

Designed for accumulation by dispossession: An analysis of Tanzania's Wildlife Management Areas through the case of Burunge

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Funding information

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program, Grant/Award Number: 641918

Abstract

Unfortunately, adverse rather than positive local welfare outcomes of community-based conservation initiatives are quite common. Through the case of Burunge Wildlife Management Area (WMA) this study documents how WMAs in Tanzania appear designed to facilitate accumulation by dispossession in the name of decentralized wildlife management. Based on focus group discussions, interviews, and policy-document analyses, we show that the process of establishing the WMA was fraught with hidden agendas and lacked legitimacy as well as transparency. Villagers and their local governments were also oblivious to the fact that the village land they contributed to forming the WMA would no longer be under village control even if they withdrew from the WMA. Decentralized revenue streams were gradually recentralized, and when the High Court ruled in favor of a Village Government that did not want to be part of the WMA, higher levels of government scared it to stay and to drop its legal as well as economic claims. We conclude that by mechanisms of rule-through-law WMAs deliberately dispossess village communities by attenuating the authority of democratically elected village governments. Hence, the wildlife policy needs urgent revision to democratize and thus promote positive livelihood outcomes of the WMA concept.

KEYWORDS

community wildlife management, democratic decentralization, dispossession, legitimacy, rule-through-law, transparency

1 | INTRODUCTION

Scholars of natural resources conservation have increasingly highlighted that Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) in Africa and Asia often seems to promote primitive accumulation or

accumulation by dispossession¹ rather than the theory-borne and officially proclaimed win-win promise—resource conservation and equitably improved rural livelihoods (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Igoe & Brockington, 2007; Kelly, 2011; Neumann, 2004). Policies and projects that, in theory, aim to benefit rural

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communities through decentralization tend, in practice, to result in enclosures and exclusion, leaving communities dispossessed of their resources, including land, and revenues. Hence, instead of abating environmental degradation and breaking poverty traps, these policies and projects may work to the detriment of rural communities by enabling accumulation by dispossession (Kelly, 2011). Such processes of accumulation by dispossession may, in turn, have negative environmental implications by provoking pervasive resistance and by eliminating incentives for sustainable resource use (Harvey, 2003).

Decentralization involves the ceding of power from central to lower-level government institutions such as District and Village Councils (Babili, Mitalo, Kajembe, & van der Wal, 2015; Ribot, 2002). Several distinctly different forms of decentralization have been tried and tested across Africa, including delegation, deconcentration, privatization, fiscal transfer, and devolution (Junge, 2002; Ribot, 2002; Ribot, Lund, & Treue, 2010). However, all too often, the theoretical benefits of decentralization have failed to materialize, and part of the reason may be that the level of decentralization has been insufficient (Ribot, 2002). Furthermore, recent findings highlight that, in their reluctance to relinquish power, national governments or their centralized bureaucracies have resisted to legislate meaningful decentralization or deliberately over-complicated procedures to implement political decentralization/devolution (Basnyat, Treue, Pokharel, Baral, & Rumbaa, 2020; Ribot, Agrawal, & Larson, 2006). Such resistance by central governments includes putting legal and bureaucratic obstacles in the way of communities that try to govern and manage their resources (Ribot & Larson, 2005). Intended or not, this approach has facilitated accumulation by dispossession (Kelly, 2011). Accumulation by dispossession involves processes of divorcing producers from the means of production (Harvey, 2003). Originally, enclosing the commons was conceived as “a conversion of commons into private property” but as Kelly (2011) shows, commons can equally well be “enclosed into” state-owned protected areas.

Accumulation by dispossession has been associated with ecotourism projects in CBNRM (Hall, Hirsch, & Li, 2011; Kelly, 2011). Hall et al. (2011, p. 71) revealed that community members helped to design and implement exclusion in CBNRM, through locally acceptable criteria that are supported by state schemes for the establishment and management of protected areas. Exclusion involves “ways in which people are prevented from benefiting from things such as land” (Hall et al., 2011; Levien, 2017). Kelly (2011) contends that “conservation by dispossession may threaten the environment more than it preserves it.” Accumulation of capital as the focus of capitalistic modes of production benefits only a few and leaves the majority, especially the rural poor and

marginalized worse off and, thus, more dependent on natural resources.² As Hall et al. (2011) state: “Capitalism in general systematically produces wealth for the few and poverty for the majority through accumulation and dispossession.” This process also takes place in the conservation context where land is enclosed, officially for “community or public interests,” but in reality, only a few literate local people, central government officials, and private ecotourism investors benefit financially through various means including rent-seeking behavior (Kelly, 2011). Communities are impoverished by conservation and enclosure of the commons because subsistence use of resources within these areas are usually curtailed or banned altogether (Kicheleri, Treue, Nielsen, Kajembe, & Mombo, 2018). Hence, communities, ultimately lose access to essential resources that they have historically depended on through enclosures that are justified by neoliberal conservation and cash benefit promises (Kelly, 2011).

In Tanzania, Igoe and Brockington (2007) showed how CBNRM through the commodification of nature, as an example of neo-liberalization, has reregulated the use of landscapes through different forms of territorialization that, contrary to neoliberal rhetoric, has failed to improve but rather undermined the livelihoods of rural people. According to several scholars, national governments, international non-governmental organizations, donors, enterprises, foreign nations, and private individuals are, knowingly or unknowingly, spearheading dispossession mechanisms for capital accumulation under the umbrella of CBNRM (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Igoe & Brockington, 2007; Igoe & Croucher, 2007; Kelly, 2011; Neumann, 2004). Moreover, covert or overt acts of violence frequently enforce reregulated landscapes and thus expedite accumulation by dispossession (Igoe & Croucher, 2007; Kelly, 2011; Levien, 2017). Contemporary examples include the establishment of conservation enclosures that lead to relocation or eviction of people from their land with significant negative welfare implications for the involved communities. Establishment of the Mkomazi Game Reserve was, for instance, associated with a militarized forceful eviction of 5,000 residents from 3,235 km² of their former land (Ringo, 1998; Neumann, 2001, p. 313). Furthermore, Brockington (1999) argues that eviction from the Mkomazi Game Reserve severely impacted the livelihoods of those evicted—especially the poorest.

