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Common Heritage, Diverse Interests: Deforestation and Conservation Alternatives for Mount Kenya

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- 1 Conservation policy discourses in Kenya in the last ten years have centred on the need to reform the natural resource sector. The discourses have questioned the natural resource governance style that has hitherto been in existence and which had been blamed for the destruction of Kenya's key natural areas. The destructive practices that have seen in Kenya's natural areas have to a large extent been blamed on the prevailing governance style that had given the state a lot of influence on the management of natural resources. Hence, the legislative framework that has been a continuation of the colonial management had given a central role for the state and had consequently led to abuse of the state's mandate where for instance the president and the minister for lands had power to allocate forestland which obviously benefited political allies. The political influence of the government and adoption of wrong natural resources practices especially through the Forest Department led to massive destruction of many natural areas including forests.
- 2 The late 1990s was the height of destruction of forests and other natural areas in Kenya. This coincided with a period of politicisation of forest management where public land was allocated politically correct individuals in such areas as Ngong, Karura in Nairobi and Mount Kenya. In early 2001 for instance, the government declared its intention to excise 167,000 hectares of forestland in the country, of which 1,825.12 hectares were from Mount Kenya. This led to a public outcry and protests against the state action which was against the public good. There were also local outcries over practices by local elites and representatives of government especially in the Mount Kenya over logging of forestland, land speculation in the forest and general forest destruction.
- 3 As a result of the massive destruction and the unpopular state policies that further threatened the forests, there were public protests spearheaded by civil society

organisations in the environmental sector from the national level to the local level. At the forefront of these protests were such organisations as Forest Action Network, the Green Belt Movement, Kenya Human Rights Organisations and Mazingira Institute who even sued the government over its policy actions especially the decision to excise public forestland. At the core of the civil society's agitation was the need to be inclusive in the management of natural resource areas. The culmination of these environmental protests was in 1999 where civil society organised a stand off with the government over the excision and allocation of Karura forest in Nairobi to private individuals.

- 4 The situation in this period shows a lot of state dominance in forest management. There has been a total absence of active involvement of various stakeholders especially grassroots communities as custodians of the local forests. The sustained action of non-state actors has recently seen proposals suggesting collaborative management that includes effective community participation as well as other forest actors through a proposed forest bill 2004 . Section IV of the Bill provided that members of forest community or landowners living within 5 km radius of the edge of a state or local authority forest may, together with other members or persons resident in the same area register a forest-user association under the relevant laws. The registered association can apply to the chief conservator of forest for permission to participate in the conservation and management of the forest. These provisions demonstrated a clear step in incorporating local populations in the management of the forests in their areas. However, the destruction of forest has not only blamed on the state but also on the practices of the local populations living adjacent to protected areas. For instance, environmental NGOs like the Green Belt Movement blamed destruction of forest to the involvement of local communities in the *shamba* system , one of the most popular forestry practices in Kenya.
- 5 In sum, lobbying for natural resource reforms where major stakeholders are involved in the development of policies and laws relating to natural resources management has characterised the natural resource scene in Kenya. In the forest sector, this led to the drafting of a bill negotiated and discussed by the various stakeholders and which suggested collaborative forest management approach where local communities play a key role in the conservation, management and utilisation of forest resources. However, how all this has played out has never been clear and this article seeks to highlight the values and stakes in the Mount Kenya, the threats that the mountain faced and hints on the implementation of suggested alternatives for a sustainable conservation of the Mount Kenya.
- 6 The conservation of Mount Kenya is not only of local importance, but also of national as well as international importance. It is considered one of the key conservation areas in the country (Emerton, 1999). Besides, its importance cut across natural, cultural and political and economic divide. The protection of the mountain both for its environmental and cultural significance has recently been of utmost importance and the exploitation of the heritage offered by the mountain has been the main motivation for its protection.
- 7 The mountain's natural and cultural heritage has been the basis of international recognition of the area as an important conservation area. Hence, Mount Kenya reserve was classified by UNESCO as a cultural heritage in 1997, and its park and some of the adjacent forests have been added to the World Heritage Sites list (Tudescq A.-J., 2003). Much earlier, it had received national conservation recognition in 1932 as a national reserve. In 1949, a national park had been established within the mountain to enhance the conservation of its biodiversity. The park was further recognised in 1978 by UNESCO

as a Biosphere Reserve under the Man and Biosphere Program further enhancing its conservation status. The mountain continues to attract visitors from all over the world who come to see its diversity of plants and animals.

