

Intergroup conflict and its impact on tourism: Causes and consequences of conflict between landowners and the nomadic Samburu tribe in Laikipia County, Kenya

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Conflict, derived from the Latin *confliggere* (to collide with), has been defined as 'a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals' (Coser, 1956; cited in Farmaki, 2017). Generally, this phenomenon is characterized by: the existence of two or more parties; resource scarcity; behaviour aimed at harming opponents; and opposed interests (Coleman and Deutsch, 2000). This incompatibility among different parties extends to ideas, beliefs, behaviours, roles, needs, desires and values among others, and can range from simple irritation to varying levels of violence (Idrissou et al., 2013; Moore, 1995). However, although the term has been widely used and taken for granted in different contexts, it has yet to be adequately defined within the field of tourism (Curcija, Breakey and Driml, 2019), which has been attributed to the inherent complexity of the concept (Isenhardt and Spangle, 2000). Scholars have also highlighted that conflict is not inherently negative, as is often assumed, but can also be constructive when managed appropriately (Castro and Nielsen, 2001; Okazaki, 2008).

Evans (2013) suggests that conflict manifests itself in four ways, as: *interpersonal conflict* (which usually occurs between two individuals, because of a difference in opinion or values relating to a situation or issue); *intrapersonal conflict* (which occurs within an individual, and equates to an internal struggle in making personal choices); *intergroup conflict* (which occurs between different groups of individuals, typically related to their access to and use of resources or the perceived transgression of social and cultural boundaries established between each group); and *intragroup conflict* (which happens among individuals within a certain group, due to interpersonal disagreements or conflicting views and ideas).

While tourism studies rarely deals with interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict, intergroup and intragroup conflicts are usually approached from a stakeholder management perspective (as in Dredge, 2010; McCool, 2009; Okazaki, 2008; Timur and Getz, 2008; Wray, 2011). Generally, these conflicts are presented as a struggle for resources (e.g. Jamal et al., 2002; McKercher et al., 2005; Ruhanen, 2013; Slocum and Backman, 2011), power and involvement imbalances (e.g. McKercher et al., 2005; Plummer et al., 2006), and impact studies (e.g. Jamal and Getz, 1995; Kibicho, 2008; McCool, 2009). From these studies, a number of potential drivers of conflict in tourism can be identified, of which the three principal ones are: ethnic divisions; economic factors and resource competition; and political and institutional factors (Farmaki, 2017). Ethnic divisions have been found to be at the root of many armed conflicts in the post-Cold War era (Esteban and Ray, 2008), though taken alone they rarely lead to intergroup conflict but, rather, are exacerbated by additional circumstances. Economic factors, when related to inequality, are usually a major driver of intergroup conflict (Brinkman et al., 2013; David and Bar-Tal, 2009; Gilley, 2004); also, the discovery of natural resources that can be exploited for material gain has been shown to lead to confrontation (Jamal et al., 2002; McKercher et al., 2005; Slocum and Blackman, 2011). Finally, political and institutional drivers of conflict include *inter alia* social injustice and dominance of government structures (Farmaki, 2018), power imbalances (McKercher et al., 2005; Plummer et al., 2006), and policymaking (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999; Dredge, 2006).

This study aims to identify and to understand the reasons for and effects of intergroup conflict between landowners and proprietors of tourism businesses, on the one hand, and tribespeople on the other, specifically the Samburu tribe in Laikipia County, Kenya. The Samburu are nomadic pastoralists and cousins of the Maasai, and settled in and around Kenya's Central Rift Valley before being displaced to Laikipia and the south of the Country by British settlers in the 19th century. Following independence, the British and their descendants bought up land in the area, forcing the Maasai to move further south towards the border with Tanzania. The Samburu elected to stay in Laikipia (Muthiga, 2017). They now move from place to place, following the seasonal rains in search of fresh pasture and water for grazing their cattle and other livestock. With rapid population growth and the need to maintain larger herds, with the loss of pasture and diminishing fresh water supplies through overgrazing and ongoing drought possibly linked to climate change, and with the erosion of communal grazing rights through the privatisation of land and the expansion of conservation areas, this inevitably brings them into contact and conflict with landowners (and also other tribes), who are mostly third, fourth and fifth generation white Kenyans. Recently, this has taken a violent turn with easy access to illegal firearms trafficked over the border with neighbouring war-torn countries, and incitement to invade private land by politicians hoping to gain capital by stoking tensions between the landowners who have land for grazing and the herders who have none. The closure of Sosian Ranch after the killing of one of the Directors, and the destruction of Suyian Lodge through an arson attack by illegal herders and the looting of the stores there, have led to the loss of tens if not hundreds of jobs, depriving local suppliers of a market for their goods and the government of tax revenues. Landowners operating in Laikipia's tourism industry claim to have contributed 4 billion Kenyan Shillings into the local economy in 2016, so the loss of critical capacity and confidence on the part of tourists threatens to have a significant and detrimental impact beyond the businesses themselves.

This is not a classic study of host-guest conflicts in tourism; we are concerned with the effects of conflict on tourism, rather than tourism as a source of conflict. Also, in contrast to previous studies, tourism is the beneficiary and not the cause of peace, here. Using purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews with ten landowners in Laikipia County, transcribed and coded using thematic analysis, we investigated the perceived causes and consequences of conflict with the Samburu tribe from the landowners' perspective(s). From this we have concluded that the above-mentioned factors have frustrated a 'functional' (co-existent) relationship between the two groups, where landowners provide grazing rights, free basic health care and primary and secondary education for Samburus and they, in turn, provide a supply of labour for their tourism businesses and protect against illegal herders, instead generating conditions and perceptions of inequity and conflict. In respect of tourism this has led to cancelled bookings and reduced visitation, the permanent or temporary closure of ranches and lodges, and adverse media coverage and reputational harm for the destination as a whole. However, this is not simply a conflict between 'coloniser' and 'colonised', between white Kenyan landowners of British descent and indigenous Samburus and other tribes, but rather a clash between sedentrist and nomadic ways of life that transcends ethnicity and other seemingly 'obvious' divisions. Accordingly, we reject structuralist, and also voluntarist accounts that privilege pre-existing social structures or human agency, and deploy post-structuralist modes of analysis and ideas associated with 'mobilities research' (championed by the likes of Coles et al., 2005, Hannam and Knox, 2010; Sheller and Urry, 2006; and Tribe, 2005). This, we assert, allows for a more complex

and nuanced reading of the relationship, albeit one that we accept is open to contestation and which would benefit from the addition of Samburu voices.