Vatn, Kajembe, Mosi, and Nantongo (2017) reasoned that legitimacy is of paramount importance in the process of establishing CBNRM and that it is vital that intended outcomes are achieved by following “acceptable standards.” When processes of environmental governance lack transparency, this endangers legitimacy (Bernstein, 2004; Biermann & Gupta, 2011). We, therefore, argue that a lack of legitimacy and transparency

(see below) in CBNRM and other natural resource governance processes can indicate attempts of accumulation by dispossession although national governments' and NGOs' rhetoric about such CBNRM projects insists on the contrary (Igoe & Croucher, 2007). Benjaminsen and Bryceson (2012), for example, reported a "serious lack of legitimacy" and transparency in the management of the Mafia Island Marine Park. Similarly, nontransparent and illegal conduct have been observed in Wildlife Management Area (WMA) operations (Bluwstein & Lund, 2018; Moyo, Funk, & Pretzsch, 2017; Stephanie, 2014). Stephanie (2014) revealed that three villages out of six in Randileni WMA resisted the WMA due to dissatisfaction with new boundaries and grazing restrictions. In this case, the police force was used to deter communities from showing their resentment. Resistance caused by discontentment over boundaries were also observed in Nalika WMA by Bluwstein and Lund (2018). Moyo et al. (2017) reported the exclusion of communities from accessing resources in Burunge WMA, which stirred violence. Accordingly, for the sake of conservation, WMAs are often associated with illegitimate, nontransparent, and violent processes that lead to dispossession.

Despite the ecological benefits (e.g., Kiffner et al., 2020) and increasing awareness and focus on the potential negative impacts of CBNRM programmes, there is limited evidence on how accumulation by dispossession takes place in practice, especially in WMAs. For example, none of the existing studies on land alienation of local communities under the umbrella of conservation in Tanzania has applied legitimacy, transparency, or violence as theoretical lenses to explore how accumulation by dispossession takes place. Hence, how a lack of legitimacy, transparency, and use of violence serve as means of dispossession deserve more scrutiny. The objective of this study, therefore, was to examine the evidence for accumulation by dispossession in Tanzania's WMAs. Specifically, and with a focus on Minjingu village, this study examined the legitimacy and transparency as well as the resulting resistance toward implementing Burunge WMA and the use of violence to suppress that resistance. Accordingly, the study follows up on that of Igoe and Croucher (2007) and speaks broadly to the natural resource governance literature and particularly to that on Community-Based Conservation and CBNRM.

2 | METHODOLOGY

2.1 | Description of the study area

Minjingu is one of 10 villages forming Burunge WMA, which is located in Babati District between Manyara and

Tarangire National Parks in Northern Tanzania (Figure 1). Burunge WMA forms part of a wildlife corridor that connects the two parks (Sulle, Lekuaita, & Nelson, 2011). It is also close to the UNESCO world heritage sites Serengeti National Park and Ngorongoro Conservation Area, and the Great Rift Valley Escarpment is visible from everywhere in Burunge WMA. Livestock keeping is the principal land use in Minjingu village, followed by crop production, which is dominated by small-scale farming. The main crops include maize, beans, bananas, millet, paddy, and potatoes. The rainy season begins in November and ends in May. Rainfall ranges between 400 and 500 mm per year, and the temperature ranges between 18 and 33°C (Burunge AA, 2011). We selected Minjingu village and Burunge WMA, in general, due to its prime location and high wildlife abundance, which offers high tourism-based income potentials. Burunge WMA is also considered economically successful in comparison to other WMAs (AWF, 2013; USAID, 2000). Accordingly, Burunge WMA should be well-positioned to fulfill the dual objective of wildlife conservation and local economic development. However, the village of Minjingu has consistently claimed that it did not willingly join the WMA (see Igoe & Croucher, 2007) and refused to collaborate with, and accept any revenue distribution from Burunge WMA. A long-lasting conflict has ensued, which ultimately led Minjingu village to sue Burunge WMA's governing institution, the authorized association (AA) at the High Court of the United Republic of Tanzania. This unusual move makes the case of Minjingu village interesting in its own right, and, as we will show, it is an example of accumulation by dispossession through CBNRM where illegitimate acts by government authorities and NGOs as well as lack of transparency and violence were used to achieve this end.

2.2 | Data collection methods

The first author conducted four focus group discussions (FGD) with 7–12 persons with each of the following groups; Village Council members, youths, women, and elders in Minjingu. Interviews were conducted intermittently between 2014 and 2016, together with follow-up interviews up to April, 2020. Key informant interviews were carried out with representatives from Burunge AA, Marambo tented camp and Burunge lodge, 13 people at the village shopping center, the District lawyer, planning officer, and game officer. Interviews were also conducted with community members who were part of or otherwise involved with the village council leadership during the WMA establishment process in 2003–2005.