- 8 Locally, it still retains social cultural and economic significance among the local communities who derive a livelihood from it. Besides, as one of Kenya's five water towers and catchment area for river Tana, the largest in the country, the mountain serves important socio-economic role in development like provision of water for farming and electricity generation. Indeed, the main electricity generation plants for the country are situated along the course of the river and the electricity generated feeds the national grid by more than half of the total national electricity production.
- 9 It is the above cultural and social economic importance of the mountain that enhances the importance to conserve it as a national heritage. With the potential to develop eco-tourism that exploits both its natural and cultural heritage, the mountain is bound to enhance its cultural and social economic importance previously threatened by the destruction of its biodiversity. But, which are the natural and cultural heritage and how have they been managed? What are the challenges facing them and how can they be managed sustainably?
- 10 Mount Kenya natural endowments include a variety of animals like elephants, buffalos, bongos, etc and indigenous plants and of course it's scenic beauty and is thus gazetted as protected area as a national park and forest reserve because of its conservation value. The National Park covers the entire area above 3200m and the protected region has now been extended to include the Mount Kenya Forest Reserve, in order to protect the catchment area and wildlife. Its biodiversity, both plants and animals makes it one of the most valuable national and international tourist destinations in the country. It's most impressive landscape and its snow cap at the summit makes it appeal mostly to nature loving tourists from all over the world. On average, it attracts 31,000 people every year . However, more and more visitation by tourists especially by uncaring visitors is threatening the very fragile landscape by way of over use of climbing routes and littering along the trails thus causing more and more stress on the routes, on animals and on the other vegetation (Kariuki, 2005).
- 11 The social cultural significance of Mount Kenya is best known for its association with the high point residence of *ngai*, the traditional god of the Kikuyu people who live adjacent to the mountain. This cultural symbol has lived with the mountain for a long time and is equated with the history of the Kikuyu and their cousin communities, the Meru and the Embu who lives on the Eastern foot of the mountain. Today, in the wake of the many societal changes taking place in the Kikuyu and indeed among the other communities, the cultural and religious significance of the mountain has waned but new strategies to celebrate the cultural significance of the mountain are coming up. This has been through recognition of cultural and historical importance associated with the mountain such as the *mau mau* war of independence which was fought in the Mount Kenya and Aberdares forests in Central Kenya. The historical recognition has been through the gazettelement of *mau mau* caves as historical sites under the national museums of Kenya Act.
- 12 On the other hand, there are other physical features that have drawn much cultural significance to the mountain such as Nkunga sacred lake and the giant king *muuru* trees (*vitex keniensis*) all in the Meru area and which are becoming the basis for development of eco-tourism in the Mount Kenya area. Already, eco-tourism products developers and the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) have funded the development of

Lake Nkunga sites for development of eco-tourism. The njukiiini sacred groves in Kirinyaga are also other relevant features that give the mountain its cultural significance which are however under threats of extinction due to their non recognition.

- 13 As is described later in this article, efforts to redeem the mountain's fading sacred culture is being spearheaded by community conservation groups, government agencies like the Kenya wildlife service which has strong community development programmes and international agencies like the UNDP who support community conservation projects especially those combine local development with conservation. However, the mountain still retains its cultural symbol which has recently been exploited politically to lure the Mount Kenya communities (Kikuyu, Embu and Meru) to vote as one unified block to safeguard their regional and national political interests.
- 14 Deforestation of Mount Kenya has been the greatest human-induced activity that has threatened Mount Kenya natural endowment, especially in the 1990s. The threats to the forests by deforestation had consequences on other activities in the mountain area such as wildlife management and even the utilisation of forest products such as timber. Hence, destructive practices and the desire to conserve the mountain highlight the different stakes in the mountain. In 1999, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) in collaboration with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) carried out an aerial survey around Mt Kenya to assess the destruction of Mount Kenya with the findings revealing extensive damage to the Mount Kenya ecosystem (Gathaara, 1999). This survey only confirmed the fears of many conservation observers about the various destructive practices that were taking place around the mountain.
- 15 The major practices that were identified as threats to the mountain include *shamba* system, livestock rearing, logging, marijuana [*bhang*] growing, fires and charcoal production and landslides). What could not be captured by pictures are the more critical and very important factor of bad governance and corruption practices which were the basis of the physical manifestation of the destruction. With these threats, conservationists and environmentalists had enough evidence to question the hitherto management practices and urged on the need for more collaborative management approaches. A deeper examination of the threats facing the mountain and the fight to save the mount further reveals the various interests that had been shown on the mountain.
- 16 The *shamba* system has for along time generated controversies among scientists, politicians and local populations in Kenya. In the 1999 survey of the destruction of Mount Kenya, it emerged as one of the critical practices that threatened the conservation of Mount Kenya. A small holder agro-forestry system in the forest reserve, the system was introduced on the idea that farmers could inter-crop tree seedlings with food crops inside the forest reserves. The idea worked by allowing farmers to cultivate on newly harvested plots as long as they would replant the forest trees and after some time, about three years of cultivation, the trees would be big enough to prevent further food crop farming and so the farmer would move out of the plot for other allocated forest plot. This was a practice that was very popular with squatter communities living around the forest as they were assured of forestland to raise food crops for their families. The *shamba* system has been supported by some conservation NGOs such the Forest Action Network and Kenya Forest Working Group while being opposed by other like the Green Belt Movement.

