Coloniality of Conservation Anton Scheit

Coloniality of Conservation

Coloniality as a concept originally derives from the late 1990s, a period when scholars increasingly identified long-lasting 'left-overs' of colonialism in former colonies. Initially, the concept had been applied in a Latin-American context but has then become a key concept examining sustained spheres of colonialism on a global scale (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243). Quijano (2000) categorizes the concept into three sections of colonial influence:

(1) Coloniality of being -

mainly physical entities such as humans but as well as cities, infrastructure, or physical borders. Focus was drawn upon how preand post-independence-born citizens perceived and defined those entities.

(2) Coloniality of power – identification of colonial influence on present power structures.
(3) Coloniality of knowledge – genealogic backtracking of powerproduction in respect of the hierarchizing impact of knowledge (Quijano 2000). The concept of coloniality rejects the caesura between colonial and non-colonial times in the history of colonized countries.

In fact, coloniality outlasts colonialism and is thus a crucial tool in order to understand ongoing colonial influence on the politics, economy, and society of a former colony (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014).

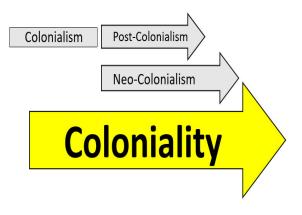


Figure 5: Endurance of coloniality. Source: own reperesentation, based on Maldonado-Torres 2007

As depicted in Figure 5, coloniality takes ongoing colonial influences into account and links them to factors that were installed during colonialism. Thus, the concept facilitates differentiated examinations of and – by distinction – non-Eurocentric perspectives on asymmetric power structures which still impede a society's emancipatory potential for autonomy (Escobar 2007: 180).

Since many African countries were among the latest decolonized countries in the 20th century, the case of Africa offers important insights into very immediate colonialities. To forestall the issue, the first day of the excursion to Northern Tanzania in April 2022 will critically examine the concept.

The city of Arusha, the first stop in the excursion, is often discussed or rather glorified as the 'gateway' to Serengeti' and indeed plays a key role in Tanzanian wildlife tourism. From the beginning of German colonial rule in the 1880s until the end of British colonial rule in 1961, the Arusha Region as well as the entire (then proclaimed) colonial state of Tanganyika, went through a profound transformation regarding the intersection of land ownership, human-wildlife-relations and trophy-hunting. German invaders disowned the people living in Northern Tanzania, relocated them to 'native'-designated land and commenced capitalizing the land they had thereby obtained. When after World-War I Britain took over in Tanganyika, the new rulers adapted the land distribution and according laws the Germans had imposed. In many regions a clear line was drawn between human beings and wildlife, basically for two reasons: on one side of the line wildlife provided the colonialists with game (trophyhunting became the 'white man's sport') and on the other side colonized locals were forced into sedentarism and later, when Britain in the course of World-War II increased agricultural exports from its colonies, plantation-labour as well. Soon, game-reserves and national-parks serving as hunting-concessions were established across the entire colonial state (Bluwstein 2018: 148 ff). Regardless of how local pastoralists and wild animals had coexisted for centuries and with little understanding of local wildlife

management strategies, both colonial powers in Tanganyika strictly dichotomized wildlife and human beings. As evidenced by present-day Tanzania, this dichotomy has been sustained throughout the colonial and postcolonial period of the country even though legislations of independent Tanzania had shifted land control from the state towards locals.

However, in recent years the government increased its control over land as well as wildlife living on this land. Today, 40% of Tanzania's land mass are protected areas counting various forms of parks, reserves, and zones (Weldemichel 2020: 1501 ff). In 2019, the last year not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, Tanzania's tourism sector generated 2.6 billion USD and thus contributed 10.7% to the country's GDP (TanzaniaInvest 2022).