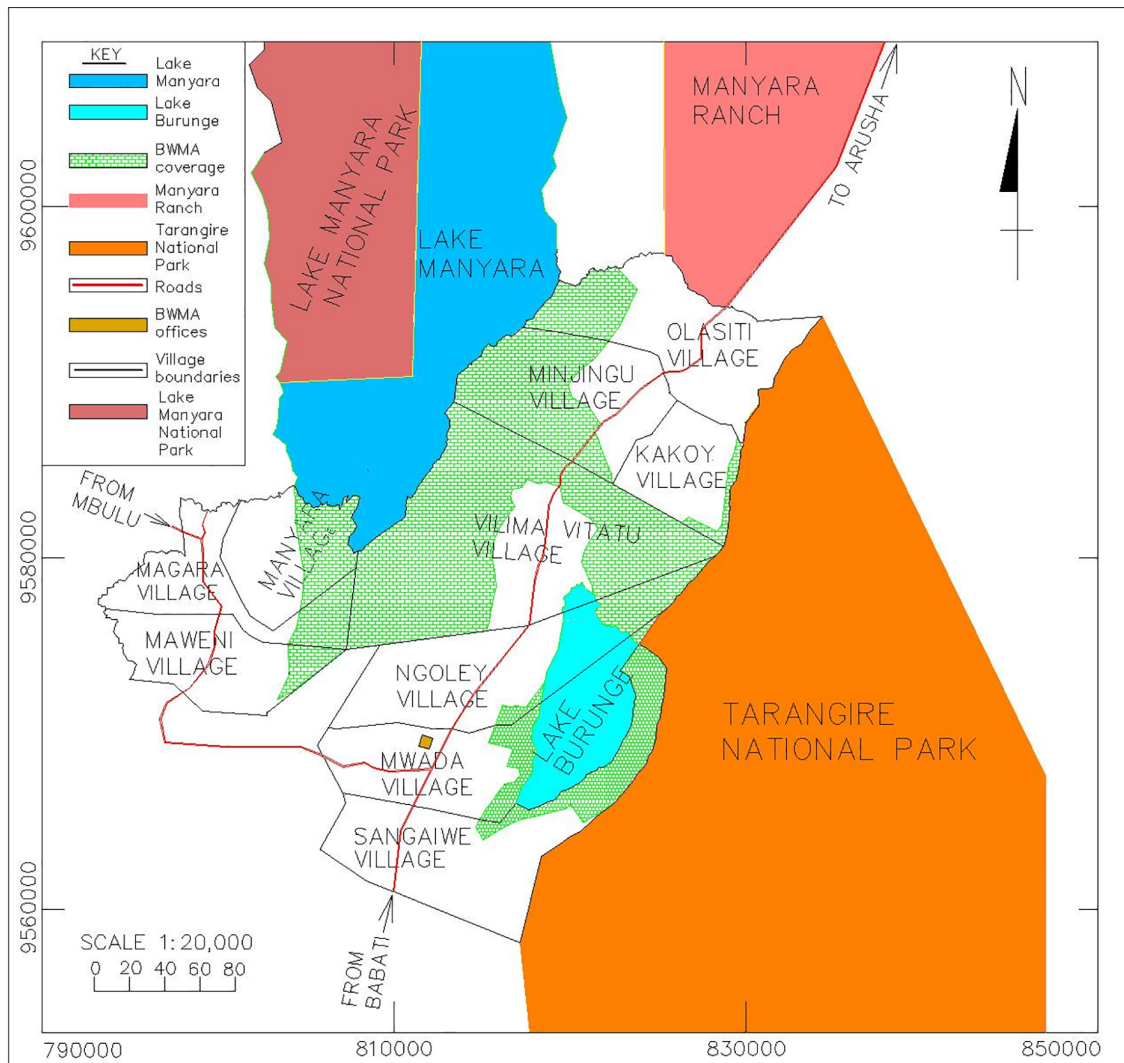


FIGURE 1 A map of Burunge Wildlife Management Area (WMA) showing Minjingu and other associated villages. Source: Burunge Wildlife Management Area Authorised Association, 2020

Whenever new information on Minjingu, the WMA or the court case came up, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted until April 2020. The FGDs, as well as interviews, focused on themes related to (a) the process of forming the community-based organization (CBO) that would subsequently become the AA through the establishment of Burunge WMA, (b) how and to what extent the village general assembly was involved in the process and informed about ongoing operations including the AA's performance, (c) revenue and other benefits received, (d) the court process of Minjingu village versus Burunge AA, and finally (e) what has transpired as an outcome of that case until it ended in December 2019. Before the data collection process started, the study was approved by the Sokoine University of Agriculture post-graduate research committee. The approval was used to acquire research clearance from the office of the Vice-

Chancellor as per the University Charter. To ensure confidentiality, we obtained verbal consents before an interview or discussion started. All interviewee and FGD participant's remain unnamed to protect their anonymity. No names of interviewees were sought or recorded unless individuals explicitly agreed to be contacted again for possible follow-up interviews. Furthermore, the objective of the research was explicitly explained, and the interviewees and groups were free to withdraw from the discussion at any time. Ample time was given to the interviewees and groups to ask questions related to the study before the commencement of interviews and during the discussions. All interviews were conducted in *Kiswahili*—the first authors and interviewees' national language. All relevant policies, laws and regulations analyzed in the study were obtained from the relevant ministries.

2.3 | Data analysis

Analytically, this study draws on Kelly (2011) and Levien (2017) who indicate that (a) dispossession may be a slow and continuous process that takes a long time to achieve the objectives of political and economic elites; (b) states are usually involved in legitimizing dispossession through the law, and (c) struggles of many forms including resistance to the state's actions frequently culminate into violence. Furthermore, to address legitimacy and transparency, the study draws on Bernstein (2004), Biermann and Gupta (2011), Gupta (2010a, 2010b). Legitimacy means that “a decision is accepted by those concerned” (Gupta, 2010a, 2010b; Vatn et al., 2017). It includes, among others, participation, transparency, and full information-disclosure (ibid). We further draw on Arnstein's (1969, p. 217) definition and illustration of participation as a ladder where the lowest rungs; manipulation and therapy denote levels of nonparticipation, the real objectives of which are to “educate” or “cure” the participants (villagers in our case). The middle rungs denote levels of tokenism where participants get to state their opinions but lack the power to ensure that their opinions are heeded by the powerful. The highest rungs denote degrees of citizen control where the participants enter into partnerships with more powerful actors, get certain powers, or hold full control. The official rhetoric around WMAs generally portrays the participation of villagers as forms of citizen control while participating villages often feel stuck on or pushed down to the ladder's lowest rungs.

All qualitative data recorded through FGDs and interviews were subsequently transcribed and categorized in groups of words with similar or related meaning following Stemler (2001). Underlying themes in the categories of words were identified, explained, clarified, interpreted, and analyzed using content analysis (Kohlbacher, 2005).

3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 | Lack of legitimacy in instituting Burunge WMA

In August 2003, a village assembly meeting was convened in Minjingu village. One of the items on the agenda was the introduction of the concept of WMAs by District Officials. FGDs and key informant interviews revealed that the meeting was called unscheduled and with a short notice (defined as an emergency assembly meeting cf. below). As a result, too few people attended to fulfill the quorum for decision-making.

During the meeting, a District Official explained that since the community village forest reserve had abundant wildlife, they had an opportunity to benefit from these wildlife resources. He informed community members that the government had initiated a project whereby communities could request ownership and management rights over wildlife, which would enable them to benefit from those resources. He further elaborated that the project was initiated to compensate the communities for the high costs they incurred due to crop damages etc. by living close to wildlife from the nearby Tarangire and Lake Manyara national parks. Interviews and FGDs revealed that community members, then asked the District Officer—“*there are wild animals in Tarangire and Lake Manyara National Parks that already cost us, why should we have another wildlife conservation area in the village?*,” to which the District Officer replied—“*now you do not benefit from the wild animals from the two national parks, however, if you set aside land in your village for wildlife conservation, you will be troubled by wildlife, but you will also directly benefit from them. You will be given the permit to crop wildlife, hunt for domestic use, conduct photographic and trophy hunting tourism and use resources therein even for livestock grazing.*”

According to the FGDs and interviews, the District Officer did not show them the rules/regulations that would be associated with this new opportunity. However, during the meeting, the community members agreed that the project seemed worthwhile but that they required further information before making a binding decision. This included the necessity of due diligence meetings with other villages (Mwada, Vilimavitatu, Sangaiwe, and Magara) with which the District Officer indicated that they would have to collaborate to undertake the project. Interviews and FGDs revealed that the community members were later informed that the facilitating NGO—The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), was unable to finance such a collective village meeting. Minjingu Village Council could not afford the costs of holding coordination meetings with neighboring village councils. So, for lack of funding (or willingness to pay by the AWF) community members' representatives (The Minjingu Village Council) did not get a chance to discuss with other Village Councils about this opportunity or resources to be invested (including mainly their village land) or the possible terms of such an agreement including cost and benefit sharing principles and mechanisms.