- 17 Those who support the system argue that it is a cost effective method of running plantation forestry as people farming in the forest also take care of the young tree plantations, work that could have involved employment of additional people at extra cost. They have thus hailed the system as subsidizing the running costs of plantations forestry by a Forest Department that suffers from serious financial problems and as the best way to increase plantation forest in the country as the costs are shared by the Forest Department and the local farming populations.
- 18 The system has also been supported by arguments that it enhances food security by allowing farmers adjoining the forest to grow food crops such beans, maize, cabbages, and potatoes. In the Western Mount Kenya forest blocks of Kabaru, Chehe, Hombe, most of the farming communities and squatters have depended on the systems to earn their livelihoods. Indeed, crops grown from these blocks have supplied foods stuffs to the various local markets in a very sustainable manner. Hence, the system has been able to support many families with food requirements and also providing enough supplies for the local market thus generating enough income to meet other social economic needs of these rural households.
- 19 Lastly, those in favour of the system have argued that the *shamba* system has established good relations between local populations besides instilling conservation values of forest ecosystems by the local communities. By allowing local communities to access and use the forestlands, they are able to conserve and better manage land as they know they know they also derive livelihoods from these forestlands. The supporters of the system have also argued it is a good method of involving local populations in forest management in the absence of elaborate mechanism in the existing policies and laws. The advocates of the system argue that the problem with the *shamba* system is that it has been misused and mismanaged and the same line of argument is used by the critics of the system to discredit it. Foremost in criticizing the *shamba* system has been the Green Belt Movement who argues that by allowing local populations to farm in the forest, the economic motives override the conservation motives thus threatening the forest biodiversity by constantly encroaching into indigenous forest areas in the search for more fertile land within the forest for farming. Most of the squatters and local populations have been for the *shamba* system thus coming into conflict with the Green Belt Movement.
- 20 The squatters' problem can be seen as a consequence of the unclear and inconsistent government policy on public forests. By the end the 1980s when the government disallowed resident cultivation in the forest by banning forest villages, many of the people who lived in these villages were rendered homeless and have been living as squatters on the edges of the forest surviving on the *shamba* system. This is the category of people who are thought to offer serious threats to the conservation of the mountain by those criticizing the *shamba* system. The squatters are mainly those who did not benefit from the government resettlement scheme in Ndathi near Kabaru forest block or belonged to the category of land speculators who have come from other places hoping to benefit from another resettlement plan. The squatters thus form a sizeable number of the interest groups in the forest and Mount Kenya forest which has one of the largest forests squatting community in the country.
- 21 Logging and firewood demands have also been a threats leading to loss of canopy in the Mount Kenya forests and weakening the mountain ecosystem. Logging has particularly been on the increase due to timber needs for domestic, construction and industrial purposes. The fuel woods requirements for domestic and industrial requirements have

created huge demands for wood and have consequently led to illegal logging of Mount Kenya forest.

- 22 The industrial demand for wood fuel is necessitated by the withering of the tea crop in the tea factories that dots the whole stretch of Mount Kenya in Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Embu and Meru districts. The wood fuel demand has been heightened by some tea factory recently opting for the use of wood fuel instead of furnace oil whose costs have been increasing. However, there are some factories like Ragati that have used wood fuel since their establishment in the 1950s (Castro, 1995) and the decision of others to use wood fuel too stretches the strains forests to meet the new wood demands. Thus, the increased demand for wood has strained the supply of wood especially because the government slapped a ban on wood harvesting in the forest in 2002. Therefore, the wood fuel requirements for domestic and industrial use has recently pushed the wood demands into crisis proportions with the factories resulting to sourcing wood from the farmers to help meet their fuel requirements. This has been through joint wood programmes with the farmers where the factories started tree nurseries and selling them to farmer which are to be intercropped with the tea plantations. However, this is facing resistance from the farmers who are cautious with the high calorific value eucalyptus trees proposed by the factories as the ideal for providing wood for tea withering. The farmers concern is that eucalyptus tree species easily absorb the soil moisture required by the tea bushes thus threatening the survival of their tea bushes which provides them with their livelihoods.
- 23 Faced with this uncertainty, the factories are seeking other ways to meet sustainable wood requirements and the most appealing one has been seeking leasehold of nearby forestland. This has also created a debate as to whether commercialisation of the forest is the best option to guarantee a sustainable future of the mountain's forest heritage with critics for commercialisation/ privatisation arguing that private sector involvement is the best way to manage plantation forest areas as opposed to leaving them in the hands of the *shamba* system managed by non professionals as *shamba* system is practised in the same plantation areas which could be leased out.
- 24 Deep rooted stakes in the forest wood resources has also been in the timber demands for the local furniture market. This heightened demand has in the past contributed to the greatest threats to Mount Kenya's forest resources through illegal logging of timber from the forest, moving as far as exploiting indigenous forest areas. In the 1990s, the timber business had increased around the forest with saw millers dotting the whole stretch of the mountain, unfortunately exploiting the forest resources indiscriminately (Rheker, 1992). However, the most affected indigenous tree species were Camphor (*Ocotea usambarensis*), Cedar (*Juniperus procera*), Wild Olive (*Olea europeae*) and E.A. Rosewood (*Hagenia abyssinica*) (Gathaara, 1999, p. 17). There has been however positive changes to the illegal logging and the subsequent survey on changes to conservation of Mount Kenya indicated a decrease in logging of indigenous forests (Valeeuwe *et al*, 2003). However, secret logging continues especially in the area around Ragati and Chehe forest blocks where saw mills owners collaborate with local unemployed people to log in the forest with networks of such illegal logging being identified in these forest blocks (Kariuki, 2004). But with the national wide ban on timber exploitation, this is slowing down.
- 25 The prevention of such destructive activities has been seen as a question of management and a failure of the Forest Department governance system. On the one hand, measures put in place to prevent entry in the forest by unauthorised people have been ineffective. The government initiated a plan to establish the Nyayo Tea Development Corporation

scheme in the 1980s where tea plantations would become buffer zones between the settled area and the forest reserve, thus safeguarding the reserves against human destruction has been ineffective and poor implemented (Castro, 1995, p. 105–6). The scheme has therefore not served to prevent loggers from accessing the forest. On the other hand, the problem of logging has been seen as a consequence of the laxity of the Forest Department to implement its mandate as custodians of the forests with its officers being accused of corruption by colluding with unscrupulous local timber cartels to log in the forest.

