiding School – interview conducted in English.
4. Interview with Ron Beaton (one of the founders of OOC). 12/04/2009 10.20am at his house in OOC – interview conducted in English.
5. Second interview with Ron Beaton 04/05/2009 11.45am at his house in OOC – interview conducted in English.
6. Interview with Rob O’Meara (new OOC manager) 09/04/2009 12.40 at Porini Lion Camp – interview conducted in English.
7. Interview with James Kaigil (research assistant) 9/05/2009 11am at Koiyaki Guiding School – interview conducted in English.
8. Interview with Jake Grieves-Cook (MD of Gamewatchers Safaris which owns Porini Lion Camp) 18/05/2009 10.15am at Gamewatchers headquarters, Nairobi – interview conducted in English.
9. Interview with Greg Monson (owner of Kicheche Camp) – interview conducted in English via e-mail, response received 17/06/2009.
10. Interview with Susan and Tyler Peterson (Great Plains Conservation consultants) 10/04/09 10.20am at their house in OOC – interview conducted in English.
11. Interview with Alphonse Omondi (manager at Porini Lion Camp) 06/05/2009 12.20pm at Porini Lion Camp – interview conducted in English.
12. Interview with Sean Hart (manager of Mara Plains Camp) 09/04/2009 2.50pm at Mara Plains Camp – interview conducted in English.
13. Interview with Derrick Upstone (project manager at Olare Camp) 14/04/2009 2pm at Olare Camp – interview conducted in English.
14. James Tira (acting manager and guide Nyumbu Camp) 9/05/2009 2pm at Nyumbu Camp – interview conducted in English.

15. Interview with Phillip Korio (Porini Lion Camp employee) 06/05/2009 1.45pm at Porini Lion Camp – interview conducted in English.
16. Interview with Jackson Sayialel (safari guide at Porini Lion Camp) 06/04/2009 2.30pm at Porini Lion Camp – interview conducted in English.
17. Interview with John Siololo (safari guide at Porini Lion Camp) 06/04/2009 3.15pm at Porini Lion Camp – interview conducted in English.
18. Interview with Mike Cool (safari guide at Olare Camp) 14/04/2009 3pm at Olare Camp – interview conducted in English.
19. Interview with Philip Keter (safari guide at Mara Plains Camp) 10/05/2009 1.30pm at Mara Plains Camp – interview conducted in English.
20. Interview with James Ekru (warden of OOC) 14/04/2009 10.30am at OOC headquarters – interview translated from Maasai to English by James Kaigil.
21. Interview with Joseph (ranger) 14/04/2009 11am at OOC headquarters – interview translated from Maasai to English by James Kaigil.
22. Interview with Abraham (ranger) 14/04/2009 11.30am at OOC headquarters – interview translated from Maasai to English by James Kaigil.
23. Interview with Duncan (ranger) 22/04/2009 3pm at OOC main gate – interview translated from Maasai to English by James Kaigil.
24. Interview with Jeremiah (ranger) 22/04/2009 3.30pm at OOC main gate – interview translated from Maasai to English by James Kaigil.
25. Interview with Amos (ranger) 22/04/2009 4pm at OOC main gate – interview translated from Maasai to English by James Kaigil.

Appendix 3 Environmental Suggestions

Problem / Challenge	Research Suggested Solutions	Stakeholder & Action
Track proliferation	Investment in infrastructure	New management have it as a priority
Ensuring camp environmental quality	Environmental audits conducted regularly	Agreed by management
Maintain biodiversity	Cattle should never be totally banned from OOC as they increase biodiversity (Reid et al., 2003). The reasons why cattle are in the conservancy should be explained to guests.	Some tourist partners want cattle banning, but for the moment cattle will continue to be allowed to graze during drought
	Grazing should only be permitted during drought to preserve grass for wildlife and some animals need isolation from people and cattle (Reid et al., 2003)	
Cattle overstocking and overgrazing	Research into which other breeds could successfully be kept in the Mara as they would enable families to keep the same value in livestock but have less cows	Under consideration by management
	Sources of income other than cattle also need to be sought, thus vocational courses need to be run, perhaps in coalition with Koiyaki Guiding School and Friends of Conservation.	
Grazers not staying in allocated area	Workshops should be run to explain the relationship between wildlife and cattle / people and why the rotational grazing technique is required	Under consideration by management
Restricting grazing numbers	Until blocks 3 and 4 are allocated you cannot ban non-landowners from grazing in OOC because the OOC landowners are living and grazing on the land that they are waiting to be allocated free of charge. Until this time all local and landowner families could be given a pass for a stated number of cattle (calculated once the stocking rate is known) enabling them to graze during drought	Under consideration by management
	After allocation, only landowners should be given a pass for a stated number of cows, proportional to the size of land they own in OOC and determined by the stocking rate, enabling them to graze during drought. They can either use this pass or sell it on, increasing the income for those who do not want to use OOC for grazing	