According to Section 103(2, 3) in the Local Government (District Authorities) Act No 7 of 1982 (URT, 1982), there are two types of village assembly meetings—ordinary and emergency. Ordinary village assembly meetings are scheduled at regular intervals while emergency meetings are convened whenever something

extraordinary requires village assembly deliberation. For a decision to be made in an emergency village assembly meeting, representation of the community members present must be sufficient, and meeting minutes must be recorded. The quorum is no less than half of all adult (18 or older) village members. These observations are essential to Minjingu village's claim that it did not agree to join the WMA. FGDs and interviews highlighted that although no vote was made, the meeting minutes combined with the register showing signatures of the few people who attended the meeting were used by the District Officer to validate the village's acceptance to establish Burunge CBO. The WMA Regulations of 2002 specifies that a CBO should be formed to subsequently become the AA of the WMA (URT, 2008, URT, 2012).. After acquiring user rights, a CBO attains status as an AA responsible for managing the WMA on behalf of the involved villagers. However, Burunge's village register shows that the population above 18 years of age in Minjingu village in 2003 was 4,714 individuals while the FGDs suggest that the number of people who attended the meeting was at most 300. Hence, the quorum to make binding decisions was not fulfilled. During FGDs, community members accused village leaders of being bribed by the District Officer to accept a positive vote that contradicted the population count in the village register. Igoe and Croucher (2007) present similar findings of illegitimate circumstances, which indicate that a lawfully voting village assembly did not accept joining the WMA.

At the same meeting, FGDs and interviews revealed that the District Officer advised the community to form a forest committee to oversee and protect their forest, and it was decided to appoint one member from each of Minjingu's five subvillages; Almasi/Minjingu, Kakoi, Olasiti, Olevolosi, and Otukai for that committee. The District Officer subsequently arranged a joint meeting with committee members of other villages' forest protection committees and informed committee members that he was taking them for training on protection and conservation of their community forest reserve. Instead of receiving training, the committee members were asked to prepare and sign a joint constitution for Burunge CBO. However, the right to sign such a legal document is vested in the Village Council based on a mandate from the Village Assembly in accordance with the Local Government Act. Hence, the constitution forming Burunge CBO, signed by the forest protection committee, was from the onset a violation of Section 141 of the Local Government (District Authorities) Act No 7 of 1982 (URT, 1982) which states "the Village Assembly is the *supreme authority* (our emphasis) in the village." However, after signing the constitution and becoming the AA, interviews revealed that the representatives of this

committee no longer provided feedback to Minjingu's Village Council or the Village Assembly about their involvement or activities in the WMA (see also below).

The presented evidence very strongly suggests that the process toward including Minjingu in Burunge WMA was far from transparent, failed to follow democratic and official procedures, and, hence, lacked legitimacy. According to Vatn et al., 2017, the legitimacy of decision-making is of the utmost importance. If decisions do not appear legitimate to the constituency, this threatens the intended outcome. Also, Kajembe et al. (2016) argue that legitimacy "is an important source of compliance with rules." Hence, it comes as no surprise that the community found it difficult to adhere to the rules of the WMA, which they complained they had not been involved in making (Kicheleri, Treue, et al., 2018). "Legitimacy rests on a shared acceptance of rules and rule by the affected communities" (Bernstein, 2004: p. 144), which clearly did not exist in Minjingu. Moreover, the fact that communities complained that they had not been informed about the rules related to the establishment of the WMA, enabling them to make an informed decision about joining the WMA, indicates major deficiencies in input legitimacy (cf. Biermann & Gupta, 2011). Finally, we argue that the introduction of the concept of WMAs on August 19, 2003 followed by an "official" signature by Minjingu on November 30, 2003 agreeing to join Burunge CBO, is evidence of a rushed, and thus at odds with what might qualify as a participatory and legitimate, process.

3.2 | The absence of transparency in the history of Burunge WMA

FGDs and interviews revealed that members of Minjingu village did not realize until later that the activities, which had taken place, were meant to implement a WMA. These activities include the following: In 1999, village representatives—that is, the Minjingu Councillor (*also known as Diwani in Kiswahili*), the village chairperson, and some ordinary village members—were taken to Songea District to learn how other villages conserved their village forest reserves (i.e., not through a WMA but rather through Community-Based Forest Management). In 2000, three people from Minjingu village were taken to Pasiansi Wildlife Training Institute under the auspices of the AWF. This institute trains wildlife management personnel to a certificate level. However, FGDs revealed that the community members who went to Pasiansi Wildlife Training Institute were informed that they were going to be trained in the conservation of village forest reserves. Hence, according to respondents, all the activities that ended up

establishing the WMA were presented as activities related to village forest reserve management.

FGDs and key informant interviews further revealed that the Village Chairman in office during the period 2004–2008, signed a Land Use Plan in 2004 that was backdated to 2000. This act unlawfully replaced the Village Land Use Plan endorsed by the Village Assembly in 1998. At a follow-up interview with that former Village Chairman, he admitted that he had backdated his signature on the Land Use Plan, which transformed some of the former Burunge Game Controlled Area (BGCA) into Minjingu Village Land. Part of the area covered by BGCA overlapped with village land in Minjingu that the District officer suggested should be included in the WMA. However, the then Village Chairman who signed the backdated documents claimed that the District Officer informed him that the documents he signed were only about changing the status of Burunge Game Controlled Area to village land in Minjingu village and that this land would be incorporated into Minjingu's village forest reserve. Hence, the former Chairman claimed to have signed the documents in the belief that this would be to Minjingu villagers' advantage as the community would stand to gain a substantial area of land. Second, he claimed that he was not aware that the document was backdated. And finally, he had heard that the Village Committee members, as well as the Village Chairperson in office during the previous period (2000–2004) had already signed the WMA constitution on behalf of the Village Council and Village Assembly. Therefore, and since he thought the WMA was already a reality, he felt it would be illogical for him to reject signing what would be beneficial for the village. However, he also stated that “*if this plan for WMA establishment had been rolled out the way it was supposed to, then people would never have agreed to it because people prefer livestock keeping and farming.*” He further informed that Minjingu already had tourism investors on its land which generated more than TZS 100 million annually. Thus, he argued, this would make it very unlikely that community members would have accepted to share this revenue with other villages, had they been properly informed and given a choice in a vote when the District Officer presented the opportunity to form a WMA.