- 26 Lastly, related to the issue fuel needs has been the issue of charcoal burning in and outside the forest. The aerial survey of Mount Kenya identified this as one of the key threats to the mountain's eco system. Charcoal burning has been popular especially among the unemployed youths who have been engaged in logging and setting up charcoal kilns in their homesteads. Previously, charcoal kilns were set up in the forest but with the ban on logging, unlicensed access to the forest for wood, and the internal monitoring by local conservation groups against these forest practices, these young people have resulted to setting up charcoal kilns in their homesteads after cutting trees and ferrying into their homes. Charcoal burning has been prevalent in the Sagana and Kabaru forest blocks, which are incidentally also forest settlement schemes which have the highest number of forest squatters evicted from the forest in the early 1990s when the review of the *shamba* system was started.
- 27 Most of the above practices that threatened the mountain natural heritage have been linked to failure of a good forest governance system. Most of the blame has been apportioned on the Forest Department's failure to change with times but above all, on the institutional capacity of the state to change the policy and legislative framework for managing natural areas. Corruption and governance failure were also manifested locally. They reflected the failure by the state and its organs like the Forest Department to implement their mandates and act transparently for sustainable management of the mountain.
- 28 There has consequently been governance related practices that have threatened the mountain's biodiversity with the most acute being corruption and inefficiency of the forest officers. The Forest Department bore the blunt of the blame from the local people and most environmental organisations have largely attributed the unproductivity of Kenya's forests to non-performance and abetting in corrupt practices of the forest officers. Foresters have been blamed for taking a hand in most of the deforestation activities from charcoal burning, colluding loggers, and in the running of the *shamba* cultivation system.
- 29 But it is in the *shamba* system where most forest corruption had been best illustrated. Forest officers had been accused of taking part in the scramble for forestland they had been employed to safeguard by using the allocation of *shamba* system plots to benefit themselves through "sale of plots" under the guise of allocating the *shamba* plots to local farmers. Most corruption therefore took place in the allotment of farming plots where about 30% of forestland was supposed to be put under the *shamba* system was balloted for while the rest was taken for "sale" by the foresters. In productive forests blocks like Kabaru and Ragati in Nyeri, an acre for forestland went for 20,000 Kenya shillings. 50 acres of such forest if put under the *shamba* system meant the forest plots could fetch 1,000,000 Kenya shillings. Questions were raised as to whether all this money was forwarded to the government.

- 30 On the other hand, tenants who are allocated plots under the *shamba* system have set their priorities on maximising their monetary gains from their allocated plots. Hence, farming that incorporate good intercropping practices of food crops and trees was ignored at the expense maximising profits from their plots which were often seen as having been bought from the foresters. As an practical example, one forest plots under potatoes, could fetch 30-40 sacks in an acre in a three months. In a good season where a sack goes for 800-1000 shilling, the forest farmers could reclaim his 20,000 Kenya shillings he used to lease the forest plot in three months. The consequence of this financial incentive of forest land is that it attracted more and more people into the forest and has also increased land speculators into the road reserves, but it has negatively left forests the loser as no meaningful forestry took place. Indeed, there are many reported cases where forest farmers have uprooted the three seedlings they are supposed to protect as they grow their food crops to give them more time to work on the plots once the seedlings dried.
- 31 These practices facilitated by the foresters were the basis of country wide dismissal of forest officer and the ban of the *shamba* system in 2004 by the new government (National Rainbow Coalition) administration as part of the suggested forest sector reforms. From the time of the suggested forest reforms, debates have however remained on the *shamba* system as the system has been said to have benefited individual forest officers and some local residents more than serving the public good.
- 32 Lastly, another governance practice that has put the Mount Kenya forest governance into disrepute has been bhang cultivation in the forest. These plantations has been associated with politicians and according to the aerial survey on the destruction of Mount Kenya, there seemed to an increase in practice from 22 fields to 29 fields (Valeuwe *et al.*, p. 18) in the observation period between 1999 and 2003 especially in the eastern Mount Kenya areas of Embu. Illegal bhang growing was associated with politicians and business people close to the previous Kenya African National Union (KANU) party regime.
- 33 The destructive practices discussed above that have threatened the Mount Kenya heritage have led to questions about the best alternatives on how to harness the mountain resources and on which is the best management style for the mountain resources. As part of a countrywide natural resources governance problem, the threats to Mount Kenya capture the national policy discourses on how best to manage natural resources. The discourses have pointed on the need for radical institutional reforms in the management of forest by questioning the exclusive role of the state through the Forest Department in the management of the natural resources where other actors have been largely been excluded.
- 34 One of the options suggested as a better approach for conservation of the natural resources is collaborative management where various players are included in the setting up of policy and legal framework as well as the actual implementation of natural resources programme in protected areas. Towards this end, the best step taken has been the crafting of the forest bill 2004 whose enactment into law was taken to parliament but has been delayed with defeat of the bill in parliament with a replacement being made and is waiting debate in parliament. But the eagerness of such suggested collaborative arrangements is the already taking place thus preceded policy and legislation.
- 35 One of the main approaches that have been suggested to manage and govern natural resources sustainably has been the co-management approach. By definition, co-