Whereas land-grabbing is often represented as driven by agribusiness, conservation today is the second and most widespread mode of land dispossession in Sub-Saharan Africa (Laltaika & Askew 2018: 7). Besides their economic importance, Tanzania's protected areas are home to several endangered species such as Rhinos, Elephants, or Giraffes. Thus, protection of these species is another aim of the country's wildlife management. Being alerted by decreasing numbers of elephants in Serengeti, for example, protectionists raise the importance of conservation

through protected areas and frame pastoralists as the immediate threat for wildlife. Thereby, the government takes advantage of this narrative which is based on the human-wildlifedichotomy which is to be understood spatially: as **Figure 6** shows, the government, obeying the economic demand of wildlife expansion, justifies evictions of pastoralists such as the Maasai of Northern Tanzania with the apparent threat they are for endangered species (Weldemichel 2020: 1511 ff.).

Regarding this form of state-driven reproduction of colonial appropriation, the link to the concept of coloniality is evident. However, the concept bears the risk of too structuralist an application missing an important question: which role do pastoralists play in this wildlife-

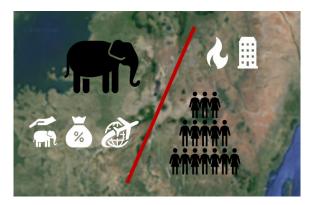


Figure 6: The separation of wildlife and humans in Northern Tanzania facilitates a booming economy of international tourism and protection of endangered species on one side but on the other side requires the displacement of thousands of people – mostly pastoralists – who are then forced into sedentarism in (semi)urban areas. Source: own representation, based on Bluwstein 2018; Google Earth 2022; Weldemichel 2020 capitalization across colonial boundaries? The significance of indigenous agency in colonial and post-colonial times must be included in the concept of coloniality in order to allow approaches from multiple perspectives (Arias 2013: 215 ff.).

Materialisation of "Coloniality of Conservation" in Arusha

In the past decade, pastoralists in Tanzania's north have experienced a new wave of violent evictions in the course of the government's aim to expand wildlife tourism. The district of Loliondo lies around 300 km northwest of Arusha. As Weldemichel (2020) carried out and (inter)national newspapers repeatedly have addressed, several evictions from 2009 until 2017 took place in Loliondo leaving thousands of Maasai people homeless and dispossessed (Photo 4). In 1974, the district was designated as a Game Controlled Area allowing controlled human activities such as grazing and hunting. Thus, locals remained in the area. In course of the 1990s, the government commenced to lease parts of Loliondo to foreign investors such as the royal family of the UAE as hunting concessions. Concurrently, Maasai locals had other leases ongoing, leasing their land to lodges. In the following years the

government tightened wildlife management legislations and increasingly declared buffer, migratory and dispersal zones for wildlife. Assuring the enforcement of the relocation of residents in the expanded zones the government deployed para-military units – so called rangers – heavily armed and often corrupt. However, many Maasai remained in the area. Resistance is often organized by initiatives and NGOs representing community leaders (**Photo 5**).



Photo 4: Disowned Maasai families after evictions in Loliondo 2017. Source: https://medium.com/conservationwatch/ violent-evictions-of-maasai-underway-inloliondo-tanzania-to-make-way-forotterlo-business-d475bf941c29 (accessed on: 24.04.2022)



Photo 5: Loliondo residents resisting government forces in 2018. Source: https://intercontinentalcry.org/maasaivillagers-win-a-major-victory-in-the-eastafrican-court-of-justice/ (accessed on: 24.04.2022)

But discrepancies are hard to overcome: The mobility of the Maasai which enables them to cultivate semi-arid areas and once facilitated their coexistence with wildlife is now under siege since it is seen as the main drive for extensive land and resource use threatening wildlife. Weldemichel has carried out another problematized aspect of the Maasai's mobility: cross-border mobility with different Maasai families and clans in Kenya which now has become illicit migration (Weldemichel 2020: 1503-1509). Interestingly, the border between Tanzania and Kenya in this area is a straight line that was once drawn by colonial powers many decades ago. Recent publications of journalists and researchers from February and March 2022 predict the likelihood of upcoming evictions of thousands of Maasai residents in Loliondo since the new President has indicated efforts to increase the capitalization of the Maasai's lands, siding with a company from UAE (Langat 2022; Pastoris 2022; Sutherland 2022).