The Village Executive Officer for the period 2005–2009, who is employed by and thus upwardly accountable to the Ministry for Regional Administration and Local Government, not the Village Government, also signed the backdated documents. An interview with him revealed that the documents were in English, which he did not understand. He furthermore stated that he signed them in good faith, thinking that the District Officer as a government official would not mislead him on such an important matter.

Furthermore, in the Burunge General Management Plan (2011–2020) (Burunge AA, 2011, p. 52), the former Chairman who signed the backdated documents and who held office during the period 2004–2008 and the Village Executive Officer of Minjingu, who held office during the period 2005–2009, are listed among the participants from Minjingu village who were involved in developing the Burunge WMA General Management Plan, which took place in 2009. However, since the gazettelement of Burunge WMA in 2003 and its subsequent operational commencement in 2006–2007, Minjingu's Village Government has not accepted any revenue disbursements from Burunge AA nor has it allowed anyone to officially represent Minjingu or attend any WMA related undertakings (i.e., including Minjingu's representatives in the AA). Following up on Burunge WMA revenues, we found that Minjingu village's shares were still in the AA bank account and that the Burunge WMA leadership will only disburse these funds to Minjingu village when the Village Government agrees to collaborate with the AA. The Burunge WMA leadership is of the opinion that Minjingu village has joined Burunge CBO on a legal basis.

The beginning of events in Minjingu coincided with the initiation of the Land Management Programme (LAMP) in 1992 by Tanzanian government agencies including forestry, wildlife, agriculture, and other sectors. The programme was funded by the Swedish International Development Agency in collaboration with the Norwegian Agency for International Development and implemented by the AWF. Among its objectives, LAMP aimed to help communities develop land use plans that would enable them to acquire title deeds, which became a formal legal opportunity and requirement with the Land Act No 4 of 1999 (URT, 1999a). LAMP and AWF assisted Minjingu village in developing its land-use plan in 1998. Around this time, the AWF also supported Tarangire National Park, among others, by creating a map that identified wildlife corridors between Tarangire and Lake Manyara national parks. As noted by Igoe & Croucher, 2007, p. 544), the village forest reserve in Minjingu's land-use plan “corresponds exactly to the wildlife migration maps at the Tarangire visitors' center”. At the time, the AWF was primarily a conservation NGO with an expressed objective to support conservation activities (Sachedina, 2010). Accordingly, the match between the identified wildlife corridor and AWF's implementing role under the LAMP programme suggests that the AWF might have seen the WMA as a means to connect Tarangire and Lake Manyara national parks—a conservation objective that stretches back to long before the idea of WMAs were conceived (Borner, 1985; Prins, 1987).

From a gene-exchange and hence wildlife conservation, as well as tourism-based income generation point of

view, wildlife should be able to move between national parks (e.g., Jones, Caro, & Davenport, 2009). So, where “poor planning” had failed to include wildlife corridors during the establishment of national parks, WMAs may seem an obvious way to right those historical “wrongs.” However, what benefits wildlife conservation (and tourism-based incomes) does not necessarily improve the livelihoods of people whose Village Governments contribute village land to form a WMA. Ideally, and in theory, WMAs might deliver on the dual-objective of wildlife conservation and improved rural livelihoods. However, while enhanced gene-exchange mostly depends on *getting corridors established*, their distributive economic effects and social consequences depend on *how* this is done, cf. Gupta (2010a, 2010b) on the importance of due process.

We do not have a “smoking gun” in the form of confessions from former or current AWF employees. However, the chain of events leading up to Minjingu village’s official but illegitimate inclusion in Burunge WMA offers circumstantial evidence that accumulation through dispossession did indeed take place through a process where village leaders were either deceived, coerced, or bribed to sign documents that led to a major reregulation of their village land. Sachedina (2010) also concluded that AWF’s involvement in mapping the Tarangire corridor, the land use planning under LAMP, and the establishment of Burunge WMA was characterized by a failure to understand realities on-the-ground including village-level dynamics. Furthermore, Sachedina (2010, p.618) outlines AWF’s history of recommending the eviction of people from failed government ranches and protected areas before it would “move-in” and finance conservation management activities. Nelson, Nshala, and Rodgers (2007) report that although donors pushed for decentralized governance of natural resources and the central government responded by promising such policies, legal and administrative measure have, in fact, increased central government control over wildlife and curtailed the rights of rural communities in the highly profitable wildlife sector (cf. Ribot et al., 2006). Thus, in several cases, neoliberal policies disguised as decentralized wildlife governance has, de facto, recentralized and reregulated wildlife conservation in Tanzania. Igoe and Brockington (2007) reach a similar conclusion and assert that neoliberal conservation often reregulates nature in ways that ultimately excludes people through enclosures, that is, through dispossession.

3.3 | The struggle for resource justice by Minjingu village

Following the illegitimate process and lack of transparency, Minjingu Village Council nullified the selection of

five committee members representing the village in Burunge CBO in 2004 and wrote a letter to the CBO renouncing the community’s participation in any collaboration with the other villages in the WMA because the village assembly had not accepted to join it. Nevertheless, as mentioned, two community members participated in developing and signed Burunge WMA’s General Management Plan (GMP) during the period 2008–2009 (Burunge AA, 2011).

In the same year (2004), Minjingu’s case was presented before the Ward Executive Officer although the Courts (Land and disputes settlement) Act of 2002 stipulates that the District Council should handle such matters. However, the Village Chairperson in Minjingu at that time (2000–2004) was *also* the Vice Ward Executive Officer and later became the Ward Executive Officer. Hence, this person first, as a Village Chairperson and Vice Ward Executive Officer, co-signed the Burunge CBO constitution without the required mandate of Minjingu Village Assembly. Then, being the Ward Executive Officer, he prevented the matter from reaching the district authorities. FGDs revealed a widespread belief that the Ward Executive Officer was bribed by the WMA sensitizing team, which included the District Officer and AWF, not to send Minjingu village’s case to the District Council.