management is a concept used to describe the participatory manner in which key stakeholders in a particular resource (say forests) form working partnerships arrangements to manage the resource but with a central contribution of the immediate local community who are the actual resource owners. In the Mount Kenya forest there are also other key stakeholders who include the Kenya Wildlife Service with interests ranging from management, tourism and protection of the ecosystem; conservation NGOs like the Kenya Forest Working Group and the Green Belt Movement among others whose stakes include community mobilisation for conservation and training; the National Museums of Kenya whose stakes include research, identification, protection and preservation of cultural heritage; and of course the many private sector actors like the Kenya Tea Development Agency and saw millers who have interest in various forest products like timber. The partnerships and collaborations among the various actors and stakeholders can be seen as a continuum between the purely government led and the purely community based management systems which has been proposed before and even practised in other countries.

- 36 The idea of co-management is promoted in the light of the importance of partnerships between various actors in the various natural resource sectors as a better way of enhancing forest governance which has been previously dominated by the state and its agencies like the Forest Department. Hence, these partnership arrangements are increasingly being used in the management even of other natural resources such as water. However, since in Kenya co-management has not been practiced as a matter of policy, most of the collaborative practices in the Mount Kenya are the result of local arrangements between the different actors but they suggest the way in which elaborately structured collaborative arrangements guided by a proper policy and legislative framework could work in the future. The local initiatives described here shows how the various actors' are engaging each others in addressing degradation of the forest and other forest resources and points on the emerging management synergies that can provide models for the implementation of participatory and joint management. These collaborations present opportunities for elaborating how participative forest governance between the various actors could be enhanced and built upon.
- 37 Collective action geared towards mitigation of deforestation is apparent right from the community level in the Mount Kenya. This is demonstrated by the various mobilisations initiated by local people through their groups' networks especially through federated groups such as the Mt. Kenya West Land Owners Welfare Association (MKWELOWA). As a conglomerate of various community groups in the western side of the mountain, the group is able to liaise with various stakeholders in initiating projects aimed at addressing various environmental challenges facing the area. Since the group is a result of elective representation, it is able to implement its mandate legitimately and this explains why it has been able to achieve a broad based mobilisation and lobbying at the grassroots level across its area of operation.
- 38 The grassroots communities' around Mount Kenya through their collaborative networks have been able to come up with initiatives on forest rehabilitation, monitoring of illegal logging and other destructive practices like charcoal burning and poaching of wildlife within their areas that border the forest. Through such local self mobilisations by the local populations, other external actors like NGOs and international development organisations are also able to tap on the already existing networks in initiating projects that are geared towards enhancing mitigation of natural resource degradation.

- 39 However, local community mobilisation efforts to mitigate deforestation are challenged by a myriad of factors such as heterogeneity of local populations with different vision for forest biodiversity conservation. Community vision is divided by the different interests, first by that of squatters living mainly on the fringes of the forest and along the roads, and also the settled people in the reserves with both groups having different agenda for utilisation of forests and forest resources. The squatters in the western forest blocks have been fighting for their settlement in forestland while the settled people have visions for tapping forest resources like water to develop their land, thus creating opposed motivations among local people in the same areas. Such local initiatives are also impeded by weak capacities of these conservation groups to undertake their activities due to weak technical and financial bases.
- 40 Another form of collaborative initiative that has helped mitigate deforestation in the area is one between NGOs and local community groups. Though there are not many NGOs working on the ground in the area, there are good examples that demonstrate how partnership with local communities could enhance participatory forest governance. One such example is that of Green Belt Movement and its work through local green belt networks that focuses more on participatory forestry methods with the community in tree planting especially in public land. The focus of this initiative is to use local networks and committees to ensure effective undertaking in reafforestation of the previously deforested areas.
- 41 This form of collaboration, too, is faced with a challenge of interest especially where the local community have opposed the conservation philosophy of the Green Belt Movement which emphasises more on planting of indigenous trees that takes long to mature with the community groups preferring to plant tree species like eucalyptus which matures fast and hence contributing to fast generation of livelihoods to the forest adjacent communities. This challenge captures the need to harmonise actors' objectives and stakes and converging them for the benefit for all.
- 42 In all, this collaboration model is useful in enhancing collaborative forest governance as it ensures inclusion of categories of people such as women and youth who have been excluded in forest management activities in the past. However, it does not indicate how other stakeholders like the private sector can be included.
- 43 This was first an initiative of the Mountain lodge for conservation through the establishment of the Mount Kenya Reafforestation Programme in 2001. They undertook forest and tree activities to enhance the aesthetic value of the area they have leased from the government for tourism business through the Mountain Lodge owned by the Serena group. The programme was started after initial consultation with the Forest Department who agreed to give out a plot to enable the hotel establish a trees nursery. The initial idea was to enable the Mountain Lodge staff participate in reafforestation especially by planting the seedlings already produced by the hotel. However, the work proved to be enormous for the staff and so the hotel engaged the local community in nurseries management, planting and protection of the planted trees.
- 44 The real reafforestation work started in 2001 during the long rains season where collaborative planting of seedlings started between the lodge, local community, local schools and the Hombe Forest Department station. Statistics with the Forest Department indicates that 1.2 million seedlings were planted that year although these seedlings could not fill all the empty spaces. By 2002, more seedlings were planted and included 30,000