Simultaneously, around 100.000 Maasai living in the Ngorongoro crater are currently facing the same fate since the crater and its conservation site is extracted like a goldmine. Most of the millions of the money generated in the crater goes to the central government (Ndesanjo 2022). Having the developments of Loliondo or Ngorongoro integrated in a broader context of colonial legacies one might recognize how the Tanzanian government, various companies and numerous investors profit from colonial structures and thus realize patterns of marginalization and oppression. Again, comparison can be undertaken with colonial legacies being reflected in Mega-Infrastructure-Projects such as the LAPSSET corridor in northern Kenya (Aalders et al. 2021; Enns et al. 2019). And yet it is important to understand which actors and which perspectives do identify colonial characteristics and for whom those actually are of relevance. Therefore, this part of the excursion will be dedicated to the perspectives of the Maasai and other pastoralists affected.



Photo 6: Advertisement photo from a lodge's website: How might Maasai people perceive international tourists? Source: https://www.cobra-verdetansania-safaris.de/camps-und-lodges/ serengeti/nduara-loliondo.html (accessed on: 24.04.2022)

Thesis: the concept of coloniality is likely to be used in too structuralist manners. Scholars miss the importance of local agency/resistance as well as the role of other actors when every aspect of being. power and knowledge is simply pointed out as colonial. In present-day Tanzania, more than 50 years after independence, the Maasai are not being evicted by German or British colonizers but are ruled by a development-oriented government imposing marginalizing laws upon them. In respect of that, it is a matter of perception which raises several questions: Do the Maasai in Loliondo recognize colonial legacies being reproduced? Do they link current experiences back to collective memories of evictions in colonial times? How do Maasai people perceive foreign, non-African investors or Western tourists (Photo 6)? How could a just and inclusive wildlife (tourism) management look like? Challenging the passive role of the Maasai – which is implicit within the coloniality concept – it is the aim of this excursion day to find answers to these questions.

Script for the Excursion Day

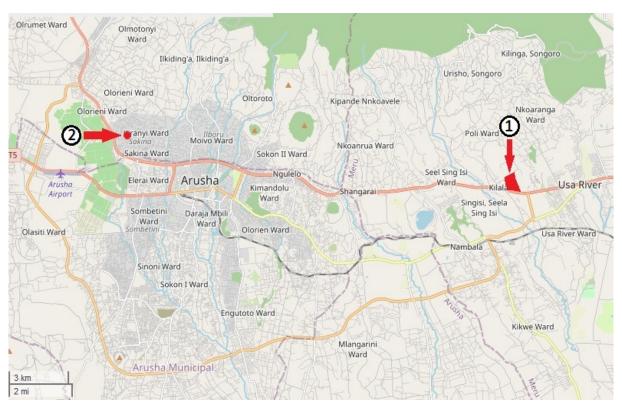


Figure 7: Map of Arusha and surroundings. Point 1: Tumaini University; point 2: Pingo's forum head office. Source: Open Street Map (accessed on: 30.04.2022)

1st Part: Brainstorming (7:00-8:00 am)

The program starts with a brief brainstorming within the group, focusing on two questions: (1) Is the matter of coloniality – from the Maasai's point of view (even though we won't realistically know by then) – relevant for their struggle for land and justice? (2) Does the concept of coloniality help to find solutions for the Loliondo conflict? This will be done during the bus drive to Usa River.