When the community received no responses from the District Council, four community members from Minjingu village were in 2005 sent to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism to inquire about the authenticity of Minjingu village’s inclusion in Burunge WMA. At the Ministry, this village delegation was presented with minutes of the first meeting in Minjingu on the 19th of August, 2003 overseen by the District Officer (see above), which showed that it had reached a common resolution and agreed to join the WMA. Furthermore, the delegation was shown documents signed by their Village Chairperson agreeing to contribute their village forest land to form the WMA. The chairman (who signed the backdated document) was among the four travelling village members. The other members of the delegation realized for the first time that their Village Chairman was involved in signing the land transfer documents against the will of the Village Council and without a mandate from the Village Assembly. The officer at the Ministry who responded to their claims also handed over to the team the 2002 WMA Regulations, which was the first time anyone in Minjingu was informed about the existence of such regulations.

Subsequently, officials from the Ministry were sent to Minjingu village where they tried to convince the Village Assembly that they needed more education about WMAs as they had already legally joined Burunge WMA. The

community members on their side agreed that education is good but stated that it should have been given before the WMA was established and pointed out that Minjingu village community members had never accepted to join the WMA. At the end of the meeting, the officials advised the community members to write a letter of withdrawal. However, FGDs revealed that the villagers thought this was a trick because they had not agreed to join the WMA in the first place. Hence, the Ministry officials' attempt to resolve the conflict as well as the District Officer's follow-up efforts appeared to them as attempts to convince Minjingu village to accept the WMA.

In 2014, Minjingu Village Council complained to the headquarters of the ruling party—Chama Cha Mapinduzi in Dodoma and to the Vice President's Office about Burunge AA's operations on their land. The response received from President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete was: *"The door you have used to enter the WMA; is the door you will have to use to get out."* Getting no assistance after appeals to various institutions in the bureaucracy, the community decided to take the matter to a court of law. So, in 2014, Minjingu Village sued both the AA and an investor who operated a tourist lodge on the village's land. The AA was sued for unauthorized use of their village land to establish the WMA. The investor was sued for contravening an ecotourism contract entered with the village before the WMA establishment because, forced by WMA Regulations, the investor had stopped paying the village directly and started to pay the AA instead (Kicheleri, Kajembe, Treue, Mombo, & Nielsen, 2018).

On July 11, 2016, Minjingu village won their case against the AA and the investor. The High Court's ruling shows that, based on the evidence provided, village land within the WMA was not designated to be a WMA under the supervision of the CBO (URT, 2016). As a result, the court terminated Burunge AA's activities on Minjingu village land with immediate effect and ordered the AA to repay Minjingu village all the funds that were not paid to the village after the WMA was established. This amounted to TZS 1.66 billion or \$754,796 (URT, 2016, p. 36) including the investor's payments to the AA. The AA promptly appealed the court ruling. However, mediation between the Village Government and the AA continued outside the court system. Follow-up interviews in 2020 with representatives of Minjingu village and the AA revealed that the Regional Commissioner (RC) of Manara Region intervened in the mediation process and allegedly threatened to deregister Minjingu as a village if the Village Government did not join the WMA. In the end, Minjingu village succumbed to the pressure and, effective December 2019, it joined the WMA and agreed to dismiss the court case. The village also agreed to receive its share of WMA revenue from the AA, which as

of October 2019, was about TZS 400 million, that is, less than a quarter of the original ruling's calculated compensation to the Minjingu. The village has further agreed to cover all costs related to the court case except for the cost of registering the case dismissal. Why the RC intervened and on what legal basis remains unclear.

3.4 | The use of violence

Besides Minjingu's heroic but futile legal struggles, reports on acts of violence came up during FGDs and interviews. For example, during an FDG with women, one of the participants revealed that women found within the WMA without a permit had been raped by WMA guards and guards of a private investor as an onsite punishment while men had been severely beaten. The women were not ready to identify the victims and, during an FDG with men, we were informed that victims of rape could not reveal their identity because a raped woman would be abandoned by her husband and thus lose her social status and possibly her livelihood as well. Another incident that provoked a big uproar by the villagers was when some women were caught by private guards while collecting non-timber forest products within the WMA and forcefully taken to the local police station. As a result, one of the arrested women got separated from her baby that was left sleeping in the bush hanging in a "hammock" made of her shawl. After painful hours in custody and uncertainty, the mother luckily retrieved her baby alive. As one participant in an FDG with youths said: *"It is much better to face crocodiles than coming face to face with the investors' private guards in the WMA."* Similar examples of struggle and violence between villagers and the AA game scouts and investors' guards over access to resources are reported by Bluwstein and Lund (2018) and Moyo et al. (2017). However, in an interview with this article's first author, the AA and investors denied all allegations of their guards' use of violence.

The recent history of Minjingu village shows that symbolic and physical acts of violence are part and parcel of the local narrative and quite possibly also the local reality of Burunge WMA. The RC allegedly exercised a kind of symbolic violence by threatening to deregister the village whereby its land rights would vanish. Although the RC cannot deregister a village solely at his discretion, he can certainly make life difficult for the already battered Village Government. Apparently, this was enough to make it succumb—likely because it cannot realistically hope to gain an advantage by launching a formal complaint about what the RC (might) have said. The extra-legal physical violence allegedly exercised by the WMA's and private investors' guards against people

served to enforce the WMA's rules of exclusion (cf. Kelly, 2011). Again, villagers, especially women who had been raped, could not hope to gain anything positive from launching formal complaints, on the contrary. Thus, in our case violence, threats of violence, and narratives of violence were indeed part of the social reality. As this process of accumulation through dispossession proceeds, violence even becomes a cost-effective means of curbing everyday forms of resistance (cf. Scott, 1985). In practice, the dispossessed lose not only their land and rights to resources and revenue streams from it. They also lose their human rights in terms of justice, personal security, and not being subjected to inhumane punishment, c.f. articles five-eight in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948). The villagers of Minjingu have, therefore, become second-rank citizens on their own land, not as a result of Burunge WMA per sé but as a result of *how* it was established and subsequently enforced.