windings (uprooted trees) of Pine species. Data from the forest indicate that in total, about 41.8 hectares of Hombe forest land benefited from the reafforestation programme.

- 45 The joint effort among the local stakeholders in Hombe was also witnessed in the fencing of the area that had been reforested. After planting, it was noted that some of the seedlings had been destroyed by wild animals especially elephants and buffalos. The Mountain Lodge talked with the Kenya Wildlife Service warden to assist in the fencing of the reforested area thus shielding the young seedlings from elephants and buffaloes. This collaboration brought all local stakeholders together. These were the local community who provided labour and posts, the Kenya Wildlife Service who provided solar panels and wires, the Forest Department who were involved in surveying, the Mountain Lodge provides oil for smearing on the post and the Bill Woodley Trust provided financial help and logistics.
- 46 The collaboration between the local community and the Mountain Lodge has been cemented further by continued joint efforts that have gone beyond the reafforestation and fencing project. This has been through engagement in other social, cultural and economic activities. For instance, as a policy the hotel has made sure that every green vegetable consumed in the hotel has to come from members of the local community. Secondly, the hotel always invites the local dancing troupes for cultural shows in the lodge besides working with the local community during public holidays in environmental clean up excises around the forests and nearby roads.
- 47 In all, the reafforestation project is a joint effort of three stakeholder categories, the Mountain lodge, the Hombe community, local schools and the Hombe Forest Department station, though the initiative was started by the mountain lodge. Between 2001 and 2003 the programme was able to collaboratively plant 1.2 million seedlings. The initiative highlights the involvement of private sector (the mountain lodge hotel) in natural resource management.
- 48 The characteristic of this initiative is the convergence of actors' conservation interests as they pursue their own stakes where the community stakes are enhancing their livelihoods, Serena (mountain lodge) hotel is enhancing their incomes through tourism and the state agency (Forest Department) stake are conservation and supporting local people potential in meeting their livelihoods.
- 49 The last kind of collaborative effort in the Mount Kenya area is one that brings together local populations, the state and NGOs and International organisations. It is best illustrated in the Hombe forest block in western Mount Kenya. Three conservation projects area capture this kind of joint effort initiative. These are two electric fence buffer zone projects at Sagana scheme and at Hombe forest and a UNESCO trial project on the efficacy of the *shamba* system at Ragati forest block. There is also a fence project, a collaboration between the Sagana community, the Forest Department, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the European Union through the Community Development Trust Fund (CDTF) that established a 10-kilometre electric fence that goes around the Sagana scheme. The fence acts first as a buffer boundary between forest and settled area to prevent local encroachment into the forest and also serve to protect the forest by limiting the number of entry points into the forest against tree and animal poaching. It also serves to reduce human wildlife conflict. In the Sagana scheme electric fence buffer zones project Sagana communities provided labour, posts and also did the clearing of the boundaries, the Forest Department which did surveying, alignment of the fence, transport (of posts) and

did supervision and the community Development Trust Fund (CDTF) of the European Union that provided the funds.

- 50 This kind of arrangement captures the multilevel (local, national and international) links in natural resource management with the rural area being the arena in which conservation objectives are met. It also shows the increasing interests by international conservation actors at conservation of important sites like the Mount Kenya and hence their motivation to support local level natural resource conservation projects. Their interest in such activities has a positive consequence that portends possibilities of reforming the natural resource management sector and enhancing participation of local people especially as important actors like the state and civil society like donor organisations engage in strategic partnerships or where other actors put pressure on the government to adapt to natural resource reforms.
- 51 The biological and cultural diversity that characterises Mount Kenya could be the key for unlocking a sustainable conservation and development of the mountain. The adoption of community based eco-tourism initiatives whose development are currently underway may just be the tool for realising the challenges of harnessing better governance of the local heritage and ensuring sustainable development and conservation of the diverse mountain's resource endowment.
- 52 Emerging evidence from the introduction of the eco-tourism concept in the area points at the capability of eco-tourism as a tool for integrating conservation and local governance and development as it has managed to bring the various actors together. In the Mount Kenya area, experimental eco-tourism practice is integrating its core objectives of conservation of natural and cultural heritage and local development through the use of local communities, government agencies and development organisations. The following two short cases studies illustrates just how eco-tourism can be used to integrate conservation and development.
- 53 The lake Nkunga community eco-tourism project is located at Lake Nkunga about 5 kilometres from the outskirt of Meru town. Lake Nkunga is a crater lake sitting on 100 acres of land and is surrounded by a forest whose trees are in danger of depletion. The lake is referred to as a sacred lake because in the traditional past of the Ameru people, it used to be a sacrificial area to their gods.
- 54 The tourism value of the lake is varied and constitutes the lake surface which is in the process of being developed for water sports (paddled canoes), picnic sites, nature and education trails. The geological formation of the crater lake thus offers tourism potential in the areas. Currently, weeds are being removed to create water ways/paths to enable the use of paddled boats by visitors along the trails at the basin of the lake. On the nature trails, the plan is to have three trails, one at the top, in the middle and the last one at the shore. Education information modules for visitors will also be introduced. Walking paths as well as a viewing tower has already been set up.
- 55 The project started in started 2001 as a joint effort of the UNDP-GEF/SGP , the Lions Club of Meru and the local community through their elected representatives . The UNDP-GEF/SGP and Lions Club of Meru are the main sponsors of the project. The contribution of the local community is mainly in kind especially through their labour. The local people are effectively represented in the implementation committee of the project with a four representative (two men and two women). The implementation of the project also involves other relevant government departments like the Meru museum, the Forest