2nd Part: Meeting with Dr. Elifuraha Laltaika at Usa River Campus of Tumaini University, ca. one hour bus drive from Arusha (8:00-12:00 am)

Dr. Elifuraha Laltaika, whom I have cited in the introduction, is a scholar at Tumaini University. He has published several writings basically about the interface between human rights and extractive industries as well as between indigenous people's rights and natural and environmental resources law. Recent works have focused on pastoralists' rights to land in particular. Thus, he will be able to share with us his insight into ongoing conflicts around Arusha and the marginalization pastoralists are facing. Centered questions will be: How could a just and inclusive wildlife (tourism) management look like? What role does research play in this and how should this research be conducted?

Firstly, we will meet the Vice-Chancellor of the university who will introduce us to the campus and how higher education in Tanzania is working. Secondly, we will be guests to an open lecture by Dr. Laltaika with the inclusion of Prof. Ouma and me. Thirdly, the program at Tumaini University will be concluded with an interactive part focusing on coloniality.

3rd Part: Lunchbreak (1:00-2:00 pm)

After the way back to Arusha there will be a break for lunch in town. After this break, we will take a bus to PINGO's Forum office in Arusha.

4th Part: Meeting with Edward Porokwa, Director of PINGO's Forum in Arusha (2:30-4:30 pm)

PINGO's forum is an NGO hosting several initiatives and organizations that represent the pastoralist community and their interests in ongoing conflicts such as Loliondo. Together with other NGOs PINGO is serving as a connection hub and holds the link to the government and other 'bigger' players. Mr. Porokwa is in contact with many representatives of Maasai communities and will be able to represent their perspective on the conflict and his insight is very crucial for our examination of the coloniality concept. Focus will be drawn upon the questions mentioned in the thesis.

5th Part: Discussion (4:30-5:00 pm)

To conclude the day, we will have a post-discussion after the meetings at PINGO's Forum office focusing on the questions and individual perceptions of the coloniality concept in reference to the Maasai's point of view.

Postscript for the Day of the Excursion on: Coloniality of Conversation

This is to assess and reflect the perspective of Coloniality on conversation in Tanzania in light of the insights and impressions of the first day of our excursion. First, I will share a brief summary of the day. Second, I discuss the keyword coloniality of conservation with regard to the insights that we obtained from Dr. Laltaika and Mr. Porokwa, the two experts we met for the day. The arguments are based on the notes that I took during the meetings. Third, I depict likely challenges for the research of white scholars from the Global North in Tanzania. The entire excursion has demonstrated how difficult research from an external point of view turns out to be once the field is entered. These difficulties are to be discussed briefly in the discussion.



Photo 7: Students from Bayreuth meet Tanzanian students at Tumaini Campus in Usa River. Source: Own Picture, 2022

Summary of the Day

The day started as planned in the script. We left Arusha at 7 am for Usa River, where Tumaini University is located. On campus, we were welcomed by one of Dr. Laltaika's students who led us to the Department of Law. We saw the library and were then led to Dr. Laltaika's house on the compound, where we got to know him and his family.

After breakfast, we went to the biggest auditorium of the campus where the lecture Dr. Laltaika had invited us to, was going to take place. This was bigger than expected, there were around 500 people in the audience. The lecture involved some cospeakers, Professor Ouma, and mainly Dr. Laltaika who had received an award beforehand and was thus to be honored with this public lecture. He lectured about Tanzania's current land law, its colonial content, and its impact on indigenous people such as the Maasai. He emphasized the relation on current conservation practices in northern Tanzania and the colonial background of conversation in Tanzania in general. He as well as one of his co-speakers demonstrated how present-day Tanzania reproduces colonial modes of land-grabbing and displacement of indigenous people and how these modes are supported by Tanzanian legislation on conservation. Professor Ouma added from a European perspective the importance of

independent research and how exchange and correspondence of scholarship between the Global North and South should be enhanced.

Folliwing the lecture, our group got to sit with Dr. Laltaika for an hour to ask questions. The content and insight revealed in this talk are depicted in the discussion part of this postscript.