3.5 | Reregulation of land rights

The villagers of Minjingu plainly wanted to withdraw from the WMA that they had never agreed to join. However, the rules about the fate of village land if a village agrees to join but then decides to withdraw from a WMA are highly problematic. Community members in Minjingu believed that *“If you withdraw from the WMA your land will be converted to a game controlled area or you will be evicted.”* According to FGDs and interviews, such explanations were on several occasions given to the community by the District Officer. Allegedly, the District Officer has also stated that *“Whether you agree or not, you are in the WMA.”* The WMA Regulations include a chapter named “Management of WMAs,” which details the transfer of user rights within a WMA to the AA, under which circumstances an AA can lose these rights, how an AA might be dissolved, and how a WMA might be degazetted. As if the wish of a village to withdraw from a WMA was initially unthinkable, the 2002 and 2005 versions of the Regulation (URT, 2002c; URT, 2005) contain no clauses on that possibility. However, the 2012 WMA Regulation 34(6) states that: “Where a village withdraws its membership from the AA, the *user right* (our emphasis) shall remain under the AA.” In other words, the WMA Regulation has evolved to specify a possibly already underlying premise for WMAs—once a village has contributed land to establish a WMA it can never regain its original authority over that land or its rights to associated resources and revenues.

However, Tanzania only has three recognized categories of land, general land, reserved land, and village land. WMAs can be interpreted to fall under reserved land,

which is defined as a “land reserved, designated or set aside under the provisions of the Wildlife Conservation Act No 12 of 1974” (revised in 2009) according to Section 6.1.a.iv of the Land Act (URT, 1999a). The 2002 WMA Regulations (URT, 2002a, 2002b) are key to the establishment of the initial WMAs in Tanzania, including Burunge, as they specifically refer to the 1974 Wildlife Conservation Act. Hence, the legal status and management of the two categories of land, that is, reserved and village land, are quite different as they fall under different legal jurisdictions. Therefore, according to the WMA Regulation, once village land has been combined with other villages' land and gazetted as a WMA, it seems to change legal status and become reserved land. Thus, if a village wants to withdraw its land from a WMA, this appears to require that the land is transferred from reserved land to village land following Section 5 of the Land Act (URT, 1999a). However, only the President has the power to transfer land from one category to another (URT, 1999b) as all land in Tanzania according to the Land Act is “vested in the president as trustee” (URT, 1999a). Accordingly, through the words “user right” instead of “land right,” the 2012 WMA Regulation in combination with the Land and Wildlife Conservation Acts circumvent the powers of the President and establish WMAs as a bizarre, *de facto-de jure*, category of land by, *de facto*, turning village land into reserved land through a, *de jure*, shift of all meaningful rights to such land from Village Governments to AA's *without* changing the legal category of the land. Legally, WMAs, thus, become empty shells of village land and once Burunge WMA was gazetted, the participating Village Councils lost all powers over the part of their village lands covered by the WMA. The resistance of Minjingu village to join the WMA suggests that they sensed something was “fishy” about the concept, but from the outset, they were very poorly informed about the legal implications of joining a WMA. The process up to the court ruling confirmed Minjingu village's suspicions but political pressure from above rendered their legal victory futile. Now, when it appears impossible for them to pull out, people are very aware of the WMA's legal implications and feel the consequences. During interviews and meetings with the first author, people in Minjingu often summed up their situation by saying: *What is the difference between Burunge WMA and Tarangire and Lake Manyara National Parks?*

The wildlife Conservation Act No 12 of 1974, has been repealed, revised, and updated with transitory provisions according to Section 122 of the Act No 5 of 2009 (URT, 2009). However, the revised Act maintains the quite confounding Section 122(3) stating that *“Any rule, order, regulation, direction, notice, notification or other administrative act made, given, issued or undertaken*

before the commencement of this Act or under any law repealed or amended in a material particular to this Act shall, if it could have been made, given, issued or undertaken under corresponding provision of this Act, continue in force and have the like effect as if it had been so made, given or issued, as the case may be, undertaken under this Act.” Our interpretation of this section is that it was meant to maintain Section 6.1.a.iv of the Village Land Act No 5 of 1999 that defines reserved land as land “set aside” under the provisions of the Wildlife Conservation Act No 12 of 1974. Hence, and in accordance with the above analysis, it seems that Section 122(3) serves to maintain that WMAs should in practice be treated as reserved lands and not village land as otherwise established by the Local Government (District Authorities) Act of 1982 (URT, 1982) authorized under the Village Land Act of 1999 (URT, 1999a).

As Nshala (2002) states, the Village Land Act No 4 of 1999 and Land Act No 4 of 1999 indeed “provide the foundation for land rights held by community members.” Nshala (2002) also encouraged village governments to challenge the violation of village land rights posed by the Wildlife Division, which is the central government’s unit in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism responsible for making rules and for the general management of wildlife in Tanzania. Nshala (2002) further argued that no one can challenge Section 142(3) of the Local Government (District Authorities) Act on the powers it bestows on the Village Council especially with regards to village land. Section 143(3) of the Act states that “a Village Council shall have the power to do all such acts and things as appear to it to be necessary, advantageous or convenient for or in connection with the carrying out of its functions or to be incidental or conducive to their proper discharge.” However, the Wildlife Division has managed to encroach upon exactly that right by usurping Village Government’s authority over their village land and by tapping into pre-WMA revenue streams from tourism investors to Village Governments.

Based on the above, we find it very likely that the formulation, interpretations, and amendments to the wildlife legislation deliberately served to attenuate Village Governments’ official authority over village land that they are persuaded (lured into) to contribute to a WMA. This suggests “rule-through-law,” or legally sanctioned accumulation through dispossession, which supports Kelly’s (2011) analysis of how the state through laws and rules conspire with the capitalist sector to capture control over land, resources, and associated revenue streams (see below)—in the name of nature conservation and, in the case of WMAs in Tanzania, even in the name of decentralized wildlife governance.