Department, Kenya Wildlife Service, National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) and the Department of Social Services.

- 56 The conservation of the lake was designed to meet the conservation objectives of the area as well as the needs of the local people who are dependent on the lake's water for their household use. In a feasibility study conducted in 2001, it was established that the greatest community need that was a threat to the lake's environment and conservation value was water. To meet this need, it was decided that a borehole would be sunk to meet the water needs of the community and therefore curb the fetching of the water from the shores of the lake thus preventing the erosion of soil as people went to fetch water at the base of the lake.
- 57 Mount Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group situated in Naro Moru township is one of the leading group that is combining community based tourism enterprise and biodiversity conservation. Founded in 1999, they started as a local group of tour guides, porters and cooks seeking to tap the tourists using the Naro Moru route for climbing Mount Kenya. Because of the dual nature of their work (tourism business and community biodiversity conservation) they are registered, as a community group registered with the Department of Social Services as Mount Kenya Bio-diversity Group with a business arm registered under the name *Summit Ventures*. This enables them to meet their two main objectives of tourism enterprise and bio-diversity conservation.
- 58 The group's community conservation work has been boosted by strategic collaboration with NGOs and other development organisations working in the area and is in a position to benefit with new ideas in conservation and development work. The group has for example been incorporated into the establishment of the upcoming eco-resource centre which will be a one stop centre to promote community interest in conserving the Mount Kenya eco-system and exploit its tourism potential. The eco-resource centre at Naro Moru town is sponsored through a collaboration of the UNDP-GEF/SGP, Nature Kenya, Forest Department, the Kenya Wildlife Service and local community interests.
- 59 The group's tourism business enterprise initiative have lead to their diversification of tourism products from the predominant ones in the Mount Kenya like mountain climbing to culture based products like Mau Mau caves viewing and the Kikuyu cultural villages. These new initiatives have also enabled them to establish local and international contacts with tourism groups interested in community based eco-cultural based tourism. The local collaborators include schools on whose behalf they organise eco-tours of the area and climbing expeditions of Mount Kenya. International tourism groups they have collaborated with include BaseCamp Explorer group and Jamba safaris both of Norway.
- 60 The group, together with other community groups, local hotels and school volunteers join with the Kenya Wildlife Service in clean ups exercises of the mountain's routes and the various huts used by tourists when they climb the mountain. These clean-ups are regularly held under the title 'Mount Kenya conservation day'. The group is also active involving schools in other environmental activities such as tree planting and also organising 'home stays' concept where willing tourists are hosted in local homes for about a week and participate in tree planting and such cultural activities like preparation of local foods.
- 61 For Mount Kenya area, eco-tourism presents an enormous potential for conservation and development. Like in many other places, grassroots focused tourism efforts in the area are driven by civil society especially non-governmental organisations and international

development agencies. A UNDP programme, the Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation (COMPACT) that focuses its programmes specifically on Mount Kenya has been in the forefront of propagating eco-tourism principles and practice alongside other community based biodiversity conservation efforts around the mountain. The initiative supports eco-tourism and other environmental conservation projects through funding support to community projects.