Thereafter, we had our lunch break and then drove back to Arusha where we were to meet Mr. Porokwa in the office of PINGO's forum. This meeting was a contrast to the set-up lecture from the morning. Mr. Porokwa spoke about his experiences as the chair of the NGO that serves as an umbrella organization for several organizations and initiatives representing Maasai and other pastoralist groups living in Tanzania's North. In particular, Mr. Porokwa spoke about the struggle of the Maasai in Ngorongoro and Loliondo. Again, the content of this meeting is depicted in the discussion part.

After this meeting, we returned to the hostel where we had a recap of the day.

Reflecting on Coloniality of Conservation after 'the Field'

Dr. Laltaika gave us insight into his outstanding work that adds emphasis to the longue durée of colonial law in Tanzania. Regarding the law that determines

the possibilities of judicial resistance and agency of Maasai and other pastoralist people affected, Dr. Laltaika stated, broad processes of decolonisation are vet to be enforced. Since the Tanzania constitution continues to contain colonial laws, any Pastoralist-eviction that is legislatively justified is consequently an eviction of colonial nature and pastoralists are thus to fight against colonial legacies. Recent events in Loliondo indicate the violence and abrasiveness that precede the deployment of such colonial forces: On the 7th of June a paramilitary unit of 700 soldiers, rangers and policemen arrived at an area bordering Serengeti National Park that is to be demarcated as a protected area and thus to be cleared of any human activity except tourismbased game hunting. In the following days, numerous representatives and individuals resenting the evictions were arrested, their livestock killed, and their houses burned. This shows how tanks and bombs are being used to remove residents from protected areas after they have been under siege for years (Yamat & Monzano 2022). Photo 8 shows

Maasai people protesting in January 2022 when the threat of evictions for over 70.000 residents became more evident.



Photo 8: Maasai pastoralists protesting in Loliondo in January 2022. Source: Anuradha Mittal, 2022

As the concept of coloniality helps to identify any colonial mode of political, economic, or societal oppression and marginalization, it is crucial in the process of removing such structures and thus opening hallways for an independent and egalitarian way of land and conservation management. Unfortunately, only a few Tanzanian scholars share Dr. Laltaika's point of view and are bringing studies of law and studies of coloniality together.

Mr. Porokwa shared a more indigenous and historical perspective on the matter. He spoke of the cases from Loliondo and Ngorongoro and the pastoralists living there. He described how changing land policies both colonial and postcolonial had ever since failed to correspond with the pastoralists' way of land-use. Since people were respected and treated as citizens only in case they had a physical address the pastoralists had little means of defending the land they were living on. They do not treat land as their property since they are regularly on the move. According to Mr. Porokwa, this fact has never been understood and incorporated in land management of the state. Furthermore, colonial powers as well as the present-day government rushed to conclude contracts with apparent leaders of pastoralist groups but did not recognise that there was no such leadership that would legitimate such contracts within the communities.

Given such instances, governmental contracts have no respect for the pastoralist communities whereas the government, aligning with colonial methods, does not include their needs of living in land management. This lack of interest is based on a wide chasm of alienation which has its origins in colonialism, too. Furthermore, the evictions, which violently oppress any resistance, are supported by the deployment of purposeful hardship inside pastoralists' communities by cutting off social services and increasing poverty, to name a few aspects. Mr. Porokwa identifies these tactics as of colonial manner and yet clearly blames the current and recent government for the suffering of the

pastoralist people affected. Moreover, he emphasized that those affected do not exclusively blame the colonial origin of the conservation areas for their misery, yet the memory of dispossession during colonialism is forwarded to the next generations. The loss of land is a painful experience for all Maasai since it is a deprivation of identity and fulfillment as well. Mr. Porokwa's moderate views on coloniality show that he, as an activist, is much more forced into contexts that do require immediate action and mediation between the current government and those Maasai affected as well as other actors. Thus, the matter of coloniality remains in the background of Mr. Porokwa's work. As a scholar, Dr. Laltaika is dedicated – and paid for – to take all layers of the ongoing conflicts into account and is thus able to push the importance of decolonisation forward which is yet to be finalized.