3.6 | Reregulation of resources and revenue streams

Not only do Village Governments lose control over their land but also resources as well as any revenues accruing from these areas. Unfortunately, this was not known to Minjingu village. The Wildlife Conservation (non-consumptive utilization) Regulations (URT, 2008 and the URT (United Republic of Tanzania), 2016 amendment) introduced new rules that require investors to pay all fees directly to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. The regulation states that “the Director shall collect the fees prescribed under these regulations on behalf of the AA” (URT, 2016, p. 13). Following the WMA Regulations, funds generated from tourist hunting and non-consumptive utilization are thereafter redistributed to (a) the Ministry, (b) the District Councils, (c) the AA, and the (d) the Treasury (Kicheleri & Nielsen, Unpublished). The AA must, per the 2012 WMA Regulation 66(2), direct “50% of its annual gross revenue to villages forming part of the WMA.” The 50% is divided equally among individual villages forming Burunge WMA. Apart from that, the 2012 WMA Regulation 48(8) directs that 60% of the revenues generated from resident hunting shall remain with the district council while the remaining 40% shall be handed over to the AA. These rules are disadvantageous to villages such as Minjingu that already had business arrangements with ecotourism investors. Before the WMA was established, investors paid directly to the Village Councils based on individual arrangements that reflected the area of wildlife habitable village land. After the establishment of Burunge WMA, all investors were initially required to pay directly to the AA and later to the Ministry. Hence, the revenue previously received by Minjingu village must now be shared between many actors. Further, individual Village Councils and maybe even to the AA will not necessarily know how much an individual investor has paid.

4 | CONCLUSION

This article examined the case of Minjingu village to evaluate whether the concept of WMAs in Tanzania, against its official objectives to promote wildlife conservation as well as improved rural livelihoods, might be better characterized as accumulation by dispossession. We found that the process of implementing Burunge WMA lacked legitimacy and transparency because Minjingu village did not willingly agree to join the WMA. The initial inclusion of Minjingu village into the WMA was made without the mandate of the Village Assembly and hence in violation of village bylaws as well as national legislation. Evidence

suggests that district-level officials in collaboration with a prominent NGO manipulated, coerced, or bribed village leaders into signing documents they did not understand, without the knowledge, and against the will of the Village Assembly. After more than 10 years of legal battle, a court of law finally ruled in favor of Minjingu village and nullified its inclusion in the WMA. By then, however, it was too late, and ironically political pressure from above forced the Village Government to officially join the WMA, when its initial suspicion—that the legal and financial implications would be disadvantageous for the village—had been confirmed.

The national legislation appears deliberately designed to trap and dispossess Village Governments by establishing a dubious, *de facto-de jure*, process that, *de facto*, turns village land, which is part of a WMA, into reserved land through a, *de jure*, transfer of all meaningful rights to such land from Village Governments to AAs. To cap it all, legislative changes also deliberately taps into WMA tourism-based revenues to the benefit of higher levels of government at the expense of Village Governments.

We, therefore, conclude that, by design and against their officially stated objectives, WMAs can leave villagers disenfranchised and impoverished, which may eventually turn them into conservation refugees (Dowie, 2011; Weldemichel, 2020). An unfortunate but not necessarily pre-conceived or coordinated mix of conservation NGOs' interest in establishing wildlife migration corridors and vested interests in wildlife tourism revenues, has slowly but surely excluded Minjingu villagers from accessing resources such as water, pasture, and nontimber forest products on their village land while their democratically elected Village Government gradually lost control over revenues generated from this land. Rather than an example of CBNRM, which aims to conserve wildlife while improving rural livelihoods, the case of Minjingu village in Burunge WMA appears a classic instance of neoliberal accumulation by dispossession justified by objectives of wildlife conservation.

As indicated, we do not conclude that the concept of CBNRM is destined to produce undesirable outcomes for the involved Village Governments and their citizens in Tanzania—on the contrary. What matters is *how* decentralization is implemented. *If* Burunge WMA were established under conditions stipulating that Village Governments, which contributed land to establish the wildlife corridor between Tarangire and Lake Manyara national parks, *must* financially benefit from *and* agree on the institutional set-up of the AA, *then* the chances of desirable livelihood outcomes would have been much higher. On this basis, we recommend an urgent revision of the policy and legislation that govern Tanzania's

wildlife sector in order to facilitate democratic devolution rather than accumulation by dispossession through “deceptive decentralization” and rule-through-law.

Specifically, Village Governments need to be fully informed about laws, rules, and regulations such that they can make informed decisions on whether to form a WMA or not. Hence, documents that require Village Council signatures must be written in Kiswahili. Processes of devising and revising WMA management rules, including cost and benefit-sharing arrangements, must be controlled and agreed upon by the participating Village Governments. Also, the centralization of revenue streams must be abolished. Instead, AAs should operate like private business associations that pay reasonable taxes to higher levels of government and distribute net profits among the participating Village Governments in ways that they decide are fair and legitimate. Lastly, Village Governments, which contribute land to a WMA, should hold legal rights to withdraw from and dissolve WMAs to pursue more profitable uses of their village lands. Withdrawal from a WMA must result in the reinstatement of Village Governments' pre-WMA rights to their village lands and associated resources. A policy revision accommodating these principles would level the playing field among Village Governments and force central administrations, donors, and NGOs to pursue wildlife conservation that improves rather than undermines rural livelihoods.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors are grateful for the support of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Building Stronger Universities programme for funding this study. Thanks are also extended to the District Council of Babati, communities at Minjingu village, officials at Burunge WMA and all who in one way or the other have made this study possible. Martin Reinhardt Nielsen's work on this study was financed by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 641918 through the AfricanBioServices project.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Rose P. Kicheleri and **Thorsten Treue**: Conceived the idea. **Rose P. Kicheleri**, **Thorsten Treue**, **Martin R. Nielsen**, and **George C. Kajembe**: Jointly designed the study. **Rose P. Kicheleri**: Collected the data, analyzed, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors reviewed, edited and gave final approval for publication.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Anonymized copies of transcripts, notes and data collection sheets can be obtained from the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study passed ethical evaluation as per University Charter from the office of the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of The Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) (SUA-Research-Regulations-and-Guidelines-2019.pdf).

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ENDNOTES

¹ In the natural resources governance literature, primitive accumulation include processes such as commodification of land, forceful expulsion of peasant populations, suppression of rights of access to commons, and colonial and neo-colonial appropriation of natural resources (Harvey, 2003).

² Angelsen et al. (2014) and numerous other publications from the Poverty Environment Network (PEN) document that all categories of rural households in the global South extensively relies on environmental products, that is, noncultivated products collected in “the wild” and that the economic importance of such products is highest for poor households because they lack physical and human capital that constrain their ability to generate income from other sources including farming, animal husbandry, business, or wage labor.

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How to cite this article: Kicheleri RP, Mangewa LJ, Nielsen MR, Kajembe GC, Treue T. Designed for accumulation by dispossession: An analysis of Tanzania's Wildlife Management Areas through the case of Burunge. *Conservation Science and Practice*. 2021;3:e360. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.360>