- 62 Other NGOs are also involved in community mobilisation of community based tourism efforts and include Nature Kenya and the Green Belt Movement. Nature Kenya focuses on the promotion of birding as alternative tourism attraction while the Green Belt Movement is using community based tree planting to promote eco-tourism through their initiative called Green Belt Safaris. The Green Belt Safaris initiative is similar to that of the Mount Kenya Biodiversity Group, a site support group of Nature Kenya. Both groups involve tourists in 'home stay', an arrangement that entails guests being hosted in specific homes for about a week and offered a unique cultural experience as they participate in field conservation activities such as seed collection, nursery preparations, tree planting and in local food preparation and cooking activities.
- 63 Community-based organisation involvement in tourism is enabling the promotion of tourism and conservation of biodiversity getting accepted locally and apart from conserving the environment they are also improving their livelihoods through tourism. This dual benefit is important at a time when Mount Kenya eco-system have been exposed to great threat through encroachment of protected area, destruction of forests and illegal poaching of wildlife, practices which has also been blamed on local communities in the past.
- 64 Other important aspects are the capability of eco-tourism to combine both natural and the cultural heritage. In the past, natural have played the most prominent role as the product that attracts tourists and have been used to promote Mount Kenya area as a tourist destination, but the introduction of cultural products like the Mau Mau caves and cultural villages has started to highlight contemporary relevance of the mountain's cultural heritage. However, the fact that there is only one Museum around the Mountain shows a weakness in using cultural resources for conservation and development.
- 65 Conservation initiatives in the Mount Kenya area points a willingness of the different actors to work together to conserve the Mount Kenya natural and cultural heritage. This is illustrated by the local initiatives that conceptualize collaborative frameworks especially forest management at the grassroots even before the enactment and implementation of law that would facilitate better structured collaborations. The collaborative initiatives are a response to the past exclusion of major actors in the natural resource sector by an arrangement that favoured strong state influence. The practices on the ground show that while collaborative management is an ideal way of enhancing natural resource governance, the success of a collaborative approach is shaped by conservation interests of the various actors. The introduction of new conservation alternatives, though still in the early stages, like eco-tourism is bound to enhance the conservation of Mount Kenya natural and cultural heritage further. In sum, experiences from Mount Kenya points on the need to better harness of various actors' multi-objectives which co-management approach and the eco-tourism attempts to achieve. For sustainable conservation and development of the highland area, the onus lies on the actors in developing collaborations at all levels-locally, nationally and internationally to

enhance conservation status of the mountain whose recognition runs across those very levels.

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NOTES

.See the *Daily Nation*, 21,25/1/2002; Kenya Forest Working Group (KFWG), 2001; Gachanja, 2003.

.This Bill was presented in parliament for debate in June 2004, but it was thrown out due to the politics prevailing in the country at the time over disagreements in the ruling National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). It has been redrafted and is due for reintroduction to parliament in 2006. The defeat of the Bill in parliament indicates the manner in which the management of natural resources is politicized in Kenya.

.Shamba system is a form of agro-forestry practice that allows forest adjoining communities to practice food crop farming while taking care of forestland and the trees growing in a particular section of a forest at a specific period of time. It is also known as the non-resident cultivation or the taungya system borrowed from Burma in the 19th century.

.Kenya Wildlife Service Narumoro office visitors statistics.

.UNDP-GEF/SGP is abbreviation for United Nations Development Programme, Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Programme.

.Lions Club of Meru is an association of Meru town businessmen and their representative is the coordinator to Lake Nkunga eco-tourism project.

.Local community in this case means the immediate local population who are dependent on the lake to meet their basic needs like drawing water for their domestic use and for their animals.

.According to the Nature Kenya's coordinator for western Mount Kenya area, the mountain is an important bird area and home to some threatened and little-known Abbott's Starling species. Nature Kenya collaborates with community based groups they call 'site support groups' through out the country in implementing its programmes. Mount Kenya as one among its 60 Important Birds Areas (IBAs) targeted to be conserved and promoted as tourist destination.

RÉSUMÉS

Héritage commun, intérêts divers : la déforestation et la protection-conservation de la nature au Mont Kenya. Au cours de la dernière décennie, de vastes espaces naturels ont été détruits au Kenya. Une des zones les plus affectées a été le Mont Kenya, pourtant une des régions majeures de conservation et de protection du pays. Les pratiques destructrices ont été variées autant que leurs acteurs. Les stratégies de gestion durable de ces zones naturelles sont elles aussi très diversifiées. L'article présente l'héritage existant au Mont Kenya et comment la mauvaise utilisation a influé sur les alternatives conservatoires. Les facteurs de la destruction environnementale sont ensuite abordés. L'exemple du Mont Kenya est analysé en vue d'encourager la conservation et le développement de la montagne-zone protégée. Cependant la déforestation a permis le développement de nouvelles options de conservation en vue d'un développement durable en favorisant les alternatives pour une bonne gouvernance des ressources naturelles et l'éco-tourisme.

Over the last decade there has been massive destruction of natural resource areas in Kenya. One of the areas greatly affected by this destruction was Mount Kenya, a key conservation and

protection areas in the country. The destructive practices were as varied as there were actors. Also varied have been suggested strategies to management of these natural areas in a sustainable manner. This article discusses the heritage endowment of Mount Kenya and how its misuse has influenced conservation alternative for Mount Kenya. The article first discusses the policy basis for destruction of the mountain on which the deforestation was discussed and blame on the destruction apportioned. It then highlights the heritage which Mount Kenya is endowed with showing how the heritage attracts interests from various actors and how this heritage could be a basis to encourage conservation and development of the mountain as a protected area. The article then discusses the deforestation practices that the mountain has faced especially in the late 1990s showing how the deforestation has influenced new conservation options for sustainable development and conservation of Mount Kenya by looking at good natural resource governance alternatives and the role of eco-tourism as an integrating tool.

INDEX

Mots-clés : cogestion, conservation, déforestation, écotourisme, gouvernance, héritage commun, Kenya, Mont Kenya

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