Appendix 4 Economical Suggestions

Problem / Challenge	Research Suggested Solutions	Action
Low rent	OOO rent should aim to exceed 50% landowner income and needs to be high enough so that half of it can be used to pay rent or buy land elsewhere.	With new rental agreement rent will increase 10% annually
Rental income being used inefficiently	Budgeting workshops are urgently needed so that landowners can learn to prioritise their expenditures.	Under consideration by management
	An alternative to having to collect the rent from the bank in Narok is urgently needed, ideally a satellite bank in Talek, if not then M-Pesa should be considered.	M-Pesa was considered by management and ruled out, talks are now in progress with banks
	Ideally women should receive the rent and manage the family finances as Lama (200) has repeatedly proven that they are more likely to spend the money in ways that improves wellbeing. It is recognised that the land being owned by the men and polygamy makes this difficult, but not impossible. Whilst this is being worked towards it is recommended that rent should go into a bank in Talek (if possible to set up) on market day so that the women are present.	Management agree that this is the ideal but unattainable. Market day idea, however, is under consideration
Financial transparency	Landowners should receive monthly financial reports in Swahili or Maasai which includes donations.	Agreed by management, now being undertaken
Those neighbouring OOO wanting some rental payment	It is not viable for those bordering OOO to get rent, however, they can benefit. Landowners should be encouraged to rent their land for landowners to live and graze on, local employment should remain at a minimum of 75% and there should be more community projects.	Agreed by management
The person who owns the land where camps are situated receiving a \$8 per person bed night fee	They should not receive any more rent than the other landowners because the land will not be degraded, as stated in the contract	Under consideration by tourist partners but it is unlikely that all camp landowners will agree easily
	The bed night fee could be used to increase landowner rent and the number of community projects.	

Appendix 5 Social Suggestions

Problem / challenge	Research Suggested Solutions	Action
Inequality between landowners due to bed night fee	See above	See above
Employment	It should be explained to local people that youth cannot be employed, especially in high paid jobs, without a good standard of education and that it is their responsibility as parents to have a family size that they can afford to educate.	Agreed by management
Community projects	It is strongly believed that more community projects will increase societal cohesion as the community as a whole will benefit. Suggested projects include: primary schools, a secondary school in Talek, clinics, boreholes, beadwork projects, a cultural manyatta, bee keeping and briquette making.	Agreed in theory by management and tourist partners but money for projects is tight at the moment due to slow business

Appendix 6 Cultural Suggestions

Problem / challenge	Research Suggested Solutions	Action
Cultural appropriateness	Keeping ecotourism appropriate to the local culture	Agreed by management
To encourage cultural rejuvenation	Requesting that herders in OOC wear shukas	Under consideration by management
	Set up a cultural manyatta / experience and a beadwork project	
	Have stalls at the camps to sell beadwork	
	Have cultural nights with local Maasai residents singing and dancing at the camps	
	Never totally banning cattle from OOC as cattle is one of the most important parts of Maasai culture	It is expected that this suggestion is beyond the possible influence of this study as it would require national level involvement.
Introduce Maasai culture, history, reading and writing to the curriculum as well as changing school uniforms from western clothes to <i>mashuka</i> in local schools ⁷⁸		

Appendix 7 Participatory Suggestions

Problem / challenge	Research Suggested Solutions	Action
Genuine participation	Ensure all are able to fully participate and voice their thoughts at committee meetings	Agreed by management
Inclusive participation	Wives of landowners should be allowed to attend the committee meetings as they currently have no access or ability to voice their thoughts about land.	Agreed by chairman of landowner committee, now in place
	Female landowners and wives of landowners should be represented on the landowner committee and the trust board, when it is created.	Agreed in theory by management but no action yet
	A female community officer should be employed to gage the thoughts of women, and could also run the projects aimed at local women eg beadwork.	Agreed in theory by management but no action yet
	Community officers should also meet with local non-landowners, and feed their thoughts back in the meetings.	Agreed in theory by management but no action yet

⁷⁸ If school and camp uniforms were *mashuka* (as initiated by Koiyaki Guiding School) the viscous connection between *mashuka* and illiteracy and a lack of education could be broken