Scholarship on conservation is to provide and disseminate new knowledge and insights that can trigger new discourses on coloniality and pose decolonial perspectives on conservation. Mr. Porokwa, as an activist, would then be able to resort to these discourses as a mediator and representative of the Maasai people.

Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Upscaling the Topic

This excursion has been my first experience of what academic fieldwork in Africa might be like and I have thus gained plenty of new impressions. Throughout these two weeks, also in the meetings with my fellow students, getting in contact with the people we met always went along with a clash of uneven positions and privileges. Often and certainly most blatant, when meeting Mr. Porokwa, I felt like invading somebody's work and living space with the purpose of 'getting to know something'. Even though both meetings were planned and well prepared, visiting Tumaini University felt more appropriate. As part of his work, Dr. Laltaika meets international students regularly and benefits from such scholarly meetings. As for Mr. Porokwa, there was no immediate need on his side to host us. Furthermore, Mr. Porokwa is directly affected by the evictions and oppression of the Maasai in Loliondo and Ngorongoro. Mr. Laltaika is indirectly affected. From a methodological point of view, this degree of affection must be considered in the design of the interviews and the assessment of the outcome. The latter shows that an academic matter like the concept of 'coloniality' can be dealt with by a formal scholar like Dr. Laltaika whereas Mr. Porokwa, an activist, simply could not afford

to spend too much time on such knowledge production. And yet, the identification of colonial legacies that lie within the forces he faces remains crucial for the struggle he is fighting for. It is thus not surprising that Dr. Laltaika and Mr. Porokwa frequently meet each other and support each other's work.

Regarding the conversations during the meetings, the questions of an interview, if formulated in academic language, are easily answered by a professor whereas a person beyond academia tends to misunderstand or not understand at all such questions. Therefore, I plead for narrative interviews in these cases that allow the respondent to share their insights freely and without the pressure of an imposed, academically formulated question. On the hand, such interview questions must be articulated properly when interviewing a person familiar with academia. However, as far as I have realised during the excursion, interviews, apart from the formulation of questions, do inevitably depend on the place where they are held, on the stage the participants are in, and how much the relation between researcher and respondent is clarified beforehand.

Another challenge that became clear was the access to the field. As European students were welcomed at Tumaini University with open arms. The 'field' was awaiting us. Access was granted with little expectation of returns. Instead, we were expected to act like researchers and ask questions. The meeting with Mr. Porokwa showed that outside of an academic context, the field is much harder to be accessed. Although Mr. Porokwa welcomed us with the same delight and respect as did Mr. Laltaika and his team, he was much more distanced from our foreign positionalities. And still, he is used to the context of talking about Maasai and their struggle to non-Maasai as well as non-struggle people. This distance is most likely centupled when meeting Maasai locals in Loliondo or Ngorongoro. Additionally, as Mr. Porokwa confirmed, they might have reservations towards white European researchers. And then, in the end, the language barriers remain a constant burden that is only overcome once advanced ability of local languages is acquired.

Another impediment is a limitation of research permits in this matter since the government, that issues them, is not keen to have critical knowledge from that area extracted. Ultimately, our academic perspective is European-preconditioned and thus we (as students focusing on decoloniality in African development studies), for example, put the matter of coloniality on top of our agenda. Whereas this is not so much the case in Tanzania, it does mean that we are to tell Tanzanians what they should gain knowledge about? Is it possible to overcome such biased perspectives when the bias becomes most blatant once the field is already entered? Therefore, the excursion has contributed crucial insights into different perspectives that are helpful for me, to question the perspectives that we hold during our bachelor's. These experiences have triggered my interest in multiperspectivity as a much more comprehensive and less biased mode of knowledge